

Bridging the Digital Divide: The Evolving Role of the National Telecoms Regulator in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

This article analyses the evolution of the role of the Office of Electronic Communications (UKE) in the process of bridging the digital divide in Poland in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Particular attention is paid to Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The aim of the article is to assess the changing role of the telecommunications regulator as a key actor in combating digital exclusion in Poland and in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. An analysis of telecommunications policy highlights the need to shift from merely providing infrastructure to co-creating a digital ecosystem, with a particular focus on the intensive development of digital skills. Digital awareness and digital skills are central to combating digital exclusion and, consequently, social exclusion. The analysis demonstrates that a modern regulatory body must combine supervisory functions with the role of coordinator of socio-economic innovation, which is a prerequisite for removing digital barriers at regional and social levels. These measures will reduce the infrastructure gap between urban and rural areas. These measures will reduce the infrastructure gap between urban and rural areas. The study utilised an analysis of original research conducted in 2025 on the digital literacy of the population (a representative sample of 1,080 respondents) and case studies of selected regulatory interventions. The results demonstrate that a key challenge for contemporary regulatory policy in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals is combating second-order exclusion (relating to motivation and skills). Our own research has shown that the greatest gaps lie in the areas of cybersecurity and the safe use of e-services, which exacerbates the divide between urban and rural areas. The conclusion sets out recommendations for regulatory policy in the era of 5G roll-out, highlighting the need for systematic education in digital skills as a prerequisite for building an inclusive information society.

Index Terms

Digital Exclusion, Digital Competences, Sustainable Development, Telecommunications Market, Broadband Infrastructure, Information Society, Regulatory Policy

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