

The 2021-24 Plan for digital appropriation

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 BELGIUM-FR

Timeline

2021 Approved/Agreed

2022 Implementation

2023 Implementation

2024 Completed

ID number 39283

Background

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of the digital transition for the entire population, businesses and administrations. During the lockdown, digital technology was the only way for most people in the Brussels Region to maintain social relations, do their jobs, take online courses, apply for jobs or contact government departments. The digital divide affects many sections of the population and the digitally excluded are not a homogenous social category.

People who are at a digital disadvantage have seen their access to these services restricted or even made impossible. It is essential to prevent these inequalities from growing.

On 13 December 2018, the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region approved a memorandum on e-inclusion. In line with memorandum a Digital Inclusion Coordinator was appointed in 2018, which in 2020 was expanded to a total of three coordinators, responsible for acting as a link between the sector and the Government and for synchronising actions at the regional level and with the other federated entities. This first memorandum laid the foundations for a digital inclusion policy in the Brussels Capital Region, centred around the Region, the municipalities and the actors in the field.

Objectives

The objective of the Plan for Digital Appropriation is to transform the Brussels-Capital Region into a Smart City harnessing digital transformation to benefit all citizens, by adapting services, renewing interfaces, and transforming organisations. Key to this vision is the enhancement of citizens' accessibility and basic digital skills in a comprehensive and ongoing way, leading to an overall improvement of the well-being of its citizens (privately and professionally) and boost its regional economy.

Description

Following its memorandum on e-inclusion, the Government approved the Plan for Digital Appropriation 2021-24 on the 12 February 2021. This plan was proposed by the Digital Inclusion Coordination and drawn up in consultation with stakeholders on the ground.

The implementation is organised in four areas defining 17 projects including 66 actions:

a. Raising awareness and destigmatising - raising citizens' awareness of digital tools and services, how to use them and on the support or training offers: the objective is to inform the public of the services available to support them (e.g. Digital Public Spaces, DPS) and to destigmatise the digital environment to encourage them to get to grips with IT tools. The actions include raising awareness among the general public, raising awareness within administrations, and labelling of Digital Public Space.

b. Uniting - bringing together and pooling the methods and skills of those involved in digital appropriation: the objective is to unite relevant actions and to pool efforts to meet a common objective, the appropriation of digital technology by all citizens. It is also essential to make the data measurable to be able to quantify the progress made. Actions include regulation and recommendations, regional coordination, and evaluation.

c. Equipping - strengthening the resources available to Digital public spaces and the front-line voluntary sector. To reach the objectives of this area, actions on the following topics are foreseen:

- equipment for Digital public spaces and front-line players,
- sharing teaching tools (didactic tools and online training platforms),
- ongoing training for facilitators,
- mobilising the necessary funding,
- supervision of the profession of mediator.

d. Supporting - support for target groups requiring an approach tailored to their specific situations and needs: supporting citizens' digital appropriation affects all citizens, but in particular job seekers, young people, senior citizens, disabled people, people in precarious situations, and women. Various actions are carried out to support these target audiences, such as the purchase or distribution of computer equipment, calls for projects, publications (guide, etc.).

2021 Approved/Agreed

On 12 February 2021, the Brussels' Government approved the Plan for Digital Appropriation 2021-24.

The implementation of the plan started in 2021. Numerous projects, activities and tools were set up, the annual report presents the complete list by areas for 2021. The following actions are an example of what is being implemented through the plan.

- (a) raising awareness and destigmatising: a budget of EUR 125 000 (provided for in the 2020 budget) has been set aside for an important information campaign, (online and in person) on the theme 'Now he/she knows!' to raise awareness about DPSs and promoting the services they offer. The Coordination also participated in and organised events for the public: workshops for young people, for people with disabilities, etc;
- (b) equipping: 20 Digital Public Spaces in Brussels received new IT equipment and specific IT equipment to improve accessibility for people with disabilities (Braille keyboard, ergonomic mouse, etc.). Multimedia animators also benefitted from CVET to update their IT skills;
- (c) supporting: at the request of the Brussels-Capital Region, the King Baudouin Foundation organised a call for projects on the theme of digital inclusion: Digital Brussels. To this end, the Region has granted a subsidy of EUR 400 000 to the Foundation. The call for projects focused on raising awareness about the digital appropriation of people far from digital literacy. Measures were also implemented aiming at equipping priority groups (learners with social difficulties, schools, rest homes and care homes in the Brussels Region, etc.).

2022 Implementation

Numerous projects, activities and tools were set up, the annual report presents the complete list by areas for 2022. The following actions are examples of what was

implemented through the plan in 2022:

- (a) raising awareness and destigmatising: launch of the Digital inclusion directory to bring together important information (on access to equipment, to the Internet and to training), interviews with leading key players, as well as a listing of digital inclusion players in the Brussels Region detailing their activities and contact details. The Directory will enable to direct users according to their needs and to the structures best able to help them;
- (b) equipping - regulating the profession of mediators: the Federal Public Service Strategy and Support (BOSA) has organised an online training course for public employees: connectoo (connectoo.belgium.be). Its aim is to train and certify public employees in digital inclusion to help the most vulnerable citizens to overcome the barriers to online public services. Connectoo's objective is to train and certify 10 000 people in two years;
- (c) supporting: the Digtrein project is a digital empowerment project for senior citizens in Brussels' municipalities (the DigiGares). The offer of Digtrein is twofold: a digital support route (in groups and individually) for the elderly and a training programme for anyone wishing to learn how to support the elderly digitally (DigiTrainer).

2023 Implementation

In 2023, Paradigm strengthened its commitment to digital inclusion in the Brussels Region. Facing the challenges of digital transformation, the organisation launched various initiatives to ensure all citizens, regardless of their skills or access to technology, can benefit from digital opportunities. Key initiatives include:

- (a) code of ethics for digital inclusion facilitators: paradigm introduced a Code of ethics for digital inclusion facilitators in collaboration with Collective of Brussels digital accessibility actors network (Collectif des Acteurs Bruxellois de l'Accessibilité Numérique, CABAN) and with the support of the Brussels Minister for Digital Transition. This code ensures facilitators uphold high ethical standards while assisting citizens in digital activities;
- (b) increased number of public digital spaces (EPN): Paradigm accredited six new Public digital spaces, providing free access to computers, internet, and basic to advanced IT training to help reduce digital inequality;
- (c) *Bruwelcome* for newcomers: since 2021, Paradigm has collaborated on *Bruwelcome*, a digital administrative tool that simplifies the mandatory integration process for newcomers in Brussels, implemented in all 19 municipalities;
- (d) digital support for schools - *Branche ton école!*: this programme helps secondary schools in the Brussels Region act as training hubs, promoting digital skills amongst students;
- (e) digital banking awareness for seniors: in partnership with easy.brussels and Febelfin, Paradigm conducts information sessions on digital banking and online safety, aimed at protecting seniors and vulnerable groups from scams.

2024 Completed

In 2024, Paradigm continued to strengthen digital inclusion across the Brussels-Capital Region, with the rollout of Digital Brussels 2.0, supporting six projects (with funding ranging from EUR 11 000 to EUR 60 000) aimed at boosting digital motivation, widening access to tools, and developing essential skills. For example, the Belgian Red Cross implemented 'Ensemble, Tous Connectés', working to reduce digital isolation through tailored training and community-based learning.

The network of recognised public digital spaces also expanded, with new EPNs bringing the total to 31 targeted collaborations, such as the partnership with Febelfin to produce materials helping seniors prevent online banking fraud, further demonstrated the commitment to reaching specific groups.

Paradigm released a White paper examining the main challenges facing the Brussels-

Capital Region and highlights the role of digital innovation in building a connected region. One chapter focussed specifically on the strengthening the ICT skills, expertise, and proficiency of Brussels residents and outlines the objectives of the 2021-24 Digital appropriation plan. It also offered recommendations for the next plan, including:

- (a) increasing funding and professionalisation for Public Digital Spaces (EPNs) to better support those with limited digital access;
- (b) creating an accessible training and certification system for digital facilitators;
- (c) ensuring public services remain accessible, both digitally and through alternative channels;
- (d) improving communication and access to resources, like help desks and complaint systems, for citizens.

As the 2021-24 plan reached its conclusion, series of workshops dedicated to shaping the successor to the Digital Appropriation Plan were organised. These activities marked a key step in preparing the region's long-term digital inclusion strategy, ensuring that the momentum built in recent years will continue into the future.

Bodies responsible

- Brussels' Government
- Paradigm

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)

Learners with disabilities

Adult learners

Unemployed and jobseekers

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Trainers

Adult educators

Guidance practitioners

Other

Women

Thematic categories

Modernising VET infrastructure

Modernising infrastructure for vocational training

Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Developing and updating learning resources and materials

Acquiring key competences

Integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula and programmes

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Digital Inclusion in Brussels](#)

[2021 Annual Report of Plan for Digital Appropriation \(2021-24\)](#)

[2022 Annual Report of Plan for Digital Appropriation \(2021-24\)](#)

[Digital Appropriation Plan](#)

[Paradigm's 2023 Annual Report](#)

[White Paper - Digital Technology: A Catalyst for Progress Serving the Common Good](#)

[Paradigm's 2024 Annual Report](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Brussels' training and employment centres

On 14 July 2016, the Brussels Regional Government and the French-speaking Brussels

Government adopted a Note on the creation of training and employment centres (*Pôles Formation Emploi*) in the Brussels Region.

 BELGIUM-FR

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Digital training offer for Brussels jobseekers

Thanks to the financial resources of the European Social Fund (ESF) made available within the framework of the Youth employment initiative 2, pilot training courses have been set up with experienced partners:

 BELGIUM-FR

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). The 2021-24 Plan for digital appropriation: Belgium-FR. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/39283>