ICT WG

ANNUAL PLAN 2021

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OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the ICT Work Group is to provide a platform for members that helps to inform about important European Initiatives, Strategies and funding programs related to ICT topics and their regional dimension. This platform is equally meant to create opportunities for interregional cooperation in the ICT area crosscutting with other areas.

2021 is marked by the start of a new funding period and the (re)launch of a new funding programme generation. We want to look at the most important programmes touching ICT topics.

CONTEXT

The key EU level priorities, strategies, and events that the Working Group aims to follow up in 2020 are:

- European Commission priority : "A Europe fit for the digital age" and all subsequent strategies such as : Digital market & services, Data Strategy, Cybersecurity, AI
- Digital Europe programme
- Horizon Europe

Funding programmes important for the Working Group:

- Horizon Europe
- Digital Europe
- Erasmus+
- CEF
- Creative Europe
- Interreg programme

ACTIVITIES

Policy workshop on the Digital Agenda
25 February

Following up on the recent speeches by President Von den Leyen underlining the Digital Decade, and the Commissioner Vestager mentioning the Digital Services Act and the Digital Market Act, this webinar aims to provide information on the legislative initiatives expected to be published in coming weeks and months.

This policy workshop will look at the ongoing and planned legislative initiatives of the European Commission to make "Europe fit for the Digital Age": Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Digital Services Act, Digital Market Act, Data Governance Act and more. It will give an overview of what's currently under preparation and as a map, it is supposed to lead our members and regional innovation stakeholders to hot spots and relevant topics to work on during the coming year.

The key questions for the meeting are:

- What legislation is already in place and what's coming?
- What are the examples to illustrate?
- What's in there for the regions and ERRIN? How does it affect the societal and economic challenges regions and cities are facing?

Data spaces and TEF (testing and experimentation facilities) for ICT
March TBC

The aim of the European data strategy is to create a genuine single market for data, where private and public entities can fully control the use of the data they generate and where both businesses and the public sector have easy access to a large pool of high-quality data. Ultimately, Europe aims to capture the benefits of better use of data, including greater productivity and competitive markets, but also improvements in health and well-being, environment, transparent governance and convenient public services.

In order to operationalise and speed up this goal, two key initiatives will see the light, supported by the Digital Europe Programme:

1. (Sectoral) common European data spaces will be funded as a means to make relevant data available for the implementation and continuous improvement of artificial intelligence systems. Such data spaces will offer a secure and trusted mean to make available data, for both the private and public sector, based upon voluntary agreements (or legal obligations where such obligations are in force).
2. Test and Experimentation Facilities: experimenting and testing state-of-the art technology in real-world environments is an important step in bringing technology to market and it is the part in the innovation chain where Europe's AI ecosystem needs significant support to remain globally competitive. TEFs should be easy to use, work under real conditions, and closely

involve end-users. TEFs should be used by technology developers, especially by enterprises, in particular SMEs. Open standards, open data, and open software platforms are important.

An efficient interplay between TEFs and data spaces is fundamental for creating a level playing field and ensuring market access. This would be achieved by teaming up the data spaces and TEFs in mutual areas of interests.

Data Spaces and TEFs will be funded throughout the DEP WP21-22, but starting already in the 1st upcoming call. Therefore a ICT WG meeting will be dedicated in S1 2021 on this topic of high relevance to ERRIN members and their stakeholders e.g. dealing with technical capacities and regulatory requirements. Furthermore, as work on data spaces and TEFs could start at the same time, both could benefit from exchanges of data and AI applications. Early regional examples of data sharing practices within ERRIN's regions might be showcased during this session, during which we invite DG Connect to elaborate on the details of the topic and its upcoming funding possibilities.

Joint WG Meeting with Health WG
April TBC

- EU4Health Programme
- Health Data Space (Digital Europe)
- Horizon Europe Health Cluster

Green and Responsible ICT
May TBC

The European Commission regularly talks about "twin transitions". Indeed, digital can tremendously contribute to making our societies much more sustainable. However, the challenge of greening the digital sector is equally as significant.

This WG meeting will showcase regional examples and best practices that demonstrate how a sustainable and responsible approach towards digital can be developed.

Topics to be monitored and further explored:

- Digital Europe Programme calls and the Digital Innovation Hubs

- The role of ICT for the Green Deal

- Digitalisation of energy systems