

Practitioners’ Network Thematic Working Group

**Digitalisation Workstream: Workshop on Digitalisation4Development**

28 April 2022 - online

On 28.04.2022, the ***Digitalisation Workstream*** of the Practitioners Network (PN) discussed digitalisation related developments and activities under the title***Workshop on Digitalisation4Development***. The event was divided into four sessions: (1) Presentation on the latest EU policy developments on digitalisation; (2) Presentation of recent D4D activities; (3) Update on implementation (Africa focus); (4) Based on short inputs PN Members exchange experience on their organisations’ digitalisation related activities and interests. Overall, a strong consensus regarding the importance of digitalisation for the PN prevailed.

The key aim of this workshop was to provide an opportunity for an exchange between PN Members, the European Commission, and the D4D Hub Secretariat, regarding the latest policy developments on digitalisation and ongoing activities in the [D4D Hub](https://d4dhub.eu/). Further objectives included fostering knowledge and exchange among the PN members on digitalisation related activities and interests (geographical areas, topics, opportunities, and challenges of development cooperation activities in digitalisation, project examples) and creating possibilities to learn from each other, to expand cooperation and joint implementation.

The co-leads (CPMA and GIZ) stressed the relevance of digitalisation as one of the priorities of the GIZ-CPMA Co-Presidency as one of its key priorities. Witnessing the rising attention on D4D during the AU-EU summit and in the Global Gateway, the discussion aimed at taking stock of current developments and the newest policy developments.

**Session 1 – Presentation on the latest EU policy developments on digitalisation**

***During the first session Eren Atarim (European Commission, DG INTPA) and Hoa-Binh Adjemian (European Commission, DG NEAR) elaborated on the implementation of the EU Global Gateway (GG) Strategy, focusing on its digital component, the upcoming digital priorities for DG INTPA in 2022, as well as recent and future digital priorities in the Neighbourhood region.***

**Eren Atarim** stressed that the GG is the first global connectivity strategy that is very much – but not exclusively – focused on infrastructures, while combining soft and hard elements. He named the promotion of a human-centric digital transformation in partner countries around the globe, safeguarding Europe’s digital sovereignty, tackling the global digital divide, fostering an open, secure, and free internet, promoting EU services ands assets across the globe, fostering cooperation on research and digital innovation as the key objectives in the field of digital connectivity. He stressed the importance of “thinking both (referring to hard and soft elements) sides together” while considering the environment and “putting money where our mouths lie”. He commended the dedicated working group and the expert teams related to the D4D Hub, giving an outlook on a new masterplan for an even more precise and informed strategy for the upcoming months. He finally pointed at the preparation and implementation of flagships in different areas and regions (e.g., EU-AU Data Flagships, AEDIB, LAC Digital Alliance)

**Hoa-Binh Adjemian** added that economic investments are the blueprints of building back better and at the very core of the Global Gateway. Amongst other statistics, he underlines that a total of 54 flagships have already been agreed on for a dedicated total of 3.7 billion EUR in capital. As an example, he elaborated on the recent approval of investment in Serbia and roaming agreements in line with the lowering of roaming charges between the EU and the Western Balkans. Concerning the Eastern partnership objectives, he pointed to the intensive work towards an advanced eGov-system in a variety of countries, including Armenia, Georgia, and – formerly – Ukraine.

**Session 2 – Presentation of recent D4D activities**

***Caterina Giuliano (European Commission, DG INTPA), Katja Majcen (European Commission, DG INTPA), Irene Salvi (D4D Hub Secretariat), and Eva Hoermann (D4D Hub Secretariat) revisited the launch of the D4D Hub LAC branch, traced current developments in the D4D Hub Africa branch, and derived possibilities for PN members to engage in or be informed about the D4D Hub activities.***

**Caterina Giuliano** stressed the essential importance of dialogue on digital policies amongst all actors (European Commission, partners countries, private sector etc). She gave an overview on the D4D Hub’s creation and development. The Hub was launched in December 2020 (during the German Council Presidency) by President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. The inherent aim is to boost a green and fair digital transformation worldwide, which roots in the realisation that our lives increasingly depend on digitalisation. The Team Europe Approach allows Member States organisations to join forces and work together to implement this green and fair digital transformation with and in partner countries. The D4D Hub is part of the European Commission’s human-centric approach. While twelve Member States (MS) officially joined the Hub through a joint letter of intent, it is explicitly open for all interested MS. The vision is to shape a sustainable digital future for all, by putting people at the very centre of EU policies. She further stressed that digital transformation, as global challenge, can only be tackled by providing global responses and joining forces. She explained the multi-stakeholder character of the Hub, resulting in a strategic platform for both private sector actors, financial institutions, academia, etc. She reemphasized that D4D is one of the core policy drivers of the GG to scale up investment and thus the “only way forward”.

**Katja Majcen** gave an overview on the progress achieved by the D4D Hub since its creation. A turning point she named was the validation of the D4D Hub governance model, strengthened by the launch of the D4D Hub website. She further mentioned the first Europe D4D Multi-Stakeholder Forum (October 2021 – April 2022) which resulted in the identification of nine working groups, of which seven were already launched. She concluded with an overview on the D4D Hub architecture, ranging from the D4D Hub Board of Directors (mostly from ministries of foreign affairs from MS), to the D4D Hub Secretariat and the diversity of stakeholders engaging in regional or thematic areas.

**Irene Salvi** added that the D4D Hub also has been launched under the momentum of Covid-19 response and the Team Europe Approach. She explained that the Africa branch is the most advanced branch. In general, there is a strong focus on regional priorities, but also on different thematic areas. She reiterated the relevant function of regional working group, serving as place where member states jointly design and concretize their measures.

**Eva Hoermann** mentioned the launch of D4D Hub LAC Branch at the high-level event in December 2021, counting over 2000 participants. This established a strong commitment to establishing cooperation and forming a digital alliance. She stressed the importance of building on the current political momentum and the strong political commitment of the 12 member states.

**Caterina Giuliano** concluded the session by stressing that the possibilities for all PN members to engage are manifold and the D4D Hub is inclusive by nature.

**Session 3 – Update on implementation (Africa focus)**

***Stefanie Zinsmeyer, coordinator of the African European Digital Innovation Bridge (AEDIB) project and Paola Cervo (AU-EU D4D Hub) gave an update on their project work. AEDIB served as an example for the implementation of flagship projects and the AU-EU D4D Hub as instance for the implementation of a regional project hub.***

**Stefanie Zinsmeyer** explained that – at least for now – [AEDIB](https://aedibnet.eu/) is a political initiative, a vision and ambition to enable close cooperation between Africa and Europe. As AEDIB is a pilot project now, also the selection of partners is being piloted. Asking how we can really introduce the change that we want to see, she stated that “we need to co-create”. Giving an overview on AEDIB NET’s work packages she explained the process of inspiring, creating, connecting, and finally taking specific actions (for each WP). She stated that selecting and assembling consortia that bring together different expertise is the key objective of the Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs). At this point, 12 consortia were selected and could become a DIH, given the support of the MS. The topics cover climate smart agriculture, smart cities, digital trade, and clean tech. She stated that the local hubs are keen to work on these topics together. Finally, she gave an overview on the entirety of activities to strengthen digital innovation ecosystems with the common aim to connect the different innovation ecosystems and improve the cooperation with the European context at their core.

**Paola Cervo** presented the [AU-EU D4D Hub](https://d4dhub.eu/au-eu-project). The main part of work focuses on policy and strategy enabling, by providing strategic guidance for aligning with set priorities. This process is supported by financial and implementing partners, prominently including the EU as donor. The team is composed from representatives of the different participating development agencies. The objective is to support regional and national institutions, including the facilitation of cooperation, knowledge sharing, and dialogue. She introduced the three core areas of work: (1) Technical assistance services; (2) Knowledge sharing products and activities; (3) Dialogue-formats for the different stakeholders of the ecosystem. Giving an update on activities, she stated that it is now the mid-term of the implementation – which will go on until the end of 2023. Currently the project is particularly busy with building up a quite diverse pipeline and expanding the activities (presented on the geographic scope in Africa).

**Session 4 – Based on short inputs PN Members exchange experience on their organisations’ digitalisation related activities and interests**

***During this last point on the agenda, Deimante Vaiciune (CPMA), Jan Kennis (Enabel), Juliette Hirsch (Expertise France, AFD), Alexandra Garcia Torres (FIIAPP), and Kerstin Lepper (PPSY) gave inputs on opportunities and challenges of development cooperation activities, geographical areas, and topics of interest.***

**Deimante Vaiciune** (CPMA) stressed the interest of CPMA in digitalisation and the wish to be more active in the future in this sector. She elaborated on CPMAs experience in digitalisation projects, pointing at a EU-cofinanced programme. The opportunities that Lithuania sees are that there are digital topics where Lithuania is at the top of the EU and global rankings and is thus able to share expertise. Additionally, she identified topics that CPMA could assist in, including the development of digital areas in EU partner countries. Challenges that she named included the importance of being present in partner countries, the substantial funding that is needed for developing project concepts, and the availability of digitalisation experts, willing to contribute to programmes.

**Jan Kennis** (Enabel) elaborated on the prerequisites of a new Enabel digital strategy (to be published soon). He named the access to devices and internet and awareness and digital literacy as key prerequisites, arguing that strategic pillars (digital skills and rights) need to be included in all programmes – but some programmes may focus on one of the two. Digital governance, digital services, and an inclusive digital economy (with a focus on entrepreneurship) will constitute the three key blocks. The guiding principles in D4D for Enabel are embodied by the principles for digital development and a digital public goods alliance. He got into more detail by elaborating on projects, such as the [Moroccan e-Tamkeen](https://open.enabel.be/en/MAR/2219/1463/u/maroc-e-tamkeen-lance-officiellement-ses-plans-de-renforcement-des-comptences-de-l-administration-publique.html) project. The opportunities that Enabel sees include the strong Enabel in-country presence, the Team Europe Approach, D4D Hub and Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) in digital, the AU-EU D4D Hub as best practice, the rising interest from partner countries (even more apparent since the Covid-19 crisis), the collaboration with regional organisations (e.g., [Smart Africa](https://smartafrica.org/)), and the digital by default approach (based on the UNDPs approach). The identified challenges were finding and retaining staff with experience in digital change management, staying lean and focused on impact, ensuring an equal participation of partner countries, classifying D4D projects, having the right expertise for quality assurance on board, and exchanging knowledge in digestible and more innovative formats.

**Juliette Hirsch** (Expertise France) stressed the importance of pursuing a comprehensive approach and stated that Expertise France (as part of the AFD group) is keen to improve and implement digital as a “topic of its own” and as a pillar and not an accessory to projects. She explained how Expertise France approached this objective by mapping all the different involved parties. She described the “Team Europe spirit” as an important enabler for working with new partners and for an increased reliability among partners which is crucial – particularly in the digital sector. Making sure that implementing organisations have their own internal digital transformation is another key learning. She argued that the complementarity of digital transformation cannot be “preached if you have not experienced it yourself”. Expertise France is diversifying their projects. The Innovation Dialogues Europe Africa ([IDEA](https://d4dhub.eu/idea-project)) project is an example.

**Alexandra Garcia Torres** (FIIAPP) reported on her experience in managing international cooperation projects at the service of public administrations, guided by Spanish and European foreign policy. Stressing that Latin America and the Caribbean stand out first, the African continent is the second (regional) priority. Thematic priorities include digital government, digital innovation, and growth, as well as cybersecurity. She identified opportunities in regional programmes, in harnessing digitalisation for promoting other priorities, and in benefitting from Team Europe diversity and public policy models of other MS. Challenges that she identified included national schemes and data interoperability, an asymmetry of the countries, and politically sensitive topics.

**Kerstin Lepper** (GIZ) presented on the Peace Process Support for Yemen ([PPSY](https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/54543.html)) project, which is pursuing an outreach to youth with digital approaches. These digital (tandem) approaches are harnessing the advantages of digital tools in a non-welcoming environment. She presented the key instruments together with [Arabia Felix](https://www.arfelix.ch/de/) (including a website, hackathons, short movie co-production, and an educational magazine). With a trailer of a “serious soap opera” (a short film with an included peace message), she illustrated the importance of building bridges between the north and south regions in Yemen. She emphasized the importance of evaluating and understanding the customers and consumers of such productions and also of making the materials and projects attractive and as accessible as possible for women in Yemen. A follow-up question regarded possibilities to give women a voice via social media (lots of them use fake profiles with male names) which presented an interesting aspect for the gender working group of the D4D Hub.