

Call for Papers

Understanding and addressing digital inequalities

Scientific conference organised by the Centre for a Digital Society
in cooperation with the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom.

20-21 November 2025

Badia Fiesolana, EUI, Florence, Italy

In 2024, the Centre for Digital Society published a study, on request of the European Parliament, on the Implications of the Digital Transformation on Different Social Groups. This call for papers aims to expand and develop the perspective of that preliminary project, to contribute to the scientific debate on the multifaceted dimensions of digital inequalities, and to explore their impact on the digital public sphere.

Inequality is a complex phenomenon that can be defined and measured through various dimensions and characteristics, depending on the specific questions to be asked: Inequality of what? Inequality between whom? While economic analysis primarily focuses on income, wealth and consumption inequalities, other dimensions of inequalities, related to the labor market, health, housing, political participation, and the environment, also deserve attention. This broader perspective shifts the focus from merely examining outcome inequality to including and addressing inequality of opportunities and capabilities.

The impact of technological innovation on job distribution and wages has been examined as a potential driver of inequality. On the consumption side, however, a different effect can emerge due to reductions in costs and prices. When examining differences among individuals, the issue of inequality in the digital realm has been categorized as the "digital divide," originally focusing on the technical ability to access the internet. However, over the past two decades, a new body of literature has developed that addresses various aspects of the digital divide, including individual skills and operational capabilities. These factors can influence all levels of individual agency in economic, social, and political activities. When we understand the digital divide in this broader context, the analysis of digital inequality goes beyond just economic dimensions; it has significant implications for society as a whole and the functioning of the digital public sphere.

This call for papers aims to gather a wide scholarship interested in contributing to understanding the factors that influence digital inequalities and their impact on the functioning of democracies. It also aims to analyse policy tools that can bridge the digital divide and empower the democratic potential of digital technologies.

A possible list of topics includes, but it is not limited to:

- The impact of digitalization on the existing inequalities and the new inequalities created in the digital environment.
- The role of algorithm bias on equal opportunities between genders and various social and ethnic groups.
- The impact of technological progress and platformization on the labour market, wage inequality, and jobs divide, focusing on the effects on social structures and organization.
- The role of innovation, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and entrepreneurship as vehicles to address and mitigate inequality. Exploring how key technologies of the future - AI, cloud computing, quantum computing, big data, and blockchain technology – can help to build digital capabilities and narrow the digital

divide.

- Market power, opinion power, and agenda control: how the oligopolistic tendencies of the digital economy affect equal opportunities in civic and political participation.
- Access to information: the role of digital platforms in intermediating news consumption, analyzed by socio-economic and geographical characteristics; the emergence of territorial and social news deserts; the phenomenon of news avoidance; the divide in media and cultural consumption related to payment models.
- Social media divide: potential drivers of inequality in the use of social media, depending on individual skills, engagement and visibility; differences in passive or active use; and the impact on social capital and individual well-being.
- Data inequality and the role of individual agency in the digital sphere, particularly regarding personal data management and governance.
- Fragmentation of the public sphere, capabilities and resources for political participation, and transparency of the electoral processes. Exploring the empowering potential of digital technologies for civic engagement and participation, as well as the risk of their unequal distribution.

Quantitative, qualitative, as well as theoretical approaches to analyse the digital divide are welcome. We specifically encourage refined definitions and empirical approaches for measuring digital inequalities, taking into account institutional, geographical, and contextual factors. Lawyers, economists, political scientists, and sociologists are encouraged to participate. Contributions from other disciplines are also welcome. Preference will be given to unpublished papers.

Programme: The goal of the conference is to stimulate an in-depth discussion of selected academic papers and to contribute via an interdisciplinary approach to the research on digital inequality, with an emphasis on the policy impact of the research findings. The conference will take place in two days, and it will be opened by an outstanding keynote speaker. Each paper will be allocated 30 minutes time, divided between 15 minutes for the author's presentation and the rest for debate by a pre-assigned discussant and attendees.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

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SUBMISSION

Please submit an extended abstract (min. 1,000 words) by 30 June 2025 [at this link](#).

The selection of abstracts will be carried out by the members of the Conference's Scientific Committee.

Selected authors will be notified by the end of July 2025.

The final version of the papers must be submitted by October 20, 2025.

COSTS

The participation fee is EUR 150, which covers the conference dinner, as well as meals and refreshments at the venue. Participants are responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses.

BEST JUNIOR PAPER AWARD

Two Best Junior Paper Awards will be given for the best contribution among those submitted by authors not older than 35 years. Scholars will be required to provide proof of their date of birth to be eligible for this award. All co-authors of joint papers must meet the age criteria.

CONTACTS

For information about submissions and the programme please contact the organising committee: danielle.borges@eui.eu; roberta.carlini@eui.eu; natalia.menendez@eui.eu; leonardo.mazzoni@eui.eu; kot.david.adhal.nguar@eui.eu

For information about accommodation and logistics, please contact digital.society@eui