

Terms of Reference

D4D Hub Civil Society and Academia Advisory Group/s¹

Zero Draft²

HOW TO APPLY:

- If you are a **network** (see definition in Annex I below) please click on this [link](#) to fill in the application (password: **D4DCSAAG22**)
- If you are a **pioneer** (see definition in Annex I below), please click on this [link](#) to fill in the application (password: **D4DCSAAG22**)

Outline

1. Introduction
2. The European Commission, D4D Hub, Civil Society and Academia
3. Objectives, Activities and Outcomes
4. Composition, Membership and Work processes

Annex I: Focus on Membership Criteria

Annex II: The D4D Hub Context

1. Introduction

The EU is strongly committed to deliver the digital targets set in the recent 2030 Digital Decade Communication³ and in the EU Digital4Development Strategy⁴. While digital technologies are at the core of geopolitical and commercial strategies worldwide, as also highlighted by the [Global Gateway](#) strategy European leadership is needed to ensure a human centric approach to digital transformation and digitalisation in general.

The European Commission and its Member states have established a multistakeholder platform to enhance coordination and dialogue in digital domain, called D4D (Digital4Development) (D4D Hub)⁵ which brings together Member States, its agencies, European development finance institutions (EDFIs) and other key stakeholders from the EU and partner countries to foster strategic partnerships and boost joint investments of [Team Europe](#) in partner regions. Please see more information about the D4D Hub under “**Annex I: The D4D Hub Context**”.

The D4D Hub would like to establish a **structured dialogue with civil society and academia stakeholders**, both in the EU and in partner countries. This will be done by structuring a dedicated Civil Society and Academia Advisory Group/s⁶ to facilitate the discussion among different civil society and academia actors around the main D4D areas of work. The possibility of organising sub-thematic

¹ These ToRs are developed to both CSOs and Academia with the objective launch a joint call for application. The criteria to join the Advisory Groups are included in the document. The D4D Hub Secretariat reserves the right to decide, based on the type and number of applications, the opportunity to create one joint Advisory Group for both stakeholders’ categories (CSOs & Academia) or two separated Advisory Groups on a later stage.

² Disclaimer: The D4D Hub and EC reserve the right to amend the ToRs according to their priorities or following the decisions of the D4D Board, etc.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0118>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/swd-digital4development-part1-v3_en.pdf

⁵ [Home - d4dhubdev](#)

⁶ See footnote 1

“Communities of Practice” should also be explored when relevant. The “Communities of Practice” should whenever possibly align with existing EU strategic objectives and/or projects closely connected with D4D Hub.

Involving the **Civil society and Academia** stakeholders is crucial to give a voice to those are not sufficiently represented in the public debate – in particular - the most vulnerable populations– to hold governments and private sector accountable and promote the interests of consumers as well as bring scientific evidence to support the digital transformation revolution. D4D hub also aims at promoting Global North-Global South dialogue and this Advisory group could become very important platform for such mutual cooperation.

2. The European Commission, D4D Hub, Civil Society and Academia

Working closely with **civil society** is aligned with the 2012 Communication on "[The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations](#)".

The importance of engaging civil society is further expanded in the Regulation (Reg.2021/947) establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) in 2021⁷.

The Academic community is key to pursue to evidence-scientific based innovation in the digital transformation sector. In engaging with the D4D Hub, they will provide fundamental support in identifying key challenges and the existing discussions and tools being considered in the context of digital transformation, in particular the ones developed to tackle structural problems in partner countries.

By facilitating exchanges and by collecting valuable experiences across the D4D Hub Advisory Groups (Private sector; Academia and CSOs), the D4D Hub will have a significant role in identifying key stakeholders on one hand, and in facilitating networking and knowledge exchange between interested parties around specific topics such as governance, connectivity, digital skills and education, services, and cross cutting areas such as gender, digital rights, green&digital, etc.

It has to be noted that the structure of the different consultative organs of the D4D Hub is still under refinement. Eventually, the D4D Hub Global Secretariat will clearly define how information shall flow between different D4D Hub Working groups and Advisory groups. Under the D4D Hub, there are already 10 ongoing “Thematic Working Groups⁸” operating on key identified priority topics. These are currently used as platforms by the EU Member States and their agencies to improve coordination, align definitions, organise strategic events and potentially launch new initiatives. The CSO-Academia Advisory Group/s⁹ is/are envisaged to feed directly into the D4D Hub and “ad hoc” could be invited to selected meetings of the thematic working groups ad hoc.

3. The Objectives, Activities and Outcomes

The **objectives** for engaging with civil society and academia under the D4D Hub are to:

- i) Contribute to the EU’s Digital transformation strategy by enhancing partnership and exchanges through a multistakeholder approach

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0947&from=EN>

⁸ 1) Connectivity; 2) Digital Governance; 3) Cybersecurity; 4) Private sector - Entrepreneurship & Innovation; 5) Green & Digital; 6) Digital Rights and Gender; 7) Digital Health; 8) Digital Skills; 9) Artificial Intelligence; 10) Space & Satellite Tech

⁹ See footnote 1

- ii) **Ensure that the needs of society for human-centric digital transformation are addressed**
- iii) **Enhance an enabling environment for inclusive digital transformation** by supporting advocacy and monitoring in the EU partner countries
- iv) **Promote diversity and a large variety of opinions and topics**
- v) **Contribute to the EU and its partners with technical and scientific expertise** on specific topics, such as governance, connectivity, digital skills and education, services, and cross cutting areas such as gender, digital rights, green&digital, etc. etc.
- vi) **Provide an incentive for civil society and academia/research organisations in all regions to organise into formal networks and umbrella organisations**, to strengthen their voice
- vii) **Build capacity of all stakeholders, including the EU and its Member States, civil society and academia/research organisations to participate in the promotion of human-centric digital transformation**

The following **activities** are envisaged:

- Provide advice or suggestions to the D4D Hub on specific topics;
- Share studies, research, approaches, innovations, expertise and experiences with the D4D Hub
- Ensure representation of civil society and academia/research organisations and the groups they represent at D4D Hub events;
- Ensure members are aware of the EU's political and strategic priorities;
- The D4D Hub Secretariat reserves the possibility to develop in the medium term "communities of practice" around specific topics such as: Gender, PWD, Cybersecurity, Internet Governance, entrepreneurship promotion, etc..

For the CSOs & Academia/research organisations, the **benefits** of participating in the D4D Hub are:

- Being able to indirectly influence policy direction of the EU and member states when it comes to digital transformation;
- Showcasing their work, experiences, achievements, research and best practices to a wide and global audience;
- Stay up to date with the different programmes, projects and initiatives under the D4D Hub, including the Team Europe Initiatives;
- Align their work in Europe and partner countries with EU principles and priorities;
- Build capacity on topics related to D4D, advocacy and policy dialogue;
- Develop new programmes around topics where CSOs have expertise and reach.

Potential outcomes of the Advisory Group

Based on the objectives above, below are some examples of **outcomes** that could come out of the advisory group:

- i) **Ensure that the D4D Hub initiatives address the needs of the most vulnerable groups**
 - a. Scale up successful programmes piloted by CSOs to reach vulnerable groups;
 - b. Share scientific evidence of the impact of digital solutions for the most vulnerable groups;
 - c. Events and dialogues to foster cooperation and networking between CSO; organisations in Europe and in partner countries with the goal to form partnerships and join forces to deliver progress on the SDGs;
 - d. Initiatives to make available data on the most vulnerable groups, as well as efforts to monitor private sector and governments on their progress on tackling inequality challenges.
- ii) **Enhance an enabling environment for inclusive digital transformation**

- a. Joint advocacy and outreach campaigns, advisory to governments on policy and regulatory frameworks, campaigns to strengthen awareness of the benefits of an open, affordable and accessible internet.
 - b. Supporting the internet governance processes, both local and global.
 - c. Multi-stakeholder dialogues around digital transformation topics.
 - d. Capacity development in advocacy and policy dialogues.
- iii) **Build capacity in the digital field**
- a. Scale up of initiatives to enhance digital skills, at all levels (society, vulnerable groups, students, leaders, governments, women and girls, private sector, entrepreneurs and IT professionals).
 - b. Partnerships to introduce digitalization in education, with other relevant players such as tech companies, mobile network operators, academia.
 - c. Webinars and other activities to strengthen the capacity of CSOs in using digital tools to achieve the SDGs in all sectors.
 - d. Expand the body of research on human centric digital transformation topics
- iv) **Promote the human-centric approach to digital transformation**
- a. Joint awareness and outreach campaigns about the benefits and threats of digitalisation for human rights and democracy; awareness about digital rights and media literacy, open internet, access to internet, etc..
 - b. Scale up successful approaches tested by CSOs in digital domain;
 - c. Develop initiatives to make available data on human rights and human rights violations in the digital space;
 - d. Develop initiatives to make available data on consumer rights and develop efforts to monitor private sector and governments on their progress;
 - e. Campaigns to interest more CSOs and research organisations in the human-centric approach;
 - f. Promote the declaration on Digital rights and principles for the Digital Decade¹⁰.
- v) **Promote diversity and a large variety of scientific research, opinions, and topics**
- a. Consultations and advice to other D4D Hub stakeholders on specific topics and emerging trends (such as LGBTQ+ community, ethical AI, intersectional feminism, green digital transformation, disability, decentralised identity, etc);
 - b. Propose possible topics for Team Europe initiatives stemming from sound research results.
 - c. Develop a common terminology and definitions of terms and principles key in the D4D Hub principles so that stakeholders speak a common language
- vi) **Contribute to the D4D Hub with expertise**
- a. Widely share scientific evidence from Academia/research organisations on digital transformation topics
 - b. Widely share best practices developed by CSOs, also with other D4D Hub stakeholders such as private sector and multilateral institutions
 - c. Learn from CSOs and Academia about the latest trends in D4D topics
 - d. Enhance the set of global principles and guidelines, formulate new guidelines on emerging challenges in digitalization for development and sustainable development

In order to achieve the above-mentioned potential outcomes, it is proposed to set up the following structure.

¹⁰ [COM 2022 27 1 EN ACT part1 LA380eaVUqfmgJ2s6UaeD7Fcbug 82699.pdf](#)

4. Composition, Membership and Work processes

Composition

- The Advisory Group is a **consultative body**, integrated in the structure of the D4D Hub
- The Advisory Group is **not** a legal structure
- It will be composed of the following categories of members:
 - Networks of CSOs;
 - Networks of academia/research organisations;
 - CSOs pioneering in digital topics;
 - Research organisations pioneering in digital topics.

The applicants will themselves select the category they belong to in the application form. See details on different groups under Annex I “Focus on Membership Criteria”.

Membership Process

- Members of the Advisory Group will be identified by the D4D Hub Secretariat, jointly with the chair of the board of the D4D Hub, through a transparent and open process.
- D4D Hub Secretariat may request additional information from the candidate, and/or perform due diligence checks where it deems necessary;
- Any applicant whose membership has been rejected can appeal the decision to the Board of Directors of the D4D Hub;
- The opportunity to join the Advisory Group/s will be ensured at any time beyond the official launch;
- Member representatives will participate in the group without remuneration. No travel costs are foreseen.
- Membership is a voluntary process and can be withdrawn at any time;
- All applicants might register in the Europe Transparency Register;
- There is no minimum or maximum number of members in the Advisory Group but the aim is to have members that are motivated, willing to cooperate and competent in their relevant field of expertise;
- There is no formula for balancing membership, but if the D4D hub or the Advisory Group notice a lack of participation from a certain region, gender, vulnerable group, youth or size, a targeted promotion campaign can be carried out to attract more participants;
- If a member has not been active¹¹ in the Advisory Group for more than 12 months, its membership could be suspended (and revoked later) or ended permanently.

Estimated Workload for members

It is estimated that the Advisory Group will organise maximum *4 meetings per year*, and an *additional maximum 3-4 engagements* for ad-hoc input on specific topics, TEIs or other matters. In addition to this, the D4D Hub Secretariat may ask the members to disseminate information on D4D hub events or news through their mailing lists/on social media etc. D4D Hub Secretariat will also invite the members to important multi stakeholder events, such the Multistakeholder Forum, European Development Days, etc.

Communities of Practices

In the medium term, members of the Civil Society Advisory Group could form “Communities of Practice” to go deeper into specific topics. The Advisory Group could carry out a mapping of the

¹¹ “Active” defined as: attending a meeting or responding to an email/call

competencies of its members, as well as their interests and gaps. The Communities of Practices constitute smaller and more manageable groups that can tackle specific topics, especially emerging trends (green & digital), topics with many remaining challenges (ethic use of AI) or topics of special interest to the D4D Hub (gender). Eventually, these communities of practice could develop programmes that could subsequently be included in portfolios, either by the EU or by member states.

Work Processes

- The possibility to revise the current ToRs based on the experience in implementing the first months of work of the Advisory Group remains open;
- The Advisory Group shall nominate an Advisory Group chair;
- The principle of rotating chair should be introduced (12 months);
- The chair of the Advisory Group could present the recommendations of the Advisory Group to D4D Hub;
- The possibility of splitting the group into two groups (One for CSOs and one for Academia/research organisations) remains open.

Annex I: Focus on Membership Criteria

Networks

These are networks, alliances, or umbrella organisations of CSOs or academia/research organisations/think tanks that are principally based on membership. The secretariat or administration of the network will represent the members in the advisory group meetings and ensure communication between the D4D Hub Secretariat and all the members. Individual members of CSOs or academia/research can participate in the communities of practice. The following networks are eligible for the membership:

1. A network representing **at least 10** or more relevant organisations/individual entities of CSOs¹² or research organisations, academic institutions or think tanks¹³. The umbrella body or network can be formal or informal. However, it should have a clear vision/mission statement to represent and perform advocacy on behalf of its members, “regular” engagements with its membership and at least active 10 “members” that are either CSOs or research organisations. It should also be able to provide one contact person who can represent the entity during the meetings;
2. **Willing to participate** in the D4D Hub CSO Advisory Group: The entity must confirm that the entity (through its leadership structures) has confirmed its willingness to participate in the Advisory Group and is committed to be available for the estimated workload (4 meetings per year, 3-4 events with ad-hoc voluntary input);
3. **Interested¹⁴ in topics related to digital policy and/ or research**. If the mission of the network is not directly linked to a digital topic, a sub-group focusing on digital topics is an added advantage and should be highlighted in the application;
4. Entity must have its main operations¹⁵ within the accepted geographical area and the majority of the membership must be from countries in the accepted geographical area.

Pioneers

Since digital topics are relatively new, there are some organisations that stand out in the way that they already focus on topics relevant to the D4D Hub. There are two reasons why these organisations will be allowed individual membership to the advisory group:

- Academic institutions, research organisations and think tanks are not as well organised in networks like CSOs, and we might miss out key players if we only accept networks;
- It is important for these pioneering organisations that have amassed great expertise and experience in relevant topics to act as motivators, inspirations and catalysts for the others, so that others can learn from them. This learning is more likely to take place if they are accepted as individual members;

¹² Civil Society Organisation (Reg.2021/947) means a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates, which may vary over time and across institutions and countries, and includes all non-State, not-for-profit independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise the pursuit of shared objectives and ideals, including political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic, and which operate at local, national, regional or international levels, and which comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations;

¹³ Research organisations are defined as academic institutions, think tanks or civil society organisations that devote a majority of their resources to research and to to promote scientific and technological cooperation

¹⁴ Since technology in development work is still in its infancy, it is proposed to make an effort to include both the “early adopters” and the “late adopters”. Early adopters are organisations with a distinct focus on tech and digital topics in their work, such as cyber-harassment, data protection etc. Late adopters are CSOs focusing on more traditional topics such as gender or people with disabilities, but interested in learning more about how to leverage technology to serve their communities better

¹⁵ Geographical limitations: EU countries, EU [candidate countries](#), NDICI countries – reference to [EU Regulation](#) 2021/947 for NDICI countries, EEA countries (Iceland, The Principality of Liechtenstein and the Kingdom of Norway), OECD Members States, IPA III countries (see IPA III [regulation](#), 2021/1529) and Overseas [Countries and Territories](#) (OCT).

The category for individual membership is temporary. If the D4D Hub realises that this category is no longer necessary, it can be discontinued. The criteria for these individual organisations are a bit more stringent than for the networks.

Criteria

- Must be able to show case a significant body of research or work in terms of executed projects, events, as well as **impact and results directly related to the core principles of the D4D Hub** (inclusive and human centric digital transformation, green & digital, data protection). The evidence should be comprehensive and be submitted in form of links to research papers, number of citations, project reports, monitoring and evaluation numbers etc.
- Entity must have its main operations¹⁶ within the accepted geographical area and the majority of the membership must be from countries in the accepted geographical area.

¹⁶ Geographical limitations: EU countries, EU [candidate countries](#), NDICI countries – reference to [EU Regulation](#) 2021/947 for NDICI countries, EEA countries (Iceland, The Principality of Liechtenstein and the Kingdom of Norway), OECD Members States, IPA III countries (see IPA III [regulation](#), 2021/1529) and Overseas [Countries and Territories](#) (OCT).

Annex II: The D4D Hub Context

D4D Hub's **mission** is to ensure connection, synergy and mutual exchange between EU overarching digital partnerships and the different groups or communities involved in our different initiatives.

D4D Hub's **objectives** are:

- 1) Scaling up investments in the digital transformation of partner countries;
- 2) Promoting a comprehensive values-based rulebook for a digital economy and society worldwide;
- 3) and fostering a stronger and more strategic EU engagement in international digital partnerships.

The D4D Hub is guided by five **operating principles**:

1. Local ownership & win-win partnerships: Facilitate partnerships that provide added-value and base cooperation activities on local demand.
 2. Multistakeholder involvement & expertise: Promote a sustainable digital transformation requires a whole-of society approach (governments and administrations, private sector, civil society, academia).
 3. Sustainable & green digital transformation: Promote the twin green and digital transition, taking existing EU experience and initiatives into account
 4. Human-centric approach: Put people at the heart of the digital transformation to ensure the full protection of human rights in the digital age.
 5. Data security & protection: Promote a comprehensive and consistent response to safeguard the global threat of cyber breaches, misuse of data and breaches of data privacy.
- ***“Team Europe” approach***

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing global health and economic crisis are raising enormous challenges for the entire world. This global health crisis made clear the absolute need for Governments to pulling resources together and better coordinating, to collectively achieve transformational changes in the long-term.

The **“Team Europe” approach** was born in this context: to ensure that jointly the EU, its Member States and Financial Institutions achieve the greatest sustainable impact, delivering a EU Global response to COVID-19 to fight the pandemic in support of partner countries.

This important lesson that the EU has learnt, **to achieve greater impact** and visibility through the “Team Europe” approach, also responds to the political “strong message of European partnership and solidarity to build back better, making sustainable recovery and the achievement of the SDGs a reality and showing that multilateralism works¹⁷”.

The importance of Team Europe is true in all fields. However, in a changing geo-political context, this approach is particularly relevant in the field of **digital transformation**. COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the role and perception of digitalisation in our societies and economies and accelerated its pace. Across the globe, digital technologies are now imperative for working, learning, entertaining, socializing, shopping and accessing everything from health services to culture.

¹⁷ <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/wbt-team-europe>

The data-driven digital economy is rapidly evolving amid huge divides in terms of digital readiness. 23% of the population in Least developed countries (LDCs) has no access to a mobile broadband network¹⁸. In developed economies, 90% of the population uses the internet, vs 20% of the population in LDCs. The urban–rural access divide is most accentuated in LDCs, where 16% of the rural population has no access to any mobile network, and 35% could not be connected online with a mobile device¹⁹.

Digital technologies could make our societies fairer, increase access and usage of fundamental services, could promoting sustainable farming, decent work, and achieving universal literacy. But technologies can also threaten privacy, erode security and fuel inequality. They have implications for human rights and democracy. For those reasons, during the latest State of the Union speech, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that “**digital is a make-or-break issue**” for the EU. Only if we join forces through digital cooperation, we can take on this global challenge and untap digital opportunities.

- ***The D4D Hub - The launch***

In a Team Europe spirit, the EU has embarked on a path to embrace a fair, inclusive and green digital transformation worldwide - inaugurating a new era for global digital cooperation through the D4D Hub that places people at the heart of digital economies and societies worldwide.

On December 8th, 2020, European political leaders, the European Commission President, eleven EU Member States, representatives from private sector partners, civil society and academia launched the [Digital4Development \(D4D\) Hub](#). Implementing the joint “[2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade](#)” – strategy through the [Digital4Development approach](#), the “[Digital Principles](#)” and the recent [Global Gateway](#) approved in December 2021 – the cooperation aims promoting new international partnerships and investments on digital transformation as Team Europe.

The D4D Hub is playing a crucial role to shape a sustainable digital future for all, bridging digital divides to place people at the heart of digital economies and societies worldwide.

The D4D Hub lives through its partners, and **private sector represents a fundamental stakeholder for the success of the D4D Hub initiative**. During the launch of the D4D Hub, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that “Team Europe is building strong ties across the globe to make the digital revolution an opportunity for everyone”.

This contributes towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, in particular for SGD 8²⁰, SGD 9²¹ and SDG 17²². The D4D Hub aims at contributing to reduce the digital divides, including the gender digital divide, promoting human rights in the cyber sphere and leveraging digital innovation for inclusive and green sustainable development.

- ***D4D Hub Members***

The D4D Hub promotes a better coordination and alignment of EU digital initiatives for an increased impact. The Hub serves as a strategic multi-stakeholder platform that fosters digital cooperation between the [Team Europe](#) and [its global partners](#). D4D Hub’s objectives are:

¹⁸ UNCTAD, Digital Economy Report 2021

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

²¹ SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

²² SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

- 4) Scaling up investments in the digital transformation of partner countries;
- 5) Promoting a comprehensive values-based rulebook for a digital economy and society worldwide;
- 6) and fostering a stronger and more strategic EU engagement in international digital partnerships.

During the German EU Council Presidency, **12 EU Member States**²³ – here in after referred to collectively as the “D4D Team Europe” - joined the D4D Hub through a [Joint Letter of Intent](#) where the D4D Hub is conceived as a vehicle for the “Team Europe” approach. Member States and their implementing agencies are equally part of the D4D Hub, as well as the European Commission and the European Investment Bank.

²³ Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden.