

PRESS RELEASE

## **Governments, companies, public bodies and social organizations sign Digital Inclusion Charter**

**Today DigitAll, with BNP Paribas Fortis and Proximus as main partners, has brought various governments of our country together with about 30 companies, public bodies and social organizations on the topic of digital inclusion. In their effort to narrow down the digital divide in Belgium, the various parties will sign the Digital Inclusion Charter. In an increasingly digital world, they are committed to undertaking concrete actions to fight digital exclusion.**

Digital inequality leads to social exclusion. This is the conclusion of a report<sup>1</sup> by the King Baudouin Foundation from June 2020. As many as 1 in 10 Belgian households have no Internet access at home. For low income families, this figure rises to almost 3 in 10. Many people also have no or inadequate digital skills. As many as 40% are at risk of digital exclusion. Finally, the report also points out inequalities in the use of essential services. Some 57% of Belgians with a low level of education, for example, have never used the Internet to submit essential documents to the government. In a time where digital is becoming increasingly important, the digital divide weighs heavily on the social integration of the most vulnerable.

DigitAll is the new name of the Digital Inclusion Ecosystem launched by BNP Paribas Fortis in November 2020. The aim of the initiative, which has already been signed by nineteen companies, eight social organizations and seven public bodies, is to narrow down the digital divide in Belgium by putting digital inclusion higher on the agenda. The ecosystem is currently working on three specific projects: a national awareness campaign to highlight the importance of digital inclusion, an estimation of the user friendliness of digital tools in the form of a digital inclusion index, and a mobile solution to teach digital skills to hard-to-reach target groups.

### **Digital Inclusion Charter**

Today, some thirty parties (the complete list can be found at the bottom of this press release) are endorsing the initiative, taking it even one step further. Proximus and BNP Paribas Fortis are bringing the parties together to seal their involvement in the project. They will affix their signatures (in digital form of course) to the Digital Inclusion Charter<sup>2</sup>. By doing so, they affirm their commitment to promoting digital inclusion in Belgium. The Charter facilitates the development of a network around digital inclusion and also contributes to raising awareness of the digital divide.

**Guillaume Boutin**, CEO of Proximus: *“Proximus is committed to making digital technologies accessible to everyone, regardless of physical abilities, economic background, cultural origin, education or age. Our support to DigitAll, gathering various stakeholders around a common commitment to foster digital inclusion, is a logical outcome of this ambition. I am convinced that exchanging ideas and defining common*

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<sup>1</sup> Brotcorne, P. & Mariën, I (2020). Digital Inclusion: Digital Inclusion Barometer. Brussels: King Baudouin Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> The full text is attached to this press release.

*actions together with all the partners involved can lead to substantial progress in ensuring an inclusive, safe and sustainable Belgium.”*

**Max Jadot**, CEO of BNP Paribas Fortis: *“Many people are at risk of social exclusion because, for a variety of reasons, they do not make use of digital resources. In our modern society, digital inclusion is an absolute prerequisite for social inclusion. That is why BNP Paribas Fortis and the other partners in the ecosystem are making concrete commitments to combat digital exclusion.”*

## Nine commitments

The Digital Inclusion Charter includes nine concrete commitments to which the signatories subscribe:

1. Identify and share best practices to improve digital inclusion.
2. Identify constraints to digital inclusion and define common actions to eliminate those constraints.
3. Urge the top management of the own organization to own and drive the commitment.
4. Improve digital inclusion within the own organization by promoting internal education and sharing actions and progress.
5. Promote digital inclusion outside the own organization to increase the number of signatories to the Digital Inclusion Charter and to strengthen its impact.
6. Provide support to campaigns that aim to prioritize digital inclusion, as the general public is still insufficiently aware of the digital divide.
7. Gradually implement a procedure within the own organization to assess the extent to which digital inclusion is promoted among employees, customers and beneficiaries.
8. Undertake actions to increase trust in digital tools, improve the feeling of online safety/security and protect users from potential abuse.
9. Monitor the implementation of the Charter and, after three years, evaluate the Charter together with the other co-signatories to take stock of the situation and define possible follow-up actions.

## Annex 1: List of DigitAll partners:

- **Companies**: AG Insurance ; Agoria ; BNP Paribas Fortis ; bpost ; Colruyt Group ; Delhaize ; De Lijn ; Deloitte ; Dilaco ; DNS Belgium ; De Watergroep ; IBM ; ICC ; In The Pocket ; itsme® ; Microsoft ; Proximus ; VBO ; VRT
- **Social organizations**: aSmartWorld ; Beego ; Close the Gap ; DigitalForYouth.be ; Hobo ; iDROPS ; Maks ; Mediawijs
- **Federal and regional authorities and administrations**: Actiris ; Agence du Numérique ; agentschap Opgroeien ; Centrum voor Informatica voor het Brusselse Gewest (CIBG) ; FOD Beleid & Ondersteuning (BOSA) ; FOD Financiën ; Service Public de Wallonie – Economie, Emploi, Recherche

## Annex 2: Contacts for interviews

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DigitalForYouth.be	Philippe Du Bois	+32 497 51 40 31	<a href="mailto:Philip.du.bois@digitalforyouth.be">Philip.du.bois@digitalforyouth.be</a>
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-	Saskia Van Uffelen (Digital Champion Belgium)	/	<a href="mailto:saskia@quadrature.brussels">saskia@quadrature.brussels</a>

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**BNP Paribas Fortis** ([www.bnpparibasfortis.com](http://www.bnpparibasfortis.com)) offers the Belgian market a comprehensive range of financial services for private individuals, the self-employed, professionals, companies and public organisations. In the insurance sector, BNP Paribas Fortis works closely, as a tied agent, with Belgian market leader AG Insurance. At international level, the Bank also provides high-net-worth individuals, large corporations and public and financial institutions with customised solutions, for which it is able to draw on the know-how and international network of the BNP Paribas Group.

**BNP Paribas** ([www.bnpparibas.com](http://www.bnpparibas.com)) is the European Union's leading bank and key player in international banking. It operates in 68 countries and has more than 193,000 employees, including nearly 148,000 in Europe. The Group has key positions in its three main fields of activity: Retail Banking for the Group's retail-banking networks and several specialised businesses including BNP Paribas Personal Finance and Arval ; Investment & Protection Services for savings, investment and protection solutions ; and Corporate & Institutional Banking, focused on corporate and institutional clients. Based on its strong diversified and integrated model, the Group helps all its clients (individuals, community associations, entrepreneurs, SMEs, corporates and institutional clients) to realise their projects through solutions spanning financing, investment, savings and protection insurance. In Europe, BNP Paribas has four domestic markets: Belgium, France, Italy and Luxembourg. The Group is rolling out its integrated retail-banking model across several Mediterranean countries, Turkey, Eastern Europe as well as via a large network in the western part of the United States. As a key player in international banking, the Group has leading platforms and business lines in Europe, a strong presence in the Americas as well as a solid and fast-growing business in Asia-Pacific.

BNP Paribas has implemented a Corporate Social Responsibility approach in all its activities, enabling it to contribute to the construction of a sustainable future, while ensuring the Group's performance and stability.

### About Proximus

Proximus Group (Euronext Brussels: PROX) is a provider of digital services and communication solutions operating in the Belgian and international markets. Delivering communication and entertainment experiences for residential consumers and enabling digital

*transformation for enterprises, we open up a world of digital opportunities so people live better and work smarter. Thanks to advanced interconnected fixed and mobile networks, Proximus provides access anywhere and anytime to digital services and data, as well as to a broad offering of multimedia content. Proximus is a pioneer in ICT innovation, with integrated solutions based on IoT, Data analytics, cloud and security.*

*Proximus has the ambition to become the reference operator in Europe through next generation networks, a truly digital mindset and a spirit of openness towards partnerships and ecosystems, while contributing to a safe, sustainable, inclusive and prosperous digital Belgium.*

*In Belgium, Proximus' core products and services are offered under the Proximus and Scarlet brands. The Group is also active in Luxembourg as, under the brand names Tango and Telindus Luxembourg, and in the Netherlands through Telindus Netherlands. The Group's international carrier activities are managed by BICS, a leading international communications enabler, one of the key global voice carriers and the leading provider of mobile data services worldwide. With TeleSign, the Group also encompasses a fast-growing leader in digital identity services, serving the world's largest internet brands, digital champions and cloud native businesses.*

*With 11,423 employees, all engaged to offer customers a superior experience, the Group realized an underlying Group revenue of EUR 5,479 million end-2020.*

*For more information, visit [www.proximus.com](http://www.proximus.com) & [www.proximus.be](http://www.proximus.be).*