MEMEX - MEMories and EXperiences for inclusive digital storytelling (2019-2022)

H2020 - EUROPEAN PROJECT

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Technology as a support for inclusion

The European research and innovation project MEMEX poses the question of what role technology can play in the inclusion of communities at risk of socio-cultural exclusion. The 3-year project demonstrated that technological innovation is extremely useful when at the service of inclusion. By introducing advanced technologies to communities at risk of exclusion, through a structured framework based on cooperation between technology and culture that stimulates co-creation with the concerned communities, MEMEX initiated a pioneer reflection on the role of technology for inclusion.

Indeed, for technological innovation to make sense for inclusion, it must be accompanied by measures and know-how from both tech and socio-cultural professionals in its design and use, as well as by awareness-raising and specific support and evaluation from policymakers.

This policy brief presents a series of recommendations aimed at fostering both the replicability of MEMEX and at paving the way to other inclusion initiatives.

Key Messages for socio-cultural professionals

- **Adopt a trans-sectoral monitoring**
  Monitoring of technological innovation for social inclusion should be ensured through a holistic approach. This implies using various systems: the 'Technological Readiness Levels' scale to assess technological impact, but also the 'Societal Readiness Levels' scale to assess the degree of the social response to the innovation proposed. To ultimately guarantee that due consideration is given to the importance of the societal component of any technological development.

- **Develop a co-creation and community-centre approach**
  Public investments for technological innovation with social inclusion aims, should consider participatory processes. These can be carried out also remotely by using collaborative tools but must always be facilitated by social and technological mediators. The needs of the targeted communities must always be considered to ensure that they are effective partners in the design and development of the technological innovation rather than simple informants for ideas.

- **Adapt the technology**
  Technological solutions must answer the needs of the communities they are intended for. To this end, systematic evaluation of the needs in terms of technological skills of the targeted communities must be carried out to adapt the given technological solution. Therefore, the most suitable technology - from the simplest to the most advanced - should be selected, to fully match the needs of communities.

Key Messages for policy makers

- **An inclusive policy-centred approach**
  - Technology should be at the service of any policy geared towards the inclusion of communities, and not the opposite.
  - Technology at the service of inclusion must be evaluated and adapted through a systematic evaluation process that also includes the SRL scale.
  - Technological innovation should not have as a sole ambition to benefit the market but should rather have the ambition to be used as a tool with a "public value" for social and educational purposes.
  - Public policies and operational programmes should systematically seek to achieve a "greater good" in terms of public service and value, by duly considering cultural participation as an element of public policies and technology as one of its enablers.

- **Funding schemes**
  - Must include SRLs and not only TRLs in the selection and evaluation process.
  - Must integrate agility and adaptability as core components of any project.
  - Must not frame in a too restrictive way the typologies and level of technologies to be used when launching calls for proposals.

- **Support to capacity-building**
  - Training, capacity-building and lifelong learning for the design, use and mediation of technology in inclusion initiatives are necessary.
  - Capacity-building support measures are essential to accompany professionals in developing their skills and knowledge.
  - Trans-sectoral training programmes mixing sectors (such as the cultural, the educational and the social ones) when delivering training programmes are of important value.

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Read more about the MEMEX project: https://memexproject.eu/en

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