

# Insights of 2nd DIF-WGs Meeting

Monday 4th of November from 14:00 to 15:30 (CEST)

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## WG1: HUMAN-CENTRIC DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

### *TOPIC 1.1 : Navigating regulation, ethics, and data ownership in human-centric digital transformation*

The rapid evolution of digital technologies presents both opportunities and risks, making **regulatory adaptability** essential to maintaining a human-centric approach to digital transformation. Governments must not only update policies to bridge digital gaps but also ensure that regulations safeguard human rights. Mechanisms such as **innovation sandboxes** and pre-implementation evaluations can help test policies in controlled environments before full deployment. Additionally, **collaborative regulatory frameworks**—involving civil society, academia, and private entities—are crucial to ensuring that digital governance remains transparent, inclusive, and aligned with long-term societal interests.

A key challenge in digital governance is the ethical oversight of **artificial intelligence (AI)**. Algorithmic impact assessments are necessary but not sufficient; additional safeguards are required to prevent biases that can perpetuate social inequalities. Strategies such as **collaborative algorithm auditing**, unbiased data collection, and cross-sector partnerships can strengthen AI transparency and accountability while ensuring that human rights remain at the core of digital innovation.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) also have a fundamental role in **bridging digital literacy gaps** and ensuring equitable digital transformation. Beyond providing infrastructure and funding, PPPs must actively promote **capacity-building initiatives** that equip individuals with the necessary skills to navigate the digital world. At the same time, clear and enforceable **data protection guidelines** must be established to balance technological advancement with individual rights.

In the realm of **cross-border digital initiatives**, ensuring individual control over personal data is paramount. Expanding the use of **data processing agreements (DPAs)** and provenance protocols can offer individuals greater autonomy over their information. An international mechanism allowing people to confirm or deny the use of their data in digital projects could serve as a foundational step toward a more ethical and transparent digital ecosystem.

The following conclusions outline the key regulatory, ethical, and structural considerations necessary to ensure that digital transformation remains inclusive, fair, and human-centric across EU and LAC regions.

How can we ensure that regulatory frameworks keep pace with emerging technologies while maintaining human-centric principles?

**Updating government policies** is crucial to bridging the digital gap while ensuring that fundamental human rights are protected. One effective approach is the use of **innovation sandboxes** and testbeds, allowing policymakers to trial and refine **new technological regulations** before full-scale implementation.

To enhance transparency and inclusivity, **collaborations with civil society organizations (CSOs)** and citizens should be encouraged, fostering a more **participatory regulatory process**. Additionally, conducting consultations and ex-ante evaluations for urgent matters can help prevent the introduction of regulations that may inadvertently infringe on human rights. The **European Union's legal frameworks on impact assessments**<sup>1</sup> (if duly implemented) offer a strong foundation for safeguarding the interests of future generations, ensuring that digital policies remain sustainable and equitable. However, recent concerns regarding transparency in some core legislation, such as the European Green Deal, highlight the need for consistent and accountable application of these frameworks.

Given the emphasis on mandatory algorithmic impact assessments, What additional ethical guidelines are necessary to prevent bias in AI algorithms while prioritizing human rights?

The widespread adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) raises concerns about bias in algorithmic decision-making. Addressing **inherent biases in data** is essential to prevent discriminatory outcomes that disproportionately affect vulnerable communities. To mitigate these risks, **human rights considerations** should be integrated from the earliest stages of AI development, including algorithm design and data selection. Ensuring that the teams behind AI development are diverse and inclusive is crucial to incorporating a broad range of perspectives and minimizing bias before deployment, ultimately reducing the need for extensive audits and corrections after implementation.

One way to strengthen transparency and fairness is by creating collaborative spaces where algorithm audits can be conducted, directly involving the communities impacted by these technologies. **Collaboration with universities and civil society organizations** can further enhance algorithmic transparency, enabling the collection of unbiased data and promoting more equitable outcomes. At a European level, establishing **coalitions such as Eticas Foundation and IA Ciudadana** can provide a structured approach to assessing and auditing AI algorithms, integrating a political perspective to ensure fairness and accountability.

What specific roles should public-private partnerships play in addressing digital literacy gaps and promoting human-centric digital transformation?

Developing digital skills is essential for fostering an inclusive digital society. A key priority should be **training and skill development programs** that enhance digital literacy across all demographics. To ensure ethical and secure technology use, both government and industry must establish **clear guidelines for data protection**.

Additionally, digital education programs must **prioritize underrepresented groups**, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in learning opportunities. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives should also play a role in funding and supporting digital inclusion projects in underserved communities, reinforcing the **importance of equitable access to digital resources**.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission's impact assessments:

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/imp-act-assessments\\_en&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1741860853546958&usq=AOvVaw27fvE0IXtzAytGtYgwVKv9](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/imp-act-assessments_en&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1741860853546958&usq=AOvVaw27fvE0IXtzAytGtYgwVKv9)

## How can we expand the use of data processing agreements (DPAs) and provenance protocols to strengthen individual control over data in cross-border digital initiatives?

As digital ecosystems become increasingly interconnected, **individuals must have greater control over their personal data** in cross-border digital initiatives. A practical solution is the development of an international tool that allows individuals to confirm or deny the use of their personal or anonymized data in such initiatives.

To ensure transparency and accountability, it is necessary to **standardize data provenance protocols**, which provide clear records of how data is collected, stored, and shared. Additionally, adopting **decentralized identity frameworks** can empower individuals with greater control over their personal data, reducing dependency on centralized authorities.

Finally, to reinforce ethical data usage, independent oversight bodies should be established to **monitor compliance with cross-border data agreements**. These entities would play a crucial role in ensuring that data-sharing practices align with global privacy and security standards, ultimately safeguarding individual rights in the digital age.

## ***TOPIC 1.2: Education and global collaboration for a human-centric digital future***

The success of digital transformation lies not only in technological advancements but also in how they are designed and implemented with a human-centered approach. To prepare future professionals for this challenge, **education must integrate project-based learning that emphasizes the social impact of digital technologies**. By incorporating established project management frameworks and interdisciplinary perspectives, curricula can equip students with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of digital transformation while prioritizing social responsibility.

Ensuring that emerging technologies, such as blockchain for financial inclusion, reach marginalized populations requires not only a shift in focus from technology to real-world applications but also a **recognition of the foundational infrastructure needed for digital transformation**. Without reliable connectivity, digital literacy, and state-supported infrastructure, efforts to promote adoption risk being ineffective. Public-private collaborations, open innovation initiatives, and targeted education programs can bridge this gap, fostering sustainable adoption. Additionally, incorporating local perspectives, regulatory frameworks, and direct engagement with end-user communities is essential for building trust and **ensuring these solutions align with actual needs**. It is crucial to assess whether digital transformation is truly a priority for these communities or if more immediate concerns—such as food security, healthcare, and access to basic services—must take precedence. Understanding these contextual factors can help tailor interventions that are both meaningful and sustainable.

Balancing data privacy with open science in collaborative research requires a strategic combination of **anonymization, encryption, and privacy-by-design principles**. While data-sharing interoperability standards can facilitate collaboration, they must be adapted to diverse regional privacy regulations. The EU's role in establishing secure data spaces and promoting transparent consent mechanisms can help researchers navigate the complexities of cross-border data sharing while safeguarding individuals' rights.

For EU and LAC initiatives to align in fostering human-centric digital transformation, mutual recognition of privacy regulations and shared governance structures will be crucial. Establishing **interoperability frameworks, regulatory sandboxes, and capacity-building programs** can support regional adaptation while maintaining global standards. Additionally, addressing financial barriers to data infrastructure access will be key to ensuring equitable participation in digital innovation across regions. Ultimately, the intersection of technology, policy, and social impact must be carefully navigated to ensure that digital transformation is both inclusive and sustainable.

How can project-based modules that integrate the social impact of digital transformation be incorporated into curricula to better prepare future professionals for human-centric digital work?

To integrate project-based modules that emphasize the social impact of digital transformation into curricula, it's essential to start by addressing the current gap in social impact education, particularly in regions like Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), where this focus is often lacking. Utilizing established **project management frameworks**, such as PMI (Project Management Institute) and

IPMA (International Project Management Association), can provide a **foundation of internationally recognized best practices** that already incorporate aspects of project-based social impact training.

By aligning curriculum modules with professional certification standards widely used in industry, educators can ensure that students gain relevant, applicable skills. Additionally, integrating **methodologies that promote multidisciplinary**, such as the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills funded through the Erasmus+ programme<sup>2</sup>, can facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders to adapt curricula based on current and future industry needs. These initiatives help bring together disciplines like computer science, sociology, and business, providing students with a **holistic perspective on digital transformation**. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that future professionals understand both the technical and societal dimensions of digital transformation, equipping them to lead projects that are not only efficient but also socially responsible.

What strategies can ensure that technologies, such as blockchain for financial inclusion, are developed with a focus on reaching marginalized populations?

To ensure that technologies like blockchain are developed with a **focus on financial inclusion for marginalized populations**, it's essential to prioritize real-world applications over the technology itself. This approach can make it easier to explain the benefits and relevance of these technologies to underserved groups.

First, private sector involvement should be encouraged to drive adoption, supported by targeted educational programs that emphasize solving specific financial problems and creating business opportunities. "Learning by doing" can foster **practical understanding**, and clear, sustainable business models should be developed to support this.

Open innovation challenges are effective tools to bring together public, private, and academic sectors, sparking collaborative solutions tailored to financial inclusion. Startups and spinoffs that focus on SPIDER HC goals for marginalized populations should have access to **dedicated funding mechanisms** to help them succeed.

An intercultural dialogue approach can further strengthen these efforts, allowing technology developers to learn from early adopters in similar communities and adapt solutions to local needs. Additionally, using **practical tools like PESTEL** (Political, Economic, Societal, Technological, Environmental, and Legal) analysis can provide a structured evaluation of the broader implications of emerging technologies (including blockchain, cybersecurity, and AI), ensuring that their development aligns with real-world challenges. To achieve the success and sustainable adoption of these technologies, it's also essential for governments to **integrate financial tech into the economic system with clear regulatory frameworks**. This will help establish trust and provide the oversight necessary to protect vulnerable populations while expanding access to financial services.

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<sup>2</sup> The scope of the Blueprint is to bring different stakeholders together to understand current and future needs, and swiftly adapt curricula to include new technology, business or societal trends at national and regional level: [https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/working-together/blueprint-sectoral-cooperation-skills\\_en](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/working-together/blueprint-sectoral-cooperation-skills_en)

## How can we strike a balance between protecting personal data and enabling open science in collaborative research?

To balance protecting personal data and enabling open science in collaborative research, several approaches are essential. First, **data anonymization** plays a crucial role by stripping away personally identifiable information (PII), such as names and addresses, ensuring that shared datasets do not compromise individual privacy. Additionally, strong **encryption and secure data handling practices** safeguard sensitive data against unauthorized access, a foundational measure across the data lifecycle. Implementing **privacy-by-design principles** from the start of any research initiative helps embed privacy considerations at every stage—from data collection through to storage and analysis. This approach ensures that privacy remains a priority throughout the data's lifecycle.

For collaborative research to be feasible, **interoperability standards** like FHIR for health data are vital, as they enable consistent data-sharing practices across various systems. However, addressing diverse regional privacy rules—some of which require data localization or database registration with public entities—is critical to enabling cross-border data sharing, as these differences can hinder collaborative efforts. To facilitate lawful data sharing, **consent mechanisms for personal data use** are essential. Where individuals opt-in, they have more control over their data, which respects privacy while allowing valuable data to be used in research.

Finally, the EU could play a leadership role by opening its cybersecurity infrastructure to support data adoption and establishing data spaces that allow for secure, privacy-respecting data sharing.

## How can EU and LAC initiatives be aligned to foster shared human-centric goals while respecting regional differences in privacy and data sovereignty?

To align EU and LAC initiatives and foster shared, human-centric goals while respecting regional privacy and data sovereignty, the focus should start with specific areas, such as health data interoperability, using **globally recognized standards** like HL7 FHIR. This allows for consistent data exchange frameworks while promoting trust. The EU's support for interoperability standards can serve as a foundation, particularly when combined with security-enhancing tools like the EU X-ROAD, which could be adapted to establish reliable cross-regional trust.

**Mutual recognition agreements and frameworks** can strengthen collaboration, ensuring that each region's privacy standards are acknowledged and respected. **Regulatory sandboxes** will be essential to test these frameworks in real-world settings, allowing for regional customization that addresses local priorities while fostering innovation.

Aligning around shared values, especially equity and inclusion, can reinforce the commitment to human-centric policies. This alignment would also benefit from capacity-building programs to deepen understanding of privacy and data protection, equipping organizations and policymakers with the tools to **navigate data sovereignty and regional regulatory complexities**.

Finally, as the high costs associated with using EU data and infrastructure may pose challenges for LAC partners, the EU should explore mechanisms to facilitate access while ensuring that this support does not compromise the economic sovereignty of LAC countries. Any cost-mitigation strategy must



be developed collaboratively, ensuring that LAC partners retain autonomy in shaping their digital ecosystems and regulatory frameworks.

## WG2: DIVERSITY, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

### *TOPIC 2.1: Integrating DEI into Digital Transformation*

Achieving Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) in digital transformation remains a complex challenge, shaped by cultural barriers, structural limitations, and resistance to change. Despite existing initiatives and funding, **many underrepresented groups still face significant obstacles in accessing opportunities within the digital landscape**. The lack of representation, particularly of women, indigenous peoples, and marginalized communities, perpetuates exclusion and limits the potential for inclusive innovation.

Additionally, workplace cultures and industry structures often fail to provide environments where diverse voices can thrive. In regions like Latin America and the Caribbean, it is crucial to **engage indigenous communities in discussions about digital transformation**, recognizing that their relationship with technology may differ from mainstream perspectives. Many indigenous groups prioritize a deep connection with the Earth and may not see digital transformation as an immediate need. Therefore, rather than imposing digital solutions, initiatives should be built around their expressed needs and interests, **ensuring that any technological integration respects their cultural values and autonomy**. Imposing digital transformation without community-driven demand could lead to societal resistance, ultimately hindering broader adoption efforts.

However, integrating DEI principles into digital transformation is not just a matter of social responsibility. It is an economic and innovation-driven imperative. When inclusion is prioritized, digital ecosystems become more dynamic, fostering creativity, addressing skill gaps, and ensuring that **technological solutions reflect the needs of all users**. A diverse workforce enhances productivity and leads to the development of more human-centric and equitable digital tools, ultimately driving broader social and economic progress through a bottom-up approach.

To bridge these gaps, fostering collaboration between Europe and LAC regions is essential. Establishing mechanisms for knowledge and cultural exchange, promoting case studies, and engaging organizations in structured DEI initiatives can accelerate progress. By **embedding inclusivity at the core of digital transformation strategies**, societies can unlock the full potential of technology to serve diverse populations effectively.

The following conclusions outline the key challenges, benefits, and strategies identified to strengthen DEI in the digital era.

**What are the most significant cultural barriers to integrating DEI principles into digital transformation?**

The **underrepresentation of women and marginalized groups in digital careers** remains a significant barrier to inclusivity. Despite efforts to promote diversity, the voices of women and vulnerable groups often struggle to be heard within the tech industry. Additionally, scaling DEI initiatives across large organizations poses considerable challenges, with corporate resistance slowing down progress.

Even with government funding and initiatives, many underrepresented groups still lack accessible pathways to participate in digital transformation efforts. In some regions, **outreach programs focus primarily on young women**, overlooking a wider range of ages and backgrounds in digital careers.

**Workplace culture** is another challenge, as predominantly masculine environments may create discomfort and hinder inclusivity for women. Moreover, general resistance to change within organizations can prevent the effective adoption of DEI practices. Large companies, in particular, are often slow to engage in DEI efforts, either due to reluctance or difficulty adapting their policies.

Lastly, digital transformation brings equity concerns, such as ensuring elderly women have the same digital access and skills as their male counterparts.

### What are the economic and social benefits of integrating DEI into digital transformation?

A stronger DEI approach not only advances gender equity but also promotes **economic growth and social progress** by ensuring that all groups benefit from digital transformation. Equitable digital access helps bridge skill gaps and creates opportunities for diverse talent to enter the tech sector.

A more inclusive digital transformation **maximizes innovation and fosters technology that works for all who need it**, as it taps into the full potential of society by including women, who represent half the population. When diverse perspectives are incorporated, tech solutions become more responsive to real-world societal needs.

Additionally, fostering innovation and creativity through diversity leads to **more effective digital tools**, improving the overall impact and efficiency of digital transformation efforts.

### How can diversity perspectives in digital innovation lead to more human-centric and inclusive digital transformation?

Technology is often gendered, meaning that, **without a focus on diversity, digital solutions may unintentionally reinforce existing stereotypes**. By prioritizing diversity-driven design, digital transformation efforts can result in more innovative and creative solutions.

**Inclusive design** also promotes wider adoption of digital tools, as they are tailored to meet the varied needs of diverse user groups. This, in turn, enhances user engagement and trust in digital solutions, leading to a stronger and more loyal user base, as well as easier transferability and adaptability to diverse contexts.

Beyond usability, mitigating bias in technology is critical to ensuring that both economic and social dimensions are addressed, leading to more balanced and sustainable impacts in the digital space.

### What mechanisms can be established to enhance DEI knowledge exchange between the EU and LAC regions?

To advance DEI efforts, collaborative initiatives should be launched through **platforms such as SPIDER DIF and the Community of Practice (CoP)**.

A **repository of case studies** should be developed to highlight successful DEI-driven transformations and their real-world impact. Additionally, appointing "Knowledge Exchange Champions" can help facilitate continuous dialogue and learning between EU and LAC representatives, ensuring a mutual exchange of best practices.

Further collaboration should be encouraged through **partnerships and networks**, focusing on shared knowledge and collective problem-solving to drive meaningful change.

## ***TOPIC 2.2 : Turning DEI Principles into Action***

Ensuring **equitable digital access** for marginalized communities in LAC requires more than just expanding infrastructure—it demands a sustainable, context-aware approach that integrates local needs and long-term solutions. While connectivity remains a primary challenge, affordability, digital literacy, and cultural relevance are equally critical in bridging the digital divide. Partnerships with local governments and organizations can help tailor digital initiatives to the specific challenges of underserved areas, ensuring that technology serves as an enabler rather than a source of further exclusion.

To foster true **accountability in DEI efforts**, structured monitoring mechanisms are essential. Beyond merely tracking progress, these systems should provide meaningful insights into the lived experiences of marginalized communities, ensuring transparency and guiding future policy development. A well-designed DEI reporting framework can help hold organizations accountable, ensuring that commitments translate into measurable impact.

Financial sustainability is another crucial element. **Joint EU-LAC funding mechanisms** must go beyond acknowledging the digital divide and focus on targeted, data-driven investments that prioritize long-term impact. Simplifying bureaucratic processes, aligning funding with identified regional needs, and fostering cross-border collaboration will be key to maximizing resources and accelerating progress.

In parallel, **empowering women in the digital sector** is not just about access to resources but also about building confidence, networks, and financial independence. Training programs, financial inclusion strategies, and partnerships with large companies can help women entrepreneurs navigate the digital economy and scale their initiatives. Tailoring digital tools to their specific needs and creating spaces for mentorship and collaboration will further enhance their participation and leadership in the sector.

How can EU-LAC digital cooperation ensure equitable access to digital infrastructure and skills for marginalized communities, especially in rural and underserved areas?

**Sustainable connectivity solutions** should be developed for rural and underserved communities in LAC, considering both infrastructure and affordability to make digital access feasible for marginalized groups. Partnerships with local governments and organizations are crucial to ensure culturally relevant and context-aware implementation of digital infrastructure projects, particularly in indigenous and underserved areas.

Additionally, programs need to be specifically designed to build digital skills in marginalized communities, ensuring that residents not only have access to digital tools but are also empowered to use them effectively. For example, **digital literacy programs** should be practical and address the day-to-day needs of these communities.

Recognize and integrate the differences between the EU and LAC digital landscapes when crafting policies. Acknowledging distinct metrics, challenges, and regional contexts will lead to more relevant, impactful policies that address the unique barriers faced by marginalized groups in LAC.

Acknowledge LATAM's digital landscape, with lower internet access and connectivity compared to Europe, when setting digital policy expectations.

To ensure long-term success, **funding models should prioritize sustainability** rather than short-term interventions. Ensuring ongoing support will be essential to avoid infrastructure degradation and to keep digital access initiatives effective over time. Also, local governments in LAC should be equipped to act as facilitators of digital development. By giving them tools, training, and resources, they can become key allies in extending digital infrastructure and skills-building initiatives.

Lastly, customized assessment methodologies should be developed to accurately evaluate digital penetration and infrastructure needs in different regions.

**How can we create DEI monitoring mechanisms and reporting processes that hold organizations accountable for their DEI commitments in digital transformation projects?**

To effectively track connectivity progress, structured mechanisms for regular data collection and updates must be established, ensuring that sustainability and meaningful metrics are prioritized. It is essential to develop detailed methodologies to guide the use of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) indicators, ensuring consistency in how DEI commitments are measured across projects. A well-structured cycle of monitoring and reporting will enhance transparency and enable stakeholders to track progress over time.

**Ensuring public transparency and accountability:** guaranteeing public transparency of data is crucial, as it allows civil society to assess progress, identify gaps, and hold key stakeholders accountable. To further enhance transparency, organizations should be required to publicly report on their DEI progress, fostering a greater sense of responsibility. Additionally, periodic technology transfer modules should be conducted to maintain consistent data collection, ensure up-to-date methodologies, and effectively monitor digital advancements.

**Enhancing data accessibility and inclusivity:** to ensure accessibility, digital content should be developed in local languages, particularly in regions where linguistic barriers may limit engagement with digital resources. Furthermore, data collection methods must be designed to accurately capture the experiences of marginalized groups, especially in underserved communities. This requires setting up dedicated processes for gathering data in areas where DEI insights are critical yet often overlooked.

**Adapting monitoring mechanisms to regional contexts:** It is essential to acknowledge that DEI challenges differ significantly between the EU and LAC regions. As a result, monitoring mechanisms should be flexible and capable of providing accurate, context-specific insights that enhance accountability and inform policy adjustments based on regional needs.

**Strengthening regional capacity for DEI monitoring:** collaboration with local governments and organizations is key to strengthening regional capacity for DEI monitoring. Local stakeholders play a fundamental role in gathering, interpreting, and utilizing DEI data in ways that are relevant and meaningful to their communities.

**Leveraging DEI insights to shape future policies:** insights gained from DEI monitoring should be actively used to shape future public policy in LAC. By integrating DEI data into policy development, digital transformation projects can be more aligned with broader equity and inclusivity objectives, ensuring that marginalized communities benefit from digital advancements.

**Evolving DEI metrics to keep pace with Digital Transformation:** as Digital Transformation progresses, DEI needs and goals will inevitably evolve. Therefore, it is crucial to periodically review and adjust DEI metrics and methodologies to reflect the latest developments, challenges, and opportunities in the digital landscape.

How should joint EU-LAC funding mechanisms be structured to specifically support DEI-focused initiatives, and what criteria should be used for funding eligibility?

**Target the technology gap:** create a structured funding mechanism that addresses specific digital transformation needs of each country. Funds should be allocated to well-defined projects that bridge existing technological gaps and ensure resources are used efficiently. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure that DEI-focused projects have sustainable plans that extend beyond the initial funding period. Long-term impact should be a key consideration to avoid short-lived interventions.

**Leverage local implementing partners:** engage local and cooperative partners to facilitate project execution, particularly in countries like Ecuador, where budget implementation can be slow. Technical cooperation with these partners can help achieve key milestones, streamline fund deployment, and enhance overall project impact. While the digital divide in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is widely recognized, acknowledging its existence is not enough. There is a need to "make it transparent" through a clear, data-driven framework that provides visibility into the specific barriers and disparities.

**Aligning resources with mapped needs:** each country in LAC has already identified its specific areas of digital inequality. To maximize impact, funding mechanisms should prioritize aligning these mapped needs directly with available financial resources. This approach creates a structured pathway for fund allocation and ensures that investments address the most urgent gaps.

**Streamlining fund execution:** the LAC region faces significant challenges in fund execution due to complex bureaucratic processes. Simplifying these procedures is essential to ensure that resources reach targeted initiatives efficiently. A potential solution to improve fund utilization is the appointment of a dedicated counterpart responsible for overseeing and managing fund execution. This approach would help address common bottlenecks, reduce delays, and ensure that resources are effectively deployed.

**Establishing transparent funding eligibility criteria:** funding eligibility criteria should be clearly defined, supported by data, and publicly available. Transparency in this process helps guarantee that projects addressing the most critical DEI needs receive priority access to financial support. Furthermore, the funding mechanism should favor initiatives that propose measurable, results-oriented approaches to reducing digital inequality. The ability to demonstrate tangible outcomes will be key in assessing the success of funded projects.

**Promoting cross-border collaboration:** joint EU-LAC funding mechanisms should actively encourage collaboration within LAC. This would enable countries to share best practices, exchange knowledge, and implement solutions that are regionally applicable. By fostering cooperative efforts, funding mechanisms can maximize their impact and contribute to a more inclusive digital transformation across the region.

### How can we support women entrepreneurs and leaders in the digital sector?

**Improving access to resources:** Facilitate connections between women entrepreneurs and organizations that provide digital training. While large corporations can play a role in empowering women as they often have the capacity to deliver training to a broader audience, it is crucial to prioritize connections with local SMEs, training centers, and community-based initiatives. These local actors often have a deeper understanding of regional challenges and can offer more tailored and sustainable support. Strengthening these networks ensures that women entrepreneurs gain practical skills and better integration into the local economy, rather than relying entirely on external corporate programs.

**Promoting financial inclusion:** Provide access to accessible financial resources, such as fintech platforms with fewer administrative barriers than traditional banks, to offer women entrepreneurs tangible financial benefits and support their growth. Rural women entrepreneurs often lack knowledge about the digital resources available to them, leading to underutilization of these tools. Establish training programs in technological tools that provide confidence in the management and use of digital payment mechanisms. Incorporate challenges or initiatives so that technology becomes a tool used daily in community services; in other words, ensuring that they understand all the mechanisms and utilities it can offer in their daily lives.

**Increasing overall digital literacy among women:** especially in rural areas, is crucial. Workshops, online courses, and accessible resources can significantly improve their confidence in using digital tools. Creating networking opportunities for women in the digital sector can facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing, empowering them to thrive in their entrepreneurial endeavors. Tailoring digital solutions to meet the specific needs of women entrepreneurs can enhance adoption. Understanding the unique challenges they face can lead to more effective resource allocation.

**Advocating for policies that address gender-specific barriers:** peer support and mentorship can enhance women's confidence and skill sets in the digital landscape. It's essential to ensure that women feel a sense of ownership and recognize the benefits of engaging with digital resources. This sense of appropriation can motivate women entrepreneurs to actively participate in digital initiatives. Organize EU-LAC events focused on connecting women entrepreneurs with investors, mentors, and peers.