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EU-AFRICA DIGITAL INNOVATION HUBS COLLABORATION POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS WORKSHOP REPORT

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Introduction

The EU-Africa Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) workshop was organised by Prototipi, partner of the DIGILOGIC project and was held on June 16th, 2023, in Cape Town, South Africa. It brought together representatives of the DIGILOGIC, AEDIB|NET, ENRICH in Africa, AfriconEU and mAkE projects (as per the Table here below).

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The workshop aimed to discuss each projects' experience, roadblocks and lessons learnt in strengthening the collaboration between European and African DIHs. The outcome of the discussion, summarised below, will contribute to the **Policy Recommendations Paper,** which all the Horizon 2020 ICT-58 projects will be submitting to the European Commission in September 2023.

The workshop started with Ryan Ford, VTT Research Scientist, presenting the **benefits of Open-Source Software for EU and African Innovators based on the DIGILOGIC experience**. The presentation is available **HERE** on the project's website.

The workshop continued, encompassing a comprehensive **discussion on five key topics,** which included:
- **recommendations for the adoption of collaborative framework models**
- **enhancing the capabilities of African DIHs**
- **fostering the development of African DIHs**
- **promoting sustainable collaboration between EU-DIHs**
- **and advancing the development and cooperation of DIH services**

The partnership between the Digital Innovation Hubs in the European Union and Africa presents an opportunity to facilitate progress, eliminate disparities, and unleash limitless potential. Collaborating in a concerted effort can establish an equitable and sustainable ecosystem that empowers creators, enhances capabilities, and lays the foundation for a promising tomorrow in crucial industries.

The first question kicking off the workshop was: ***What were the main pain points of collaboration between European and African digital innovation hubs?***

It was surprisingly easy for **DIGILOGIC** to make partners work together on the project, which involves two Digital Innovation Hubs in Africa and three from Europe. This was the first time these partners had worked together; Despite the project began in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the **collaboration kicked off quite nicely**.

There is a **significant disparity in knowledge, skills, and resources** between European and African Digital Innovation Hubs in DIGILOGIC. On this front, we worked to ensure an effective transfer and knowledge exchange between different DIHs. DIGILOGIC had, for example, specific peer-to-peer workshops between DIHs to exchange good practices, but **more could be done in the future to reinforce the reciprocal learning process**.

From **AEDIB|NET's perspective**. Regarding pain points, **there's a big gap in resources, primarily financial, when discussing African DIHs**. There are also **difficulties in parties' collaborations**, determined by geographical distance, differences in interests and priorities, and different perspectives. Matching parties' expectations is challenging due to a lack of incentives for cooperation. Collaboration requires partners to see the value, but that value can be perceived differently. Also, **various Digital Innovation Hubs are at different stages of maturity**; Some companies are in the early stages, while others are further along. This impacts service provision and adaptability. The main pain points here are mainly around **how to build cooperation for the benefit of everyone.**

ENRICH in Africa perspective. Raised the question of whether a common understanding of Digital Innovation Hubs is shared. In Europe, a framework exists for a consortium of organisations with specific skills providing certain services. The framework is very fluid in Africa. **When talking about Digital Innovation Hubs**, is **the same thing meant across the different projects**? Was there a discussion about what is out of scope for a Digital Innovation Hub at the beginning of the project? A digital **baseline must be established at the beginning of a project** by discussing the scope of a Digital Innovation Hub if the focus is services, collaboration, and win-win partnerships.

Digital Innovation Hubs have been established in Europe for several years, and the ecosystem surrounding them is robust. They have been collaborating with other stakeholders for a long time, and when they collaborate at a regional level, they are aware of funding opportunities. They share a common vision and purpose. African and European DIHs began collaborating thanks to AEDIB|NET funding and support, but their future is still being determined. This makes it challenging to discuss collaboration as we introduce African DIHs to established European DIHs that have collaborated for at least five years under the long-term framework set-ups of a DIH defined by the European Commission, which is not available in Africa.

ENRICH in Africa works with incubators and accelerators, and it's not focused on digital innovation. ENRICH in Africa aims to unite creative and agricultural hubs with a sector-agnostic approach. However, engaging the European side has proven to be a challenge. While the African side is highly engaged, interested, enthusiastic, and motivated, European start-

ups are more interested in Silicon Valley, and there seems to be a knowledge gap regarding the opportunities Africa offers. **European innovators seem so focused on going to the East or the West that they have yet to think about the South**; They haven't considered the opportunities in Africa for start-ups. Unless they have a product specifically focused on Africa for internationalisation, they tend to think about other markets. This is why incubators and accelerators mainly focus on the United States and the Far East for their soft-landing programs. As policymakers push the conversation about Africa, knowledge is gained, but a way needs to be found to **activate the interest of European entrepreneurs within the incubation ecosystem.**

AEDIB|NET has a partnership program and faces the same challenge. They received 200 applications from Africa and 30 from Europe. This could be due to the Africa-Europe collaboration. However, in Europe, many programs are available online even after COVID. Previously, start-ups and entrepreneurs had to dedicate a week to a workshop on-site which required them to leave their businesses largely unattended during that time. Now, everything is offered digitally, offering the participants much more flexibility and avoiding long-distance travel. European Innovators are usually connected to an incubator, accelerator, or university, so selecting the right candidate is not easy, unless you are providing them with precisely what they need. This should be considered for future programs.

What do the innovators need? Collaboration between African and European incubators and accelerators faces challenges even though they have a training program and share best practices to support each other. They need to start seeing the **collaboration from a mutual perspective**. This is often related to collaboration issues due to different levels of maturity. Digital Innovation Hubs often only require and expect an introduction to them rather than to invest in a mutual relationship. For example, needs and conditions are assessed and matched, and then the connection of entrepreneurs with champion services through ENRICH in Africa is made. Their twinning program provides appropriate hub connections and a framework including suggestions for a six-month-long relationship. At the end of the six months, progress is checked, but the champions are allowed to continue on their own; **the important thing is building relationships.**

The discussion moved to *an analysis of whether the current DIH model for supporting innovators and start-ups in Africa is the most effective.*

Consortia partners in Europe and Africa and network champions are highly qualified and enthusiastic about the collaboration. On the other hand, **innovation's focus in Africa differs from Europe. In Africa, it's driven by need, often for local solutions**. African innovators aim to scale local solutions, while **European innovators seek to internationalise** into African markets. Collaboration and competition are closely intertwined. This is especially true for ENRICH in Africa because they are building a network of various African and European partners who deliver similar programs. They will benefit from exchanging ideas, building capacity, and then twinning the different programs. However, there can be difficulties in getting them to collaborate.

The European Commission's top-down approach focuses on deep tech activities in Africa, while African players prioritise frugal innovation to meet local needs. **Different types of innovation are required, reflecting a unique African perspective.**

There are entirely different needs from the European and the African side, and it is still to be clarified **how to bridge that gap between the different requirements from both sides**. For example, how to match deep tech with food preservation?

DIGILOGIC noted that the project involved much learning, with activities from the work plan, like the trend radar, initially focusing on deep techs such as blockchain and artificial intelligence for smart logistics but had to be adapted to meet the needs of African innovators. Therefore, much "learning by doing" was needed to ensure relevance to the African audience. European innovators were initially reluctant to participate in co-creation activities with their African counterparts. However, DIGILOGIC's facilitation between European and African start-ups has supported new collaborations, as seen in the Italian and Kenyan start-ups collaborating. The partnership process takes time and support and requires mentoring and listening to the specific needs of innovators. It also **requires developing trust between these innovators so that they can engage in peer-to-peer exchanges**. The demo day in Cape Town and the boot camp in Finland allowed them to work together for a few days in person, building personal relationships and exchanging experiences from their own countries.

The discussion moved to another point in the agenda: *Are the EU-Africa DIHs collaborations meant to last?*

There must be an understanding of win-win partnerships as building friendships, getting to know each other, being in proximity, and building a community.

The European Commission has established a framework for Digital Innovation Hubs in Europe. Meanwhile, it is still in the developmental phase in Africa. Therefore, fostering fruitful collaborations, capacity building, and EU-AU meetings between DIHs are paramount. Through research, **what are the common denominators DIHs in Africa that differ from how it's being run in Europe**? Once a **baseline is established**, it is possible to determine what improvement are needed for African DIHs to lift them up to. The **co-creation activities** achieve this.

Despite the EU's focus on activation, Africa's priority is sustainability. While there is excitement at the beginning of EU collaborations, after a few months, African stakeholders lose interest due to a knowledge gap, and the collaboration they received was different from what they expected. There is no direct incentive for Africans, who desire money, investment, or the opportunity to travel to Europe.

The EC has ensured that African stakeholders are engaged in projects since 2021. However, many lose interest when they don't see direct benefits.

A question kept recurring: **What do EU-projects bring to the table that would move African stakeholders?** One challenge with the African-EU-projects is funding. The concept of incentives was not considered from the beginning. AfriconEU held meetings to determine possible sources of funds and created an ambassadors' program to have AfriconEU ambassadors, but soon realised it is not sustainable. For example, 150 African applications were received, but when the requirements were outlined, only 50 signed up. Only about 20 graduated, and 10 remained active. The program had to end since it wasn't sustainable. From the initiative, it was learned that there are two types of people. Some participants are willing

to work on the project because they have experience with the EU and understand that it is a slow process. Others are very interested; for example, one of them organised a TEDx event and invited AfriconEU to speak. All AfriconEU materials, webinars, masterclasses, and workshops are available online to go back to, and some participants returned to ask for mentor introductions.

It must be clarified that the **purpose is to enable them and not take away their power.** Incentives are not given for compliance - they should be present from the beginning when working on these projects and calls. AfriconEU have had several interviews with government officials, at least for the project's first phase. Some DIHs' managers were not interested in conversing because they had already been involved in one, two, or three EU projects. It appears that their actions did not align with their initial assurances, as they proceeded to utilise the reports without showing any recognition for the hard work that was put into their creation.

For sustainable development in Africa, a catalyst and methodology are needed. Catalysts provide direct incentives, such as introductions to helpful contacts, to achieve alignment. Meanwhile, the methodology is essential to ensure that progress is made.

In some African countries, people prefer physical interactions and phone calls over email. This makes it difficult to get them to register and show up. Contact is made with community leaders to fill seats, but sometimes attendees need help understanding why they're there. Spoon feeding is necessary for grassroots digital innovation ecosystems. **Even when attempting to assist their growth, they still feel dependent on the EU funded projects. It is crucial to have a sustainable methodology to reach the end goal.**

Look for the purpose of incentive, most likely now joint research programs. People are more likely to join if they can be involved from the beginning and understand the impact and success of the project. It's important to develop initiatives that encourage cooperation from the start. However, some people stop participating because they feel used. Collaboration and competition coexist in the digital innovation ecosystem within the states. While many tech workers are proud to earn money through remote jobs, some cannot travel to Lagos or Abuja. Opportunities are accessible, and those who cannot afford to miss out take them seriously. However, those already connected to Abuja may perceive these opportunities as wasting time. It is crucial to **foster communication and collaboration to cultivate the digital innovation ecosystem.**

The "train-the-trainers" model is used to give back and balance the conversation around competition and collaboration. AfriconEU created a network of Ambassadors from different African countries who came together in a WhatsApp group, where they share challenges and ideas to make a difference. Monthly meetings with consortium partners encourage cooperation and idea-sharing.

Eliminating the element of competition and focusing on making an impact with African EU projects to ensure their success, measure their impact, and benefit the EC. Frequent meetings for ICT58-projects allow us to efficiently and timely address each other's challenges.

A **co-creation process should be in place when the EU calls for proposals are drafted to consider the European and African perspectives**. For instance, the AUE Youth Cooperation Hub co-created a call for proposals in Addis Ababa in 2018. Identifying partners and accessing information in African countries about these projects can be challenging. When preparing a proposal, please provide your number, PIC, and a short paragraph describing your role in the project. This is not co-creation but necessary to address gaps in knowledge of the African market.

Is there a real need? Knowing about the Ambassador Program and putting it out there from the beginning would be a plus. It is essential to **question whether Europeans genuinely want to learn from their African partners or merely seek to share.** This should be a part of the co-creation process to understand what can be known, added, and brought to the table. **African partners should also understand what they can gain from these projects.**

The meetings like AU-EU Innovation Festival in Cape Town in June 2023 were a fantastic opportunity for young innovators to network and present their ideas to diverse people. It's not just about winning but also **about the experience of pitching on stage and contributing to something greater.**

Understanding the nuances of innovation in different regions in each country, to meet local needs is important. **Acknowledging and respecting needs cultural differences when working on projects is essential**.

mAkE perspective. The meaning of Digital Innovation Hubs in the project was discussed multiple times to define its scope, and it is crucial to strike a balance and make it broad enough. The concept is perceived differently in Africa and Europe. The mAkE project focuses on makerspaces. Do other projects include makers' spaces? Are they considered part of the Digital Innovation Hub? **Makerspaces in Europe qualify as Digital Innovation Hubs**, even though they have different names and slight differences in their functions.

Projects must clarify their definition of a Digital Innovation Hub and how it is approached. Additionally, we realised that **makerspaces in Africa differ from those in Europe,** as they are often businesses **providing employment and livelihood**. In the **European context,** not all maker spaces operate as businesses. Some are simply **spaces for tinkering and collaborating on projects** without expecting to generate revenue or employment. In Africa, however, makerspaces often provide full-time employment and a source of revenue for those involved. Engaging African maker spaces in projects has been challenging but involving them from the beginning can help.

African maker spaces realise that the value they seek differs from what is provided. For many, value equates to money or direct funding, and they express concern about the sustainability of maker spaces following COVID-related shutdowns. They expect immediate value in the form of funding to support their actions and lack interest in research unless it yields concrete feedback and value. **To engage African makerspaces in research activities, better communication channels and responsiveness must be established.** When communicating with European makerspaces, it's important to be responsive. However, African spaces may

require following up multiple times and utilising WhatsApp, phone calls, and Google Calendar reminders to ensure event commitment.

One successful program in the mAkE project is a maker-in-residency program. Applications were open for makers and makerspaces from both continents to apply. Selected makers will be sent to collaborate, learn, and prototype in a maker space on another continent. Many applications were received from African makers and spaces but very few from the European side. One of the main challenges for collaboration is the need for more direct access from African innovation hubs and makerspaces to European ones.

Individual projects can only partially bridge the gap between African and European spaces. While efforts to connect these spaces and establish communication networks are ongoing, they cannot be relied upon solely as these projects ensure collaboration since they have an end date. **What happens to that collaboration when it ends? Who then facilitates that collaboration between the spaces in Africa and Europe?** mAkE has utilised the Global Innovation Gathering (GIG) and African Maker Space Network, both in the consortium. GIG connects innovators and spaces worldwide. The African Maker Space Network also connects maker spaces across Africa. Until now, a collective association that exists purposely to bring together spaces from Africa and Europe has not been founded. If a collaborative effort between spaces in Africa and Europe is to be sustained beyond individual projects, **it would be beneficial to establish a collective association**.

Finally, **financial resources and visa processes** need to be improved to ensure effective collaboration.

The discussion moved to ***defining and differentiating an incubator accelerator from an innovation hub or Digital Innovation Hub.***

A maker space is a hardware studio equipped with traditional and digital fabrication tools, such as hammers, 3D printers, laser cutters, and vinyl cutters. It serves as a hub for innovation and small-scale production and can also function as an incubator for business ideas.

Technology is crucial in generating solutions, but **software-only solutions are sometimes insufficient.** Hardware components may be needed for specific ideas. Makerspaces can provide resources for prototyping, making the process easier and promoting involvement in hardware development.

From Tanzania's innovation ecosystem perspective, an innovation space is a place for early-stage businesses. They receive mentorship until they have a minimum viable product and are taken to the incubator. They can access mentorship, financing, marketing, and other expertise there. Fab Lab takes on hardware start-ups at any level, providing access to mentorship, prototyping, and testing.

On the European side, the innovation hub has the idea of creating an ecosystem of organisations. When collaborating with African DIHs, they are expected to have a group of complementary organisations.

In a scenario where different organisations with complementary capabilities come together in a group, not all of them must have the same say. For example, representatives of a Digital Innovation Hub don't always see themselves as part of a DIH when contacting incubators and accelerators. They may question why they are attending a meeting in a maker space. **Instead, it would benefit both parties to collaborate and have the makerspace in touch with the DIH.**

It is important to consider government institutions' alignment with sustainability when contributing to program sustainability. After the program ends, connecting the supported individuals to existing programs is crucial. For instance, the Minister of Science and Innovation runs an innovation program in Tanzania. They usually hold innovation competitions. Local programs run by the consortium connect start-ups and Digital Innovation Hubs participating in local workshops with ministry-run programs. Participants receive support for mentorship, seed funding, and networking access to other developing partners. When designing programs, it's important to avoid duplication and complement what others have done—research existing ecosystems to understand how to contribute best.

Ways to support start-ups in Tanzania must be explored in accessing the European market. This includes soft landing solutions and collaboration with Finnish Digital Innovation Hubs. The Southern Africa Innovation Support Program, funded by the Finnish and Tanzanian governments, has helped Tanzanian start-ups establish businesses in Finland, test their products in the Finnish market, and connect with other start-ups and Silicon Valley. However, a succession plan for the program must be developed.

Once more, it all comes down to capacity building. As capacity is built for innovators, start-ups, and entrepreneurs for sustainability, there must be a focus on building EU capacity to continue supporting them beyond the project's end. Government involvement, incentives, and sustainability are important considerations. Each state in Nigeria has its unique way of running government agencies, although there is a federal baseline. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology in Tanzania handles innovation. In Ondo State, three agencies specialise in technology.

When engaging with governments, which tech agencies align with the project or DIHs goals must be considered. **Sustainability is critical**, and the **triple helix model involving academia, the private sector, and government is often discussed.** However, it must be considered that governments in Nigeria change every four years, and new administrations may not be interested in continuing previous initiatives. Therefore, it's crucial to engage with governments to ensure political support.

Diplomacy is essential because people expect the government to provide initiatives to better their lives despite not trusting it. When engaging with the government, identify the value of cooperation and agencies sharing this value with your project. Besides the provision of the seed fund, the necessary resources must be provided. Which agencies can assist with this? Instead of just providing the funds, identify the challenges that can be solved to motivate involvement. It's important to manage the government's participation in this area.

It would be beneficial to extend the timeline of the value given to governments when they assist with implementing projects. Suppose they are given the value over a more extended

period, such as every 2-5 years. In that case, it will encourage commitment from future governments and prevent a loss of support when a new government takes power. It needs to be ensured that the objectives of the DIHs align with government and institutional policies, so the government requires the projects to implement their policies.

Participating in a two-way dialogue is necessary to address significant needs. Remembering that this dialogue should be two-way, even if it doesn't always feel that way. It's also essential to follow the narrative and be a part of it, in addition to expecting support from funders, donors, and institutions.

Government and politics are intertwined, and all governments operate similarly. It's not surprising, and **there is a need to ensure politicians see project outcomes to secure sustainability,** even if their timeframe is shorter than expected. By keeping dialogue and being attentive to alignment, this can be achieved.

At this coordination stage, the importance of funding is recognised by having a unified funding instrument. DG RTD uses Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, while DG INTPA utilises direct grants, loans, and blended finance. **The aim is to implement the AU innovation agenda through unifying instruments under one overarching initiative.**

It would be best if the stakeholders suggested initiatives that contribute to implementing the innovation agenda. Co-creation involves annual workshops with training, networking, matchmaking, and experience-sharing components. We want to build on previous events and require reports to the official AU-UA policy dialogue on science, technology, and innovation, but stakeholders can also be involved.

Digital Innovation Hubs in Europe provide SMEs and industries with platforms for technology scouting and testing before investing. This is not the case in Africa, yet. For this reason, DIGILOGIC works to engage industry players, like for example Procter & Gamble and DHL, as they are already operating in the continent and they could be interested in scouting and support local African innovators.

The Digital Innovation Hubs often offer standardised programs that may cater to something other than the specific needs of innovators and start-ups. DIGILOGIC, on the other hand, provides a menu of training options that innovators can choose from or apply to participate in. The focus is on experimentation and providing personalised support to innovators.

We are learning by implementing. ENRICH in Africa network includes **incubators and accelerators and operates on a multi-sided platform business model.** Engagement is required with innovators to add value to these incubators and accelerators. A needs assessment process acts as a pipeline to connect individuals with incubators and accelerators that offer relevant services. The point is to **create that dynamic of finding out the needs and then finding the services that can support them.**

A question was raised about sustainability, project silos, and post-funding existence**.** Currently, there is curiosity about a project completed by Enrich in Africa. A new legal entity was established that will continue to exist beyond the project's life. The ENRICH in Africa

Centre's definition is heavily influenced by the ENRICH in Africa project. **ENRICH in Africa Centre is specifically designed to be this point between the policymakers and those guys on the ground**—someone who can have conversations at all levels. If limited despite existing, it may benefit business, but as a connectivity point, the focus should be on incubation, acceleration, and innovation support.

The new ENRICH in Africa Centre can better meet needs and offer services to help with the legacy of the project. It is divided into separate entities with a new CEO who will be based in Cape Town. Conversations regarding the proposal mentioned above should be directed to them.

During the project discussion, concerns were raised about the long-term cost of about 7,000 euros per year for running the centre after the project ends. It was suggested to explore options like repurposing the ENRICH in Africa Centre or presenting it as an opportunity to others for a win-win situation.

This will be a legacy, a way to offer what innovators need. **Projects must be used to identify their needs, create an impact, and find a way to continue.** It's important to have a business-oriented mindset when starting a project. This involves identifying a need and ensuring that the project meets that need. Otherwise, it will only be viable if it is funded.

Innovators are being matched with incubators and accelerators. However, their operations differ. One part seeks start-ups with the potential to internationalise and make a huge impact, as their revenue model is based on owning a company share.

Another incubator has claimed that they don't require a pipeline of innovators as they are funded mainly by the government. However, the aim is to **unite all incubators under one umbrella** and provide services that meet the needs of all participants.

For instance, if both parties need capacity building or access to relevant calls, we must adapt to their specific needs.

There are three types of innovation hubs. Some see a problem in their environment or a particular location and **want to be able to solve that problem**. First, establish a Digital Innovation Hub to tackle this issue. Then, search for partners who can assist in growing and obtaining funding.

The second **type of innovation hub is those who know the EU is funding technology.** One way to survive is to align with the EU's focus on public health, green transition, and science. Developing proposals aligned with the AU EU innovation agenda can lead to funding for new projects.

The **third type of Digital Innovation Hubs are those that made a name for themselves**. They are involved in almost all EU projects. They are admired for their visibility, and it is good to learn from them.

Three categories of **digital innovation goals** must be identified and then determined which **partners are best suited for each project or proposal**. Additionally, the needs of **stakeholders should be addressed.**

It may be challenging to navigate if you receive 30 applications from innovators and 20 want funding. Ten people want matchmaking, and ten want networking. Balancing both is possible. By doing so, all problems can be addressed in different ways. Discussing the sustainability of projects, innovation hubs, and networks they are intertwined. The knowledge developed in the project must continue and ensure that the network of Digital Innovation Hubs and people on the ground is left to their own devices.

The sustainability of the assets developed in projects, such as the DIGILOGIC community. What will happen to the community in the future?

Questions should be asked: Have you participated in any EU initiatives? If so, what were your experiences? What challenges do beneficiaries face, and how can we design sustainable solutions? Sustainability is a crucial focus for EC projects, and we should work together to meet the needs of beneficiaries. How can we combine our resources and results to create a lasting impact? Shall the partners of the ICT-58 projects join forces for a common follow up action?

A new call from the AU EU lab requires applicants to include funds for grantees in their proposals. The proposal is for 7 million, and a specific percentage must be allocated for the grantees. Several factors to consider when supporting Digital Innovation Hubs include empowerment, capacity, funding, and coordination. However, coordinating efforts and addressing diverse needs can be challenging.

Are DIHs in Africa ready for smart specialisation? And should this specialization be linked to the AU-EU Innovation agenda strategic pillars?

There are several digital innovation tools in Africa, including recent ones like the blue economy. Should these tools be recommended to the EC for future courses? Are innovation hubs critical to the EU Africa innovation agenda? Should DIHs be linked to priorities like smart agriculture and public healthcare?

This point should be addressed from **private DIHs and government DIHs perspectives.** In Tanzania, the innovation focuses on agriculture, health, education, etc. The government's goal is not to leave anyone behind and support everyone in the community. Despite challenges like infrastructure and the internet, there should be grassroots efforts to address these issues. Many businesses are moving to Lagos due to various factors. Despite the state government's efforts to lay fibre, **readiness can only be achieved by addressing the issue.** Necessary infrastructure is needed to execute there. Logistic support needs to be provided to move personnel. In addition to **readiness for DIHs, EU support must be discussed.**

African DIHs need support in readiness as well, it is not that they do not want to take it on, they cannot take it due to capacity constraints. Both parties need to be ready. The EU should not be solely responsible for readiness. Each vertical sector has its local content and context, whether public health, innovation, or green transition.

It is important to **localising the DIHs activities and specialisation to fit the local needs and local policy makers priorities and requirements**.

Networking should be approached from a different perspective. A single person within the EU network can support a start-up through three other connections. One person can link a start-up to a program, then have a conversation with that person, and they can connect the start-up to others who can support them. This way, **a pool of contacts can be built to assist a start-up across different sectors.**

The critical point highlighted is about **incorporating grassroots efforts**. It's not just about state priorities but also about **local community involvement**. By establishing Digital Innovation Hubs that focus on grassroots efforts, more value can be brought to these projects.

Networking plays a crucial role in the implementation process and contributes to sustainability. Working together to maximise impact and leverage resources through events like the one held in Cape Town. This approach is not limited to DIGILOGIC and ENRICH in Africa but includes all ICT58 projects. Working together creates a **multiplier effect** for all beneficiaries and ensures the long-term success of our projects.

DIHs and maker spaces undertake numerous activities and have a significant impact; what indicators and evidence support this? Engaging with many spaces, a key finding from the research is that even though innovation hubs are specifically doing training, prototyping, and small-scale production, the relationship between what they do **and their impact is like one too many.** With skills training, for example, the impact is vast and widespread, spanning various sectors like agriculture, health, technology, and innovation.

It's not beyond Digital Innovation Hubs to specialise in specific sectors, as their work spans multiple industries. However, the EU must be ready to build capacity in innovation and technology, public health, and agriculture. Regarding whether **DIHs should be prioritised across target areas**. They enable innovation, and there may be ways to find a common thread across areas, from food security projects to public health. The DIGILOGIC ecosystem had an outstanding quality of innovators at the AU-EU festival, including eloquence and speaking skills. Notably, the Southern African participants were also particularly impressive. There is a space for cost-cutting across the five areas. Be specific about actions in the final agenda. Look for a common thread to see how a Digital Innovation Hub can contribute to different activities.

Due to the DIGILOGIC project's nature, innovators in smart logistics were engaged in Zambia and Ghana. Additionally, corporate logistics sector experts were engaged. As a result, BongoHive received a request from the Logistics Association in Zambia to offer digital innovation lab expertise in logistics. **This acquisition of specialisation has made them perceived as experts in their context. The partners are saying, let's not end DIGILOGIC.** How are resources allocated to sustain it? But what kind of collaboration can be supported after DIGILOGIC ends? Corporations are interested in African markets and innovation. However, they usually derive innovation from their European or regional headquarters in Europe or the Middle East. How can the private sector be encouraged to support innovation hubs in Africa?

Create a **self-sufficient perspective for Africans**. Aim to **scale up after receiving the initial funding and technical assistance.**

It is possible to offer subtle mentoring to advise African DIHs. The **commitment to the project has decreased, and providing monitoring and evaluation to ensure the progress is recovered is needed.** Through social mentoring, the needs of individuals can be identified, and they can be connected to relevant projects or initiatives. A pragmatic approach is appreciated, and the idea that action brings change. It will take time, but it will inspire other initiatives.

The workshop concluded with a final remark on *how to promote sustainable collaboration between EU-Africa DIHs.*

Research and innovation organisations, NGOs, and European companies that engage with EU delegations or bilateral embassies in Africa should be part of the sustainable and enduring discussion. There is a need to monitor and quantify European engagement to **emancipate the Europe-Africa relationship from dependency on international development.**

Innovation-driven initiatives will dominate the future, as it is currently. Therefore, more European organisations must balance the relationship and provide **market access opportunities for African start-ups.** This could be achieved through private-private partnerships or partnerships between start-ups and companies from Europe and Africa. Public funding may not be necessary once the early risk stage is overcome. Ways to systematise progress in this space should also be discussed with colleagues from DG INPA, through a system that includes progress updates. One of the biggest challenges is engaging with the European market. Innovators have yet to show much interest in Africa. **Much work is needed with the European Commission and political leaders to build awareness and educate on the opportunities and value proposition of working with Africa.**

It's essential to bridge the gap between the African and European sides. This is where ENRICH in Africa comes in – discussing what it entails. Since the business plan is still somewhat fluid, determining what **value each nugget of the project offers is needed. Is it a network, a tangible tool, or a platform?** Once these needs are identified, they can be brought together and **determine their impact on the ecosystem.** This meeting is for policy recommendations to create opportunities and change in a joint effort with the Commission. It is essential to follow a specific format for policy recommendations. To make it more effective, consider tailoring it to the party. For instance, if you surveyed at the beginning of the AU Innovation Agenda, it may be worthwhile to create different surveys for business support organisations and innovators so that they can better understand and provide feedback on what they need.

Can EU-Africa DIHs collaboration be pivotal in supporting the EU-AU innovation strategy across the identified key collaboration area?

When considering Digital Innovation Hubs, it's crucial to contextualise them within research and innovation infrastructures—from that viewpoint, keeping them as **lighthouses within the ecosystem for research infrastructures**. Let's make it as specific and applied as possible. You can address multiple thematic areas simultaneously, but the **infrastructure is always linked to sustainability.**