



EU4Digital: supporting digital economy and society in the Eastern Partnership

Guide for EaP stakeholders on joining European DIGITAL SME Alliance

About this Guide

This Guide provides an in-depth overview of the possibilities for stakeholders of the six Eastern partner countries to join the selected specialised EU networks and platforms in the area of ICT Innovation.

The **goal** of this Guide is to further support the integration of the EaP stakeholders with EU networks and platforms introduced during a series of EU4Digital networking events with lead EU organisations on the policy topics prioritized by the countries.

1. European DIGITAL SME Alliance

	<p>Policy area: ICT Innovation ecosystems for start-ups and scale-ups</p> <p>Networking event topic: Facilitate the development of expert communities and increase their involvement into policy design and implementation</p>
<p>Organisation details</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short description: The European DIGITAL SME Alliance (“DIGITAL SME”) is established as a non-for-profit international association. It is the largest network of ICT SMEs in Europe, representing more than 45,000 SMEs. The alliance is a joint effort of 30 national and regional SME associations from EU member states and neighbouring countries to put digital SME at the centre of the EU agenda. DIGITAL SME is implementing initiatives of general interest for the ICT SMEs in Europe, monitoring EU policies and regulations on ICT and informing its members. Also, the network is raising SMEs awareness on standardisation process, supporting access to SME funding, facilitating B2B and matchmaking processes, carrying out actions in third countries, especially in matters relating to the support and training of local ICT enterprises. Presentation of organisation • Mission statement: DIGITAL SME is the voice of ICT SMEs in Europe, and the main objectives of network are to provide information to the members on EU policies and to represent their interests and stances vis-à-vis the institutions of the European Union, to support networking and knowledge sharing among the members and their SMEs, and facilitate their access to EU funds, SME B2B activities, etc. • Priority topic(-s): Digital skills; Sustainable B2B Digitalisation; Digital Innovation Hubs; Cybersecurity and Data protection; ICT Standards for SMEs; Intellectual Property; Future Technologies and Artificial Intelligence; Internet of Things; 5G; Cloud; Trade and Competition etc. • Network: The European DIGITAL SME Alliance is a member of Small Business Standards (SBS), the European Association of Crafts and SMEs (SMEUnited), European Cyber Security Organisation (ECISO), Alliance for the Internet of Things Innovation (AIOTI), the European Artificial Intelligence Alliance, International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications (INATBA); European Internet Forum, and other digital market associations. DIGITAL SME also contributes to or works closely with the international organisations including EUIPO; OECD; EP; EC; ENISA; ISO; ETSI; CEN-CENELEC; LKDF; UNIDO; World Economic Forum; IEEE; Scale-up Europe. 	
<p>Target groups and opportunities</p>	
<p>Ultimate goal: Integration of EaP associations of ICT/digital SMEs with the community of like-minded EU associations, to foster cooperation of EaP and EU digital SMEs and joint work on digital markets development.</p> <p>Main target group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National associations of ICT/digital SMEs in EaP countries can enhance their capacity as executive bodies to support their member SMEs in cross border B2B collaboration opportunities as well as to contribute in policy and ecosystem activities for EaP digital markets development. <p>Additional target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMEs, startups and researchers who innovate in ICT or want to accelerate their digital transformation; they could network for joint innovative projects and initiatives. • Associations of non-ICT SMEs; they could collaborate via digitalisation promotion initiatives. 	



- Policy-making organisations in EaP countries; they could benefit from enhanced dialogue with EaP digital business community.
- Other organisations sharing the values and objectives of European DIGITAL SME Alliance and seeking for synergies can implement ecosystem building projects (NGOs, public bodies, research organisations, non-formal networks, etc).

Available services and tools

(services/tools description and eligibility criteria)

1. Membership as an association

a) Service description. Member package for organisations includes:

- Opportunities to participate in EU-funded projects: Horizon Europe (previous Horizon2020), Erasmus+, tenders or other financial support schemes. These are usually invitations to become a partner of existing consortia that develop project proposals in response to specific calls. Such invitations are directed either to member associations or to their SME members.
 - Examples of projects:
 - a) [European Digital Skills and Jobs Platform](#) - A key platform for boosting digital skills in Europe. It will offer information, resources, overview of training and funding opportunities and a community space for networking and collaboration both on European and national level.
 - b) [EUHubs4Data](#) - The European federation of Data Driven Innovation Hubs project aims to foster collaboration between data driven initiatives in Europe, facilitate federating solutions in a global catalogue of data services, and sharing data across borders and sectors.
 - c) For more projects see [here](#).
- Letters of Intent (support letters) for members to participate in EU projects.
- Support in promoting project outputs of the members or other important info within DIGITAL SME network.
- Annual calls for experts to participate in standardisation activities co-funded by Small Business Standards ([SBS](#)).
- Calls for experts (at the request of European institutions) to workshops, high level working groups and similar, with payment of allowances.
- Support in business to business (B2B) collaborations opportunities (DIGITAL SME liaises between its represented SMEs and helps them to make a first contact, collaborate or form consortia, including SMEs from other sectors than ICT).
- Opportunities to participate or speak at international events.
- Privileged access to trainings (free for members).
- Participation in Working Groups.
- Other services provided specifically for the organisations from the EU:
 - Representation vis à vis the European institutions and bodies. This includes organising direct meetings between members and EC officials or MEPs.
 - Tailored information and policy analysis on relevant EU policies. Participation in policy and research activities. Actual EU policy overviews prepared for dissemination by the executive body of associations to member digital SMEs and national policy-makers, for example, the following papers prepared in 2021: [Response on Digital Decades Targets 2030 Consultation](#); [Response to the Consultation on the Proposal for a Revised Directive on Security of Network and Information Systems](#); [Position Paper on the Digital Services Act](#); [Position Paper on the eIDAS Regulation](#); [Position Paper on the Digital Governance Act](#); [Position Paper on the Digital Markets Act](#); [Position Paper on the Digital Tax](#).

b) Eligibility/target group for a service:

- The following organisations can be eligible for *Associate Membership*:
 - Associations of ICT SMEs in countries that are not members of the European Union;
 - Any other organisation not fulfilling the conditions.
 - Associate members may take part in the Association's meetings, but without voting right.

c) How to join?

1. [Fill in the form](#) and upload the organisation Statutes.
2. Wait for secretariat to contact you.



3. Specific membership fee will be calculated based on the number of organisations that the applicant associates.

How national associations of ICT/digital SMEs can benefit?

Build capacity of the executive body of association as well as access B2B collaboration and business development opportunities for member digital SMEs.

2. Membership as an enterprise - European Digital Innovators Club

- a) **Service description:** Benefits provided for European Digital Innovators Club members are listed below:
- Access to DIGITAL SME's working groups (e.g. Focus Group - Artificial Intelligence, the Task Force Blockchain, or Working Group CYBER). See all working groups [here](#).
 - Funding opportunities.
 - Networking events.
 - Possibility to nominate experts for high-level meetings, workshops, and conferences.
- b) **Eligibility/target group for a service:** Membership is open to the following organisations:
- All enterprises that fulfil their respective national or the [European Commission's SME definition](#).
 - Other interested stakeholders like researchers, policymakers, or journalists (upon review by DIGITAL SME).
 - Members of DIGITAL SME's member associations enjoy free access to Innovators Club functionalities until 2022, when new Club-only services will be offered.
- c) **How to join?**
- o Joining the club is possible under the [link](#).

How national associations of ICT/digital SMEs can benefit?

Member SMEs of the association would be eligible for the free of charge access to Innovators Club, where they can get B2B collaboration and networking opportunities and additionally engage in policy work.

3. Working groups

- a) **Service description:** The European DIGITAL SME Alliance maintains the operation of the Working Groups that elaborate policy papers for EU and national bodies, as well as joint initiatives and project proposals in their related topics. The working groups are as follows:
- **WG SKILLS** covers a variety of topics related to skills development, re-skilling and easier outsourcing, which help to close the digital skills gap in Europe. WG SKILLS' expertise includes digital skills, social dialogue, movement of workers, competence centres, work-life balance, and other areas.
 - **WG DIGITALISATION** operates to enable the digital transformation of European industry. In order to foster innovation, WG contributes to policy debates and European initiatives on Industry 4.0, Digital Innovation Hubs, IoT, AI, building information modeling, cloud computing, blockchain and other technologies.
 - **WG STANDARDS** focuses on providing SMEs access to the European standardisation process. As the sectoral representative of Small Business Standards (SBS) in the field of ICT, DIGITAL SME helps small business representatives to actively participate in expert working groups and technical committees. WG STANDARDS develops positions and consultations for EU institutions and standardisation bodies.
 - **Other Working groups:** WG CYBER & DATA, WG Software Patents & Intellectual Property Rights, [Focus Group Artificial Intelligence](#), [Task Force Blockchain & DLT](#) and [Focus Group Sustainability](#).
- b) **Eligibility/target group for a service:** Representatives of Associate Members of DIGITAL SME and their member SMEs, members of European Digital Innovators Club.



c) **How to join?** [Register](#) and wait for approval.

How national associations of ICT/digital SMEs can benefit?

Build competence of the executive body of association as well as member digital SMEs in impacting policies of national digital markets via transmitting of consolidated business position.

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