

## **EUDIGIT Kick-off Meeting Report**

**October 7 and 8, 2020**

Members of the European EUDIGIT project – the cities of Marseille, Genoa, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Cluj-Napoca and Varna and the EvroAdvans/TheMayorEU association - met online for the first time on 7 and 8 October 2020.

Originally planned for April 2020 in Marseille, the kick-off meeting was put off due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To avoid further delays in launching the project, the partners decided to exchange via videoconference.

### **Wednesday 7 October (9am to 12pm. See programme and list of participants.)**

The morning was the chance for partners to meet for the first time and begin to get to know each other. Previously, multiple videoconferences were organised between the City of Marseille, as lead partner, and each project partner.

The seminar began with an official greeting by Laurent Lhardit, Deputy Mayor of Marseille and responsible for European funds and Alain Dumort, head of European Commission Representation in Marseille. Pierre Chaillan and Pascale Srulovici (European project Managers at the International & European department, City of Marseille) then presented the EUDIGIT project that addresses the link between digital divide and citizenship. They recapped the framework for the project, which is part of the Europe for Citizens programme, and objectives, planned activities and expected results.

Most of the half-day meeting included presentations by experts who reported on their experiences and shared their knowledge with participants. The session was also open to the public via Facebook Live. In addition to the European partners, 36 people watched the video.

All the presentations were marked by the pandemic which has aggravated digital exclusion for many European citizens, and featured the following subjects:

Alain Dumort, Head of European Commission Representation in Marseille: recap of the European Union and NextGenerationEU's priorities and the importance of successful digital transition for the European Union.

Gaël Le Roux (European Digital Law Researcher at CERIC, Aix-Marseille Université and the Institute for European Studies at Vrije Universiteit Brussel): presentation of the single digital market, the issues and implications for users and citizens.

Florence Durand-Tornare (Founder and General Delegate of the Villes Villages Internet association): presentation of the origins of digital technology and the association, and the label they award to connected towns and villages.

Stéphane Delahaye (Expert & Deputy Mayor of Martigues in charge of digital): presentation of the local issues of digital mediation demonstrated by the policy applied by the City of Martigues, near Marseille.

Presentations were followed by exchanges between the experts and participants.

They were unanimous on one point: the EUDIGIT project addresses digital exclusion, a topical issue which is being aggravated by the social and economic emergency. It is therefore important that it meets its objective to focus on the link between the digital divide and a feeling of European citizenship.

**The meeting ended at midday.**

**Thursday 8 October (9am to 12:45pm. See programme and list of participants.)**

This session was booked for EUDIGIT project partners to provide a more detailed presentation of the project. The morning was divided into two parts:

- Presentation of digital city portraits.

Discussion about main points relating to the organisation of the partnership and the project: conformity with the Europe for Citizens programme, selected methodology, calendar of future events, communication tools, administrative and financial matters, and election of the steering committee.

To ensure all the participants understand the local digital reality of each of the partner cities, the lead partner suggested that each city present its own digital portrait based on a unified set of indicators (see portraits).

The presentations of the city portraits were successful. Despite some difficulty comparing statistics, positive exchange ensued about how to deal with the EUDIGIT project's five priority themes: youth, seniors, people with disabilities, urban/rural divide, and communication tools. The lessons learned from this first EUDIGIT partnership event should enable all partners to:

- undertake topic inventories in each city;
- prepare seminars;
- develop e-books for communication purposes.

After a general presentation, TheMayor.EU association presented its role for communication and information for the EUDIGIT project. The association's activities working with many mayors and municipalities throughout Europe will be an undeniable advantage for the project.

The following points were addressed in the second part of the meeting:

## 1. Compliance with the Europe for Citizens programme

A quick recap of the project's objectives in relation to the European programme.

## 2. Selected methodology

The proposed methodology (see application form) is based on the following elements:

- the establishment of a committee of experts in each city, bringing together municipal officers, digital actors and actors linked to the project's priority themes and targets (youth, seniors, people with disabilities, urban/rural divide, communication tools). The committees can be constituted formally or informally. The aim is to bring together complementary experts in public policy and proposed services with private experts in digital mediation, and others working for access to citizens' rights.

The committees are established to last for the duration of the project (2020-2022/2023) but some participants may be renewed depending on topics covered. The City of Marseille organised an online meeting of its committee on 17 September. Efforts to increase the number and quality of experts is in progress. Organising citizen committees during the COVID-19 pandemic is difficult. It is proposed that each partner organise meetings of expert committees, followed by online conferences for exchange with citizens/users before each seminar (workshops).

As an example, **to prepare Varna' seminar focusing on youth and digital divide**, each partner city must organise at least one workshop with citizens. Succinct states of play will have to sum up the workshop exchanges and be delivered by each city.

The lead partner will propose a common framework for this purpose. This matrix will help summarise the existing situation, young people difficulties & needs, challenges and good practices in order to facilitate exchanges between cities (seminars). All partners agree on an important point: the importance of concrete action. The international seminar results will be presented in E-books. It was suggested that the E-book model be added to the agenda for the Varna seminar.



- (1) Design your Expert committee** on digital inclusion and youth (if your city already has this kind of organization, you can keep it).
- (2) Favour exchanges between experts & young citizens** (“citizen committees”) online.
- (3) Keep attendance lists** (signatures are not required)
- (4) Take photos and videos** of your workshop.
- (5) Write down the state of play of your workshop** (max 2 pages).
- (6) Do not forget to send us all documents** (state of play, attendance list, photos...)

### **3. Scheduling future meetings**

The pandemic has delayed progress of the EUDIGIT project. The lead partner made a formal application to the European Commission to extend the project’s eligibility period by one year, from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2023. It is likely that this request will be accepted. The new schedule (see partnership agreement) sets the end of the project in November 2022. This gives the partnership an additional six-months that may be useful if difficulties due to the pandemic persist.

Despite desire expressed by partners to meet face to face, it is more realistic to plan the next **Varna seminar in February 2021 online**.

For this seminar to be effective, each partner must have conducted the workshop on youth between November and December. Workshops should help to identify local actors and citizens who can be invited to participate in the webinar of youth issues by 15 January 2021.

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Year 1 (2020)</u>	<u>Year 2 (2021)</u>	<u>Year 3 (2022)</u>
<b>1. <u>Expert committees and citizens' committees setting up</u></b>	<u>October</u>		
<b>2. <u>Citizens committees on the youth, the digital divide and citizenship</u></b>	<u>November/December</u>		
<b>3. <u>Seminar #1 Varna (topic 1 : youth, the digital divide and citizenship)</u></b>		<u>February</u>	

#### **4. Information and communication tools**

The lead partner has produced a logo and graphic charter for the project for zero cost. The EUDIGIT now has a visual identity. Creation of the web page is underway. Each partner must endeavour to communicate locally about the EUDIGIT project and keep track of all communication including press articles, social network statistics, photos, videos, paper media, etc. The Mayor.EU will play a very important role in ensuring optimal communication between partners and with the general community. Each partner city should help to facilitate its task. The strategy for communicating project results will be discussed at a later date.

Click here to watch the 7 October video with Facebook Live:

[https://www.facebook.com/plugins/video.php?href=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FEUDIGITnetwork%2Fvideos%2F365984554516077%2F&show\\_text=0&width=560](https://www.facebook.com/plugins/video.php?href=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FEUDIGITnetwork%2Fvideos%2F365984554516077%2F&show_text=0&width=560)

Marseille, 26 October 2020

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