Cross-analysis of best practices to bridge the digital divide

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Which issues is the youth currently facing?

- Participants noted that a number of **issues were accentuated by the COVID-19 crisis**.

- In terms of **education**, traditional teaching methods have been proving less effective due to distance learning and some learning materials are not yet adapted. There is also a risk of aggravating social inequalities as teachers have different competencies and digital skills.

- Some of the participants mentioned that they felt **ill equiped regarding their own digital skills**. They fear it will have a strong impact when entering the job market.

- The **lack of available information** was also noted as a recurring problem. Participants claimed that they not always aware of ways to improve their digital skills.

- Discussions in seminars also focused on difficulties to access tools and devices.

Which best practices can be implemented?

- **Collecting relevant data**: In order to apprehend citizens' needs and prevent inequalities, the first step is to have a clear overview of the cities's situation.
  - Examples: Europe Direct Centre which set up a permanent observatory of digitalization in the city of Genoa ; study on socio-demographic profile of the youngsters living in Cluj-Napoca…)

- **Providing education and training**: It is necessary to ensure that trained teachers can educate others in basic digital competencies and online work. On top of that, youth need to be trained from an early age with a focus on concrete use.
  - Examples : *La Fabulerie* in Marseille ; Innovator Foundation in Varna which promotes and helps developing a culture of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills among young people ; *Junge Volkshochschule* in Hamburg.

- **Granting access to digital equipements**: To bridge the digital divide and avoid societal divisions, an equal access to devices and fast internet is a requirement.
  - Examples: Distribution of 5000 devices and WIFI hotspots among students in Rotterdam ; Cluj Metro Area association providing free, high speed access to the deprived community

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To conclude

- The COVID-19 helped some young people realising that digital divide can have a direct impact on them even though they are not the ones lacking expertise or skills.

- It appears that digital divide is often perceived from one's current situation. Discussions with young people have mosty focused on school, education and employement. However, it remains a cross-generational issue which requires targeted solutions.

- To better address the problem and counter the fast development of digitalisation highlights, fostering long-life learning and an in-depth knowledge of the city's population are essential. It can help preventing structural problems such as brain-drain.