

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF

DIGITAL INCLUSION?

It is clear that society is more and more **digitizing**. To use a service, such as (when) submitting your tax return or booking a trip, you are increasingly referred to digital channels. While this can lead to an

increase in a person's agency, there is a **cost**: not everyone can take advantage of the opportunities offered by the internet and the expanding use of online services. This can lead to **digital exclusion**. In this brAlnfood we explain what digital inclusion is and how you can take this into account in the development of your new product or service.



brAlnfood of the Knowledge Centre Data & Society in collaboration with Mediawijs.

Mediawijs is the Flemish Knowledge Centre Digital and Media Literacy of the Flemish government and imec. Mediawijs helps inhabitants of Flanders and Brussels to use and understand digital technology and media in an active, creative, critical and conscious way in order to fully participate in society. www.mediawijs.be

WHAT IS DIGITAL INCLUSION?

Digital inclusion refers to actions that ensure that everyone can **participate fully** in the **rapidly digitalising society**. There are **four ways** in which digital inclusion can be achieved. First, it is important to **remove existing barriers to digital access**. This can be done by making devices (such as smartphones and laptops) available, but also widespread and affordable Internet. Secondly, the focus is on **increasing the digital skills** of citizens. Various training initiatives that attempt to increase digital skills are being developed. Thirdly, it is important to set up **support networks** to which people who are **digitally excluded** can easily turn. Finally, it is important that digital platforms are **accessible and user-friendly** for everyone. For example, subtitling videos for people with hearing disabilities or adding textual descriptions to images, so people with limited vision can use text-to-speech programmes.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The number of people with limited digital skills should not be underestimated. According to the latest figures from the King Baudouin Foundation, **only 38% of the population in Belgium has well-developed digital skills**. In contrast, there is a large group with **limited digital skills (32%)** and a smaller group that does not use digital facilities (8%). As many as four out of ten Belgians are thus digitally savvy.

As society becomes increasingly digitized, a significant proportion of the population risks, if no measures are taken, having their **access to certain services restricted or even completely cut off**. Consider, for example, the rise of **Internet and smartphone banking** and the closure of banking branches. Digital exclusion can also have other societal implications, such as **social exclusion** or **limited opportunities on the labour market**. Digital inclusion is therefore important if we want every citizen to be able to **participate in society**.

TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

To make sure anyone is able to use your digital technology, it is important to **communicate in clear language** about your product or service and **make assistance available** for users when they experience obstacles or are stuck in your system. **Involve** the different (vulnerable) **target groups** in the design of the technology by **speaking with them** and **testing** your product or service (prototype) with them. These insights give you more information about the **accessibility** of your product or service, and how it can be improved. How can you create a **simple and user-friendly** design? Sometimes it is necessary to (only) keep or create **offline alternatives**.

HOW DIGITALLY INCLUSIVE IS YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE?

With this workshop (in Dutch only), together with your team or partners, you will discover step by step how digitally inclusive a service or product is. Using personas, you will gain insight into the barriers users can experience. You then form a team of developers to make the service or product more inclusive.

The workshop was developed with Mediawijs, the Flemish Knowledge Centre for Digital and Media Literacy of the Flemish government and imec vzw.

[Download the different parts](#) of the workshop and print out. Or order a physical copy [via the webshop of Mediawijs](#).



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