



EU4Digital ICT Innovation networking event CONCEPT OUTLINE

When and where: 22nd April 2021, 10:00-13:00 (CET), online.

Concept: The EU4Digital Initiative will hold ICT Innovation networking event in form of virtual session.

Language: The event will be held in English.

Topic: Networking with EU Digital Innovation Hubs¹ (DIHs) to enable the development of competence centres, platforms, tools and services supporting digital transformation of SMEs in the EaP region.

Goals:

1. Facilitate joining of experts from the relevant EaP organisations to an [Online community](#) of European DIHs Network that offers information exchange about DIHs-related initiatives and projects, joint submission of proposals; access to [DIHs Academy](#) including mentoring, training and learning materials from DIH networks as well as [DIHNET Repository](#).
2. Increase knowledge of the EaP stakeholders about the [DIH Catalogue](#)² and its' market sectors and services provided. Present possibilities to identify the existing DIHs in Europe and its evolutionary stages, technical competences and technology readiness level for partnership and peer learning.
3. Present the services provided via EU initiative 'ICT Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs' ([I4MS](#)), including experimentation and testing with new ICT technologies, funding, training, mentorships and access to physical and virtual technology platforms.
4. Present the experience of leading EU DIH(s) in order to assist the emerging DIHs in the EaP countries to develop their specialised services and a self-sustaining business model.

Potential strategic cooperation areas:

- Establishing an EaP community under an [online community](#) of DIHNET for peer learning from the EU DIHs and joint projects.
- Establishing a capacity building programme based on [DIHs Academy](#), [DIHNET Repository](#) and EC's training programmes for new DIHs, in order to assist the emerging DIHs in EaP countries to establish their networks, develop their specialised services and a self-sustaining business model.
- Direct cooperation projects of EaP digital competence centres and business support organisations with EU DIHs (testing, experimentation and staff training).

Key EU participants:

- The European Commission (DG CONNECT).
- Digital Innovation Hubs Network ([DIHNET.EU](#)).
- Europe's largest deep tech funding ecosystems - [FundingBox](#).
- EU initiative ICT Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs ([I4MS](#)).
- DIH of the EU member state - 2020 DIH Champions Challenge winners - [am-LAB](#) (Hungary).

Target audience in EaP countries:

- DIHs in the EaP region.
- Competence centres with digital technology infrastructure, including those at universities and other higher education institutions, research and technology organisations and tech parks.
- Business organisations, networks and associations, related to digital transformation;
- Regional development agencies with interest to support digitalisation of SMEs;
- Ministerial level representatives and agencies coordinating the development of innovation ecosystem with focus on digitalisation of SMEs.

Number of participants: around 30 – 60.

¹ "Digital Innovation Hubs are one-stop-shops that help companies to become more competitive with regard to their business/production processes, products or services using digital technologies. They are based upon technology infrastructure (competence centre) and provide access to the latest knowledge, expertise and technology to support their customers with piloting, testing and experimenting with digital innovations. The DIHs also provide business and financing support to implement these innovations, if needed across the value chain. The DIH is a regional multi-partner cooperation (including organisations like RTOs, universities, industry associations, chambers of commerce, incubator/accelerators, regional development agencies and even governments) and can also have strong linkages with service providers outside of their region supporting companies with access to their services" ([European Commission](#)).

² [European catalogue of DIHs](#) is a repository, an online catalogue including more than 450 existing hubs across Europe. The purpose of the tool is to help companies get access to competences needed in order to digitise their products and services.



AGENDA

EU4Digital ICT Innovation networking event:
«Networking with EU Digital Innovation Hubs to enable the development of competence centres, platforms, tools and services supporting digital transformation of SMEs in the EaP region»

22 April 2021 – Thursday		
Time (CET)	Topic	Participants / Speaker
9:45 - 10:00	<i>Time for connection – the session will start at 10:00 sharp</i>	<i>EU4Digital Facility ICT Innovation Team</i>
Session 1 – Introduction & keynote speech		
10:00 - 10:20	Opening notes. Networking event organisation – goals and objectives. Brief introduction of participants.	<i>EU4Digital Facility ICT Innovation Team</i>
10:20 – 10:40	Keynote speech: Digitising European Industry initiative and European Digital Innovation Hubs	<i>Matthias Kuom, Seconded National Expert to the European Commission, DG CONNECT</i>
Session 2 – Networking, funding and capacity building programmes for DIHs		
10:40 - 11:00	Digital Innovation Hubs Network DIHNET.EU and DIHNET online community	<i>Maurits Butter, Project Leader at DIHNET.EU</i>
11:00 - 11:20	Q&A	<i>All participants</i>
11:20 – 11:35	FundingBox experience with key enable mechanisms for supporting SMEs in their digital transformation journey: DIHs and cascade funding	<i>Mayte Carracedo, Partner & Chief Business Development Officer at FundingBox</i>
11:35 – 11:45	Q&A	<i>All participants</i>
11:45 - 11:50	<i>Short break</i>	<i>All participants</i>
Session 3 – DIHs for digitising the manufacturing industry (Industry 4.0 and beyond)		
11:50 – 12:10	EU initiative ‘ICT Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs’ (I4MS)	<i>María Roca, Senior Project Manager at FundingBox</i>
12:10 - 12:20	Q&A	<i>All participants</i>
12:20 - 12:40	Experience of leading DIHs of the EU member state: service specialisation and business model of operation	<i>Balázs Barta, Founder of am-LAB</i>
12:40 - 12:50	Q&A	<i>All participants</i>
12:50 - 13:00	Wrap up and closure of event	<i>EU4Digital Facility ICT Innovation Team</i>






Annex 1. Short descriptions of organisations

Name	Description
DIHNET.EU	The DIHNET.EU project enables the coordination of European, national and regional initiatives directly supporting the digital transformation and Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs). The project supports the creation of a sustainable pan-European network of networks. Via its online community , the DIHNET.EU fosters interaction among hubs, information exchange and peer-learning, but also addresses strategic issues to further increase the quality of the European DIH community. The project enhances the collaboration between the different stakeholders from the European DIH Community with a wide range of services, information and tools that will help DIHs to communicate, align, collaborate and synchronize activities. It also contributes to the upgrade of the DIH Catalogue by identifying/triggering activities in the DIH Community in coherence with regional, national and EU policies and create a strategy to reinforce the specialisation of DIHs services, as well as supporting its uptake by relevant DIHs and DIH networks.
FundingBox	The FundingBox is Europe's largest deep tech funding ecosystem. It enables entrepreneurs and innovators through easy-to-apply funding opportunities and tailor-made acceleration programmes. Its Deep Tech communities gather champions in their respective fields: start-ups, SMEs, investors, corporates, researchers, DIHs and more. In terms of DIHs, FundingBox is one of the main orchestrators in Europe, supporting them by hosting the DIHNET community and acting as an expert in the definition and implementation of DIH services.
ICT Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs (I4MS)	The I4MS is the EU initiative to digitalise the manufacturing industry. It is promoted by the European Commission to expand the digital innovation of manufacturing SMEs in Europe and is one of the key initiatives of the European Commission to shape the pan-European network of DIHs. 84% of its industrial partners are SMEs, to whom I4MS provides an opportunity to apply for technological and financial support to experiment with different technologies and services, to improve the innovation skills of staff and the technologies and services that the company provides. I4MS maintains the community of experts, the working groups and the contact points across Europe.
am-LAB	The am-LAB is a digital innovation hub in Hungary and the 2020 DIH Champions Challenge winner. It is focused on applied research and development and training in the area of digital transformation. The am-LAB competencies embrace prototype printing, product launch and series production, based on custom animation (CGI) and augmented reality (AR) solutions and artificial intelligence-based algorithms. The unique features of am-LAB as a DIH are the combination of economic and technical knowledge as well as its unique system of international relations in Central Europe. In more than 75 international partnership and research and development projects, it worked with 450 international partners, also operating a national training academy for 2,000 companies.



Annex 2. List of speakers

	<p>Mr. Matthias Kuom, Seconded National Expert to the European Commission, (DG CONNECT)</p> <p>Matthias Kuom is currently Seconded National Expert to the European Commission, Directorate General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology, in the new unit CNECT.A.4 'Digital Transformation of Industrial Ecosystems'. Here he works on topics such as digital platforms for industry and implementation of Digital Innovation Hubs within the Digital Europe Programme.</p>
	<p>Mr. Maurits Butter, Project Leader at DIHNET.EU</p> <p>Maurits Butter started his career at a consultancy firm, after graduating as a chemical engineer from the Technical University of Delft. He worked as a policymaker for the Dutch Ministry of Environment in the field of transitions, before joining Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) in 1998 as a senior researcher in innovation policy. During his career, he has gained extensive expertise in collaboration between research, industry and government, which came together in working in a field of strategic public/private partnerships that are now culminated in the European DIHs strategy. Currently, he is the scientific coordinator of the DIHNET project. He is also involved in many training and other projects that focus on the further boosting of European collaboration using the DIH approach as a core element.</p>
	<p>Ms. Mayte Carracedo, Partner & Chief Business Development Officer at FundingBox</p> <p>Mayte Carracedo has a degree in Political Sciences and International Studies from the University of Santiago de Compostela, a Master in European policies by the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) and an MBA by EAE Business School. For the last 17 years, Mayte has been active in public funding for innovation, taking part in international projects with different roles. The speaker is currently playing a leading role in several initiatives for supporting the digital transformation of European companies, such as ICT for Manufacturing SMEs (I4MS), DIHNET or PhotonHub, as well as facilitating the connection among deep tech start-ups with private capital.</p>



Ms. María Roca, Senior Project Manager at FundingBox

María Roca is currently seeking to improve how SMEs can benefit from EU innovations and EU projects opportunities to boost their competitiveness and growth. She has been working in Brussels representing the interest of the Valencian industry and civil society and at the European Commission as National Expert in Professional Training. The speaker also has experience as a Project Manager at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain supporting Associated Countries in the development of country's public policies. In 2013, María focused her career in research, development and innovation activities at the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), working towards the exploitation of research results and connecting researchers and industrial partners. Thus, she has sound experience implementing actions to improve the performance of EU funds by public administrations, interregional cooperation, enhancing the links between industry and academia and good governance.



Mr. Balázs Barta, Founder of am-LAB

Balázs Barta is an economist who graduated from Budapest University of Economics. He studied executive management at Wharton (USA) and Insead (France) and earned his PhD at Sopron University at Manufacturing Technologies Institute. After working for a multinational company for a decade in various senior positions, he established Pannon Business Network (PBN), focusing on the competitiveness of SMEs. At PBN he also coordinated the preparation of regional operative programmes, city development plans and presented in the European Parliament as a good practice in regional development. He established am-LAB, the digital innovation hub of the PBN in 2017. Also, he is a former member of the Hungarian Swimming Federation executive board and national delegate of the Chamber of Commerce.