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D4D
HUB

AFRICAN UNION — EUROPEAN UNION

DIGITAL FOR DEVELOPMENT HUB

African
Union 



Bringing people at the centre of the Africa - Europe digital partnership

Brainstorming session report



1. Introduction

On 21 June 2022, first day of the 2022 edition of European Development Days (EDD), the AU-EU Digital for Development (D4D) Hub convened a brainstorming session to discuss how to shape a truly human-centric digital transformation in the context of Africa-Europe relations.

Prior to this session and with the aim to promote broader participation, the AU-EU D4D Hub also published an online consultation. This report compiles inputs from both the brainstorming session and the online consultation. The areas of focus and specific actions that were identified by participants will help inform future activities of the AU-EU D4D Hub and its collaboration with African and European policymakers.

The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the participants of the brainstorming session and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the AU-EU D4D Hub, its implementing partners, or the European Commission.

2. Methodology

Over 35 participants representing civil society, governments, private sector, media, and academia joined the in-person session at the EDD. The purpose of the AU-EU D4D Hub was to provide a platform for all stakeholders to contribute to an open conversation on the shared principles and priorities for Africa and Europe to work together in the digital field.

Open Space was the social technology chosen to provide the framework for people to express themselves actively and creatively around this topic. The brainstorming session was designed to engage participants from the beginning, asking them to choose one of four overarching principles to explore further: (1) inclusiveness, (2) participation, (3) sustainability, or (4) privacy, safety and real choice.

Following this reflection, the session flow aimed to bring the participants to a more pragmatic space through action-oriented questions to foster discussion on concrete actions. This process allowed participants to voice their ideas and concerns, learn from each other, and take collective responsibility for finding solutions.



Figure 1. Inclusiveness spokesperson sharing outcomes from group conversation

3. Cross-cutting insights

The outcomes from the conversations in the four different breakout groups highlight some common themes and patterns. Every group, for example, touched on the importance of increasing connectivity, one of the challenges currently making the digital transformation

advance slowly and contributing to increase the digital divide. Affordability was an issue repeatedly identified in relation to connectivity. All groups identified governance and regulation as key elements to guarantee that the digital transformation responds to the needs of the population. They also expressed the need for further collaboration and a Pan-African approach to prevent further inequalities. Finally, every group discussed about the importance of ensuring that every individual has the capability to participate and benefit from the digital transformation, from an inclusiveness and skills perspective.

In summary, the different groups pointed to three key cross-sectional pillars necessary for Africa and Europe to deliver a human centric digital transformation:



Connectivity and access

Developing infrastructure to connect underserved regions and ensure affordability for all.



Governance framework

A common Pan-African framework (policies and regulation) based on users' needs.



Inclusive digital education

Programmes to increase digital literacy for all, with special attention to women and girls.



Figure 2. Participation spokesperson sharing outcomes from group conversation

In addition, participants across groups identified the need to become more effective in using the resources available to deliver on the three pillars. This requires, according to them, engaging stakeholders in proactive listening and dialogue and promote real participation and intersectional collaborations. In this sense, the important role of civil society and local communities was highlighted. Participants also mentioned the importance fostering equal representation between Africa and Europe, which might need a shift in the mindset of European and African policy makers.

Ensuring connectivity for everyone is a must and yet, it will still not be sufficient, participants said. Having the tools and infrastructure is a good first step, but it needs to be followed by building capacity for the entire population to be able to use them. For this to happen, multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential. In this sense, the AU-EU D4D Hub was called to facilitate this process

by listening, convening the necessary conversations, supporting the different actors, and providing safe spaces for exchange and learning.

4. Findings by group

Below are the main conclusions reached in each of the breakout groups:

<p>Inclusiveness</p> <p>The digital transformation must focus on the importance of equal access and skills development regardless gender, age, disability, income level, education, or language.</p>	<p>Participation</p> <p>The digital transformation needs to be designed bottom-up with local actors, considering the social and economic diversity, and ensuring no power imbalances.</p>
<p>Sustainable transition</p> <p>The digital transformation needs to create value locally. This requires stakeholders to design the implementation with a mindset that delivers financial returns and permanent value creation.</p>	<p>Privacy, safety, and real choice</p> <p>The digital transformation must be safe, respectful of future generations, and able to evolve and adapt in response to the changes that will inevitably take place.</p>



Figure 3. Groups of conversation during brainstorming session

5. Online consultation

1 How can Africa and Europe work together towards a human-centric digital transformation?

Share your views in relation to...

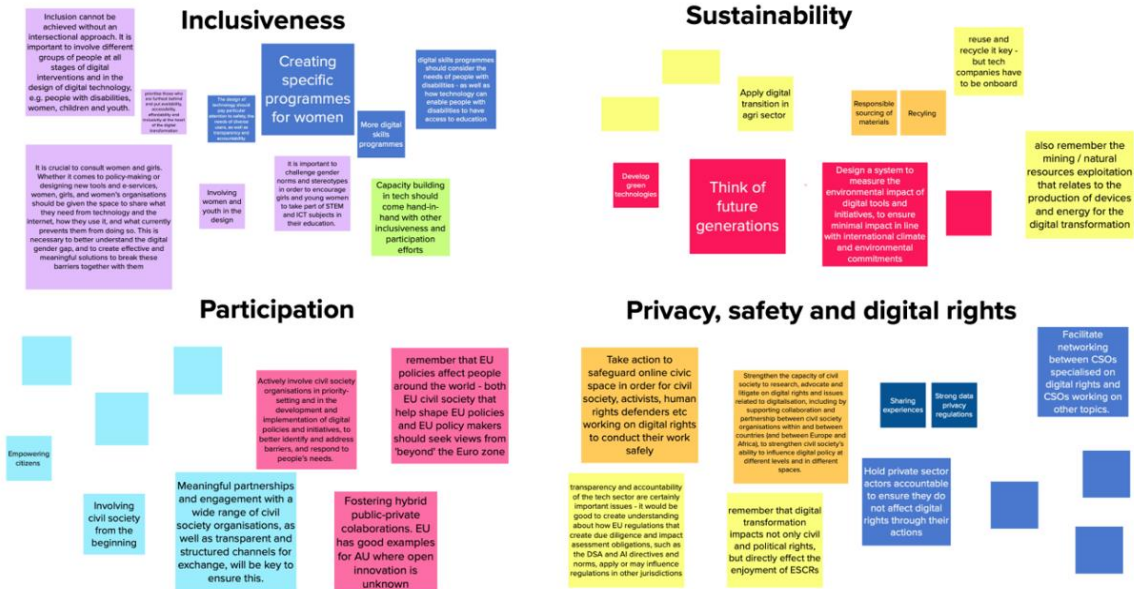


Figure 4. Overview of online consultation tool

Additional reflections were also shared with the AU-EU D4D Hub via the online consultation. While many of them coincided with the findings from the brainstorming session, some valuable inputs were only shared online. A summary is presented below.

<p style="text-align: center;">Inclusiveness</p> <p>"Women, girls, and women's organisations should be given the space to share what they need from technology."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"It is necessary to better understand the digital gender gap, and to create effective and meaningful solutions."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"It is important to involve different groups of people in the design of digital technology, e.g. people with disabilities, women, children and youth."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Participation</p> <p>"Fostering hybrid public-private collaborations."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"Transparent and structured channels for exchange."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"EU policymakers should seek views from beyond Europe."</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sustainable transition</p> <p>"Measure the environmental impact of digital tools."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"Apply digital transition to the agricultural sector."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"Responsible sourcing of materials. Mining/natural resource exploitation that relates to the production of devices and energy for the digital transition."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"Develop green technologies."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"Reuse and recycle is key but tech companies have to be on board."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Privacy, safety, and real choice</p> <p>"Hold private sector actors accountable to ensure they do not affect digital rights through their actions."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"Facilitate networking between civil society organisations specialised on digital rights and those working in other topics."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"Take actions to safeguard online civil space."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*</p> <p>"Strengthen civil society's ability to influence digital policy at different levels and in different spaces."</p>

6. Questions that we are leaving with

The conversation amongst participants raised other interesting questions that could unfortunately not be answered in the time available. They are however pertinent and will be considered in the planning of future activities of the AU-EU D4D Hub.

- Who is driving the digital transformation in Africa and what principles are they following?
- What would a common digital transformation roadmap enabling full participation from all stakeholders look like?
- What key players and elements need to be present to develop a coherent and shared framework for the digital transformation?

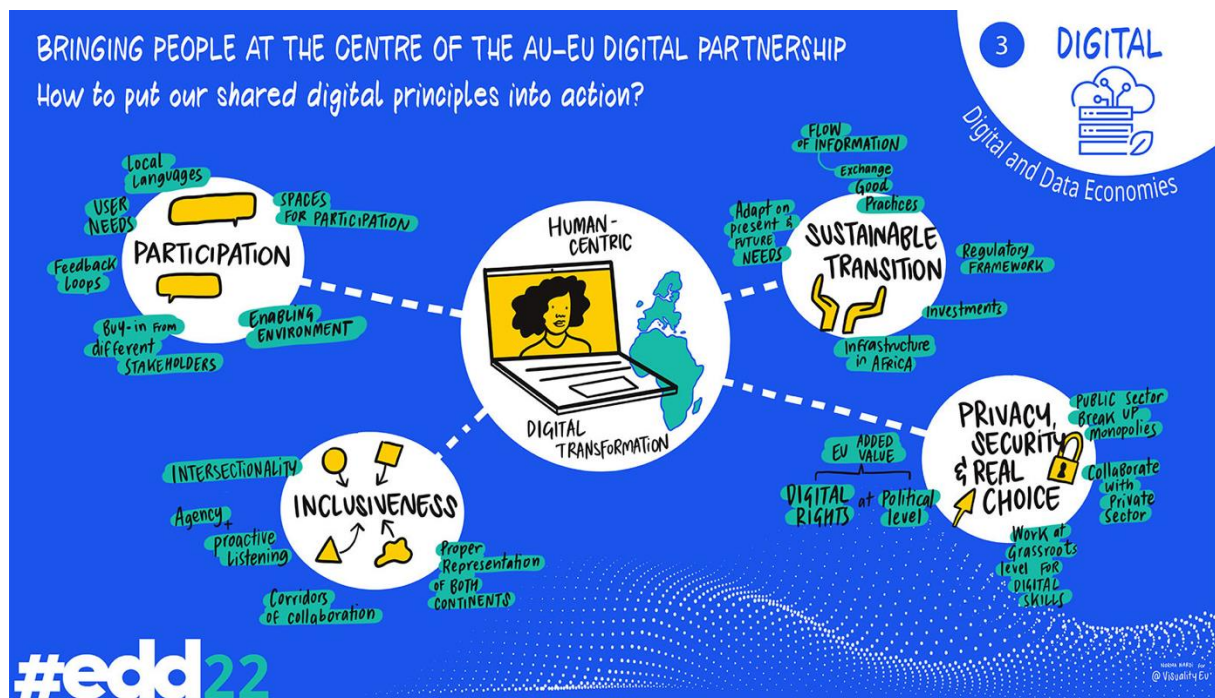


Figure 5. Visual graphic recording of the brainstorming session provided by the EDD organisers

7. Continuing the conversation

The AU-EU D4D Hub supports African institutions to create an enabling environment for a sustainable and inclusive digital transformation. The project provides demand-driven technical assistance, promotes knowledge sharing, and facilitates multi-stakeholder dialogues.

To learn more about the project activities and participate in upcoming events, please visit the website: au-eu.d4dhub.eu, follow the AU-EU D4D Hub on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/visualityeu), and subscribe its quarterly [newsletter](#).

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