

ANNUAL PLAN 2024 - SUMMER UPDATE ICT WORKING GROUP

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OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the ICT Work Group is to act as a platform to discuss and share information on ICT-related initiatives and funding opportunities in relation to the European Commission's policy priority "A Europe fit for the digital age". Especially highlighting the regional dimension of the ICT-field, the WG aims to create opportunities for interregional cooperation in the field of ICT by linking with other areas and sectors such as smart cities, energy, transport, health or culture.

CONTEXT

In the past few years, the ICT WG has developed many activities around EU initiatives that can foster the digital transition in our regional ecosystems. This will remain a priority for 2024.

The key EU-level priorities and strategies that the Working Group aims to follow up in 2024:

Key EU processes to follow

- Further development of the AI Act
- EU Chips Act
- Europe's Digital Decade
- Network of European Digital Innovation Hubs
- The current development on digital topics such as digital twins, data spaces and the European Digital Infrastructure Consortium (EDIC)
- Research & Innovation Week in March 2024

The WG's activities are related to several partnerships funded through Horizon Europe, such as:

- European High Performance Computing (EuroHPC JU)
- Chips JU
- Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking (SNS JU)
- PHOTONICS PPP
- AI, Data and Robotics Partnership

Funding programmes important for the Working Group:

- Digital Europe programme
- Horizon Europe programme, notably the calls under Cluster 4
- CEF Digital

Events relevant for the ICT Working Group:

- R&I Week (18-21 March 2024)
- European Week of Regions and Cities 2024 (October 2024)
- Smart Cities Expo (5-7 November 2024)

OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTPUTS IN ERRIN PROJECTS

Related to the ICT Working Group, ERRIN has been involved in the [Go Li.EU](#) project. It supports the governance of the Living-in.EU movement in order to foster digital transformation in cities, regions and communities. In this project, ERRIN is responsible for measuring the impact of the project and the Living-in.eu initiative at local, regional and European levels. ERRIN is also supporting the work of the 'Monitoring and Measuring Working group', aiming at developing a solid and unique framework for measuring and monitoring sustainable digital transformation processes.

In 2024, two main activities of the project can be of interest for members of the ICT Working Group, but also for ERRIN members in general:

- The organisation by ERRIN of the project annual event, the Living-in.EU Digital Assembly, an high-level political event aiming at engaging a dialogue between and regional authorities and the European Commission on ICT-related topics. The event will be organised during the European Week of Regions and Cities, on Wednesday 9 October (14:30 to 16:00). More information [here](#).
- Display of opportunities for funding and technical support on ICT-related topics curated by the Living-in.EU movement, such as support for the development of local digital twins with this [Expression of Interest for EU Smart Communities](#) or for the deployment of data spaces with the [DS4SSCC Open call](#).

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Digital tools for smart cities

Date: 22 November 2024

Joint with Low Carbon Cluster

The Smart Cities and ICT Working Groups will organise a knowledge exchange session on EU initiatives and projects related to the development of digital tools for smart cities. The Working Group plans to invite: DG CONNECT to present the objectives of the call 'Towards networked Local Digital Twins in the EU' and how cities and regions can benefit from it.

- One of the projects funded under last year's Cities Mission call HORIZON-MISS-2023-CIT-01-02 to present how they are developing Positive Energy District Digital Twins (TIPS4PED, EXPEDITE or BIPED).
- The Data Space for Smart and Sustainable Cities and Communities (DS4SSCC) project to present the development of the data space for smart cities and communities and the pilots that run under the project.
- ERRIN members to present examples of innovative digital tools for smart cities that can support the implementation of the Cities Mission (e.g. RECIPROCITY, USER-CHI, 1.5-degree city).

The meeting will be organised in a hybrid setting and is directed towards Brussels-based colleagues and regional stakeholders. Further discussion will be engaged to better define the objective of such meeting and could lead to the organisation of different sessions.

AI application to enhance cultural heritage for sustainable tourism

Joint with Cultural Heitage & Tourism WG

Date: 3 December 2024

This session will provide participants with info on EU initiatives and regional best practices on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its application to enhance cultural heritage to promote sustainable tourism. It will integrate follow-ups on previous activities implemented by both Working Groups, such as:

- 'Digitising Cultural Heritage' - Joint CH&T and ICT Webinar, December 2020, information [here](#)
- 'Understanding the European Data Space for Cultural Heritage and Cloud for Cultural Heritage' - ICT and CH&T, April 2023 - information available [here](#)
- Artificial Intelligence related strategies at local and regional level – ICT WG Meeting, June 2024, information available [here](#).

Issues/topics to be monitored further:

- European Digital Infrastructure Consortium (EDICs) – Instrument made available to Member States under the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030 to speed up and simplify the setup and implementation of multi-country projects. EDICs will enable the achievement of the Digital Decade general objectives and targets.
- Greening the digital transition - Even though digitalisation is an effective tool to reduce Energy consumption and CO2 emission, the sector itself faces an enormous increase in energy consumption due to a combination of growing data volumes, widespread cloud computing, increasing use of AI, expansion of IoT, development of mobile networks, and higher demand for computing power and storage. The challenge is to make these developments sustainable and optimize energy consumption through technological innovations and behavioural changes. We want to explore what is done on EU and regional level to tackle the problem.

PAST 2024 ACTIVITIES

Digital Innovation Hubs for public authorities

Date: 21 May 2024

The 1st series of European Digital Innovation Hubs started activities in 2023. While most of them target SMEs, a considerable number of EDIHs (also) supports public authorities in their digitalisation. This year, the ICT Working group tackled the question of the support Digital Innovation Hubs give to public authorities in their digital transformation journey. The meeting aimed at:

- Presenting the current state-of-play of the Digital Innovation Hubs support to public authorities
- Sharing key messages and challenges with key stakeholders from the European Commission to bring the question of Digital Innovation Hubs in the current discussion launched on the next Multiannual Financial Framework

AI Act and regional AI strategies

Date: 12 June 2024

In December 2023, the Council and the European Parliament reached a political agreement on the AI Act, setting out rules for the development and usage of AI in Europe. With AI's growing importance and related challenges, the ERRIN ICT WG will organise a meeting on regional digital strategies related to AI on Wednesday 12 June 2024. The event explored how regional actors can benefit from generative AI while protecting privacy for example, through regional AI strategies. This meeting aimed to:

- Present the AI Act implementation for local and regional governments and provide information on the European Commission's establishment of the AI Office.
- Communicate on existing projects and initiatives, providing concrete opportunities and tools related to AI through two dedicated presentations - Open call of Communicity and AI Clauses from Living-in.EU.
- Open the floor to four ERRIN members' use cases, allowing the initiation of a structured dialogue with the European Commission on local and regional needs and challenges related to Artificial Intelligence.