



## **Social exclusion a short introduction:**

'Everybody belongs to the world and the world belongs to everybody' sings Thé Lau, a famous Holland singer. If we want to include 'everybody' in our fast evolving world, it is necessary to give 'everybody' a face. In order to do that we designed a questionnaire to find out who we think in our region are socially excluded from social life and social services. There are many reasons why somebody can be excluded temporarily or permanently from social life, activities and services. The main goal of the questionnaire is to define for each partner his socially excluded groups and the opportunities to decline the gap with society.

The focus of this report is about 'social inclusion by ICT'.

# Definitions of social exclusion and social exclusion by ICT

## General definitions of social exclusion and social exclusion by ICT

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### Definition of social exclusion

Social exclusion is a relatively new concept. It is difficult to find a definition that reflects the whole complexity of the phenomenon. Most of the investigations are one-dimensional and are mostly concentrated on the aspects of economic life.<sup>1</sup> Academic studies prove that social exclusion has a more multidimensional character. Social exclusion is a multidimensional concept, related to the relative position of an individual or a group (a region) in the entirety of society. Each type of societal "disadvantage" can cause social exclusion.

Exclusion is conceptualised through different social processes and dimensions of everyday life: economical, cultural, physical or mental disability, geographical (spatial), political and institutional. In other words, social exclusion is the outcome of a complex process and certainly not the result of poverty alone. Therefore social exclusion should be understood in the framework of a social structure in which four subsystems are playing:

- politics (as the democratic distribution system)
- economics (labour market and other instruments of economic integration)
- social system (welfare and social integration)
- community and family systems.<sup>2</sup>

However, the concept, even viewed as multidimensional, still poses persistent problems. Anthias argues that social inclusion is not only multidimensional in the sense that it is influenced by different processes- economic, political and cultural- but that the concept is also relational because these different causes "will affect categories of persons differently depending on whether they are treated in terms of gender, in terms of ethnicity or in terms of class."<sup>3</sup>

It is important that social exclusion and inclusion are not considered as a dichotomy: one is normally not totally excluded or included; e.g. one can be (partly) excluded (e.g. from certain political rights on the basis of geographical or ethnical origin) but included for social welfare services. Exclusion and inclusion are also not static phenomena: within a given

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<sup>1</sup> ICT and Social Inclusion in the everyday life of less able people, Key deliverable, European Media and Technology in Everyday Life Network, University of Liege and University of Amsterdam, 2000-2003, pp.19-22.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.europace.org/s2net/docs/Soc\\_incl\\_discus.doc](http://www.europace.org/s2net/docs/Soc_incl_discus.doc)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/EMTEL/Less\\_Able/project\\_home.html](http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/EMTEL/Less_Able/project_home.html)

society, people can become socially excluded or included over time. Therefore, it is better not to try to provide a comprehensive definition for social exclusion, but to use an approach that identifies "deprivation factors" (such as income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education, training and skills deprivation, housing deprivation, geographic access to services, crime, physical environment). In this systemic approach, social inclusion results from synergies between different actors in local government and services, public administration, and social partners through participation, partnerships and networking. <sup>4</sup>

There can be concluded that there are many arguments about exclusion processes remain "systemic" that is exclusion is seen as a dependent only on system failures. Within this perspective, social exclusion is seen as based on the hetero-designation of certain groups or individuals; which are defined as the excluded. Sometimes studies ignore the human potential to construct "inclusion" within one or different everyday spheres. Few concerns are raised about self-designation processes, the influence of identity on inclusion and exclusion boundaries or personal choices, which may intervene in those identities. Therefore social exclusion depends also of the individual role/feelings: an individual person is socially excluded when he can't give anything to society, in exchange for what society can give him.

## **Definition social exclusion by ICT**

Social Inclusion through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is becoming increasingly pervasive. Every day more and more services like banking, travel, training and job seeking are delivered online. The digital divide is as thus increasing. As it is hard to find a definition on social inclusion in general, it is also difficult to find a definition on social inclusion by ICT.

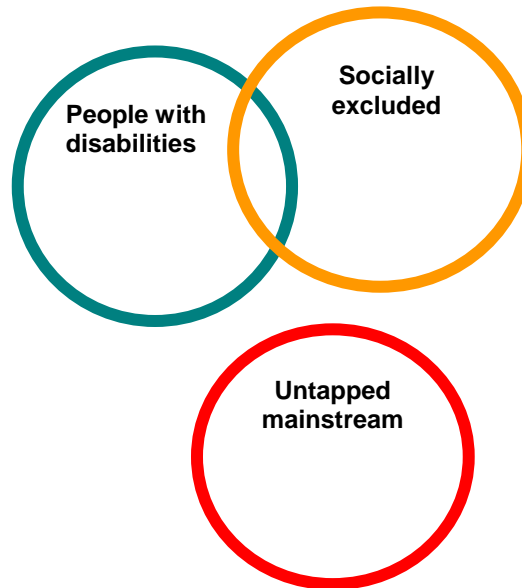
In our search to find a good definition we start to define the phenomenon "Social Inclusion by ICT". Social exclusion by ICT can emerge when two groups are separated from each other: the people who use ICT and the people who don't use ICT. These groups can be several religious movements, ethnic minorities, people who live in more rural communities, people with disabilities,...

Therefore we can find ourselves in the approach of Michael Mulquin, Director of IS Communications. He has experience in working towards a social inclusive information society for the last ten years. In his study on social exclusion by ICT he divides three target groups:

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.europace.org/s2net/docs/Soc\\_incl\\_discus.doc](http://www.europace.org/s2net/docs/Soc_incl_discus.doc)

- **People with disabilities**
  - Mobility
  - sensory
  - cognitive
- **Socially excluded**
  - deprived
  - basic skills
  - attitudes
- **Untapped mainstream**
  - frustrated
  - unmotivated
- **Some degree of overlap**
  - e.g., disabled and socially excluded
  - significant overlap with old age



As we used the deprivation factors in the definition of social exclusion in general, we will use barriers to internet usage of the groups of disadvantaged or disenfranchised non-users:

- Motivation
- Access
- User interface
- Web-design usability
- Content

These factors can lead to social exclusion, especially for the target groups people with disabilities and the socially excluded groups. But another reason of social exclusion by ICT can be that someone can be socially excluded but doesn't feel so. The individual will not use the internet, because he does not see the relevance of it. This is the untapped mainstream: people who can potentially be excluded.