



DC-EDIC AS AN ANCHOR FOR DIGITAL COMMONS STEWARDSHIP

Policy Building Blocks for the Digital Commons #6

**OPEN FUTURE
POLICY BRIEF**

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ABOUT THIS POLICY BRIEF

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[Open Future](#) is a European think tank that develops new approaches to an open internet that maximize societal benefits of shared data, knowledge and culture. Open Future advocates for Digital Commons–characterized by distributed production, collective governance, and shared stewardship–as offering the most viable path towards a resilient digital ecosystem.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital sovereignty, understood as the ability of states, organizations, and individuals to independently shape and control their digital environments, has become a central concern for the European Union. Achieving it requires more than regulatory oversight of dominant technology providers: it requires building credible alternatives. Digital Commons, characterized by distributed production, collective governance, and shared stewardship, offer a viable path toward such alternatives.

The European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDICs) provide a framework for Member State coordination and investment in digital infrastructure well-suited to the cross-border nature of Digital Commons. A new EDIC specifically focusing on Digital Commons (DC-EDIC) has been established. It offers long-term institutional anchoring for Member State–led collaboration on Digital Commons, with the continuity and scale needed to address shared sovereignty challenges.

This brief proposes granting DC-EDIC the required mandate and resources to steward shared digital infrastructure, channel support to critical open source projects, provide services that accelerate adoption, and build the expertise that public bodies need to move away from closed ecosystems.

PROBLEM DEFINITION: A LACK OF STABLE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR COOPERATION

The EU, through its frameworks for funding research and innovation, has supported many innovative digital projects. However, existing funding and governance arrangements are not aligned with the long-term requirements of supporting Digital Commons. And this is especially true if these commons are expected to scale and integrate with public infrastructure. Funding frameworks must therefore extend their scope to cover mechanisms that enable alternatives to achieve such scale. This requires, alongside sustained investment in research and innovation, institutional arrangements capable of anchoring long-term support and maintenance. Digital Commons in particular depend on durable governance frameworks to ensure their continued development and uptake. Without such frameworks, the impact of public investment risks remaining fragmented and failing to translate into sustainable deployment.

European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDICs), introduced under the Digital Decade Policy Programme, offer a flexible framework for coordinating long-term, cross-border investment and governance of digital infrastructure.

An EDIC is a legal person meant to aid Member States in setting up and implementing multi-country projects. It is created on application by Member States (at least three) with approval from the European Commission. An EDIC's budget is based on contributions from its members, and may also be complemented by other sources, including grants or private contributions. EDICs may also participate in commercial activity in order to facilitate the achievement of their

objectives. Member States can customize various elements of the EDIC statute, giving flexibility with respect to contributions, governance, voting rights, etc. EDICs are also meant to remain open to subsequent participation from other Member States.

Unlike centrally managed programmes or EU agencies, EDICs can allow Member States to jointly steward shared digital assets while retaining flexibility over governance, contributions, and participation. This makes them particularly well-suited to the distributed, cross-border nature of Digital Commons. In October 2025, the European Commission approved the establishment of the Digital Commons EDIC. France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands are its founding members, with Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia participating as observers at the time of writing.

Supporting the Digital Commons ecosystem and fostering viable infrastructural alternatives to dominant platforms requires a combination of complementary interventions. This includes facilitating access to professional services that enable maintenance and scaling, providing procurement support on both the demand and supply sides, and mobilizing EU-scale funding instruments for Digital Commons that underpin critical digital infrastructures. Delivering these functions requires coordination at the EU level, alongside sustained, Member State-led collaboration. The Digital Commons EDIC offers a particularly well-suited institutional framework for bringing these elements together.

This brief takes as its starting point the functions currently envisaged for the DC-EDIC. It identifies the opportunities they create, and explores additional functions that the EDIC could perform in furtherance of its existing mandate, given adequate funding and support.

The following core activities are currently envisioned for the DC-EDIC:¹

1. Building a European community of public, private, and civic stakeholders.
2. Facilitating access to funding, including via a physical and online one-stop-shop and expertise hub.
3. Offering legal and technical support for maintenance and scaling.
4. Providing policy advice and awareness-raising.
5. Coordinating and participating in concrete multi-country projects anchored in Digital Commons.

The launch announcement states that by 2027, the EDIC will deliver: a One-Stop-Shop and Expertise Hub, a Digital Commons Forum and Award, and an annual State of the Digital Commons report.

¹ European Commission (2025). Commission Launches Digital Commons EDIC to Support Sovereign European Digital Infrastructure and Services. News article. Brussels: European Commission. Available at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-launch-digital-commons-edic-support-sovereign-european-digital-infrastructure-and> (accessed 18 February 2026).

PROPOSED INTERVENTION: A HUB FOR ECOSYSTEM SUPPORT

As the Digital Commons EDIC takes shape, it can assume several essential functions to support and sustain the Digital Commons ecosystem, facilitate their integration into public infrastructure, and advance the EU's shift away from dependence on proprietary ecosystems.

A Stable Home for Digital Commons and Public Digital Infrastructure

The Digital Commons EDIC should serve as a stewardship vehicle for Member State collaboration on Digital Commons and public digital infrastructure projects. As a new instrument enabling Member States to jointly develop, deploy, and operate cross-border digital infrastructures with dedicated governance and legal personality, the EDIC provides a framework for sustained coordination on multi-country initiatives. This framework can support the development and maintenance of cross-border digital services and anchor open source initiatives within democratically accountable institutions.

The DC-EDIC can offer continuity and scale for shared digital tools, including sovereign workplaces, identity frameworks, secure communication tools, and civic engagement platforms, enabling their transition from pilots to reliable, operational infrastructure.

By providing long-term institutional anchoring for Member State-led collaborations, the EDIC can address the recurring challenge of scaling promising infrastructure projects and support their sustained operation over time.

Channeling Sustainable Funding for Digital Commons underlying critical infrastructure

Within its mandate, the DC-EDIC can play an important role in facilitating and structuring sustained support for Digital Commons that underpin critical digital infrastructure. In this role, it complements existing research and innovation funding by ensuring that maintenance, security, and governance needs are addressed once projects exit time-limited funding cycles.

As noted, many Digital Commons and open source projects that form the backbone of contemporary digital infrastructure remain structurally underfunded or operate at the margins of sustainability. The DC-EDIC could help address this challenge by acting as a coordination and stewardship framework for EU-level funding instruments dedicated to the long-term maintenance and security of critical Digital Commons, rather than as a direct fund manager. In particular, it could provide an institutional home for initiatives such as a proposed EU Sovereign Tech Fund, supporting priority-setting, coordination with Member States, and alignment with broader EU digital sovereignty objectives.

The German Sovereign Tech Agency has announced it will run a pilot for an EU Sovereign Tech Fund in partnership with the DC-EDIC.² This pilot represents an important step toward operationalising EU-level support for critical Digital Commons, and demonstrates how the EDIC's coordinating role can translate into tangible funding and stewardship mechanisms. The EDIC can strengthen coherence between national and EU-level efforts, building on existing models, while operating at a scale commensurate with the EU's shared digital infrastructure needs and remaining consistent with the EDIC's facilitative and coordinating role.

One-stop ecosystem support

Building on functions already envisaged within the DC-EDIC's mandate, the EDIC can operationalize and scale its role in providing coordinated non-financial support to Digital Commons. Findings from the NGI Commons³ indicate that many of these initiatives operate with limited institutional capacity while navigating complex legal, financial, administrative, and tax-related requirements. Consolidated access to essential professional services and organizational guidance would strengthen their operational resilience and governance in ways that can accelerate adoption. Access to shared services, along with structured guidance on procurement, would also strengthen their capacity to participate in public tenders and facilitate their integration into public infrastructure.

Coordinated Procurement support

The EDIC can play a role in strengthening strategic procurement for Digital Commons by providing a centralized layer of expertise and capacity for public administrations. Any contracting authorities, on account of limited internal capacity, face challenges in applying non-price procurement criteria. This undermines the use of procurement as a lever for strategic objectives such as openness, interoperability, sustainability, and institutional autonomy.⁴

By pooling specialized expertise, the EDIC can develop shared instruments, such as model clauses, standardized criteria, and guidance on the lawful inclusion of qualitative requirements, to support the adoption of Digital Commons.

² Sovereign Tech Agency (2026). Sovereign Tech Agency and EDIC Digital Commons to Pilot EU Sovereign Tech Fund. Press release. Berlin: Sovereign Tech Agency. Available at: <https://www.sovereign.tech/public/press/2026-03-26-Press-Release-Sovereign-Tech-Agency-EDIC-Digital-Commons-Director.pdf>.

³ NGI Commons Consortium (2025). D1.1 Active Communities of Commoners and Relevant Commons (Grant Agreement No. 101135279). Horizon Europe Programme. Available at: https://cdn.commoners.ngi.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/01095250/NGI-Commons_D1.1_ACTIVE-COMMUNITIES-OF-COMMONERS-AND-RELEVANT-COMMONS_v1.pdf.

⁴ A previous brief in this series examines how public procurement can support the scaling of alternatives, the capacity constraints faced by contracting authorities, and the need for better coordination around procurement and enforcement: Singh, A and Warso, Z. Public Procurement as a Strategic Lever for Digital Sovereignty, Open Future (26 March 2026), <https://openfuture.eu/publication/public-procurement-as-a-strategic-lever-for-digital-sovereignty/>.

The EDIC can also support monitoring and enforcement of tenders to address gaps in post-award oversight, ensuring that conditionalities related to Open Source or interoperability are effectively implemented.

In doing so, the EDIC can reduce duplication of effort across Member States, ease the administrative burden on smaller contracting authorities, and counteract fragmentation that disproportionately favors large incumbent firms. This function would complement existing national Central Purchasing Bodies and competence centers through coordinated EU-level support while maintaining flexibility for Member States.

FIT WITH THE MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Article 39(2) of the **European Competitiveness Fund** proposal recognizes the EDICs as vehicles for multi-country projects focusing on digital transformation and for channeling support for digital infrastructure through the framework of the ECF.

The objectives of the Digital Commons EDIC align closely with the priorities outlined in the MFF and the ECF proposals, and are uniquely positioned to meet the objectives identified in the **Digital Leadership** window: Digital Commons, enabled by a multi-country stewardship mechanism like the DC-EDIC, can strengthen digital resilience, ensure high levels of cybersecurity, and support the digital transformation and interoperability of public and private sectors.

Accordingly, the ECF should explicitly recognize Open Source and Digital Commons as essential to achieving its objectives, and the DC-EDIC as a central vehicle for delivering this support.

Horizon Europe should play a complementary role by earmarking support for the research, experimentation, and coordination activities that comprise the EDIC's mandate, and ensure alignment with the EU's broader R&I ecosystem.

National and Regional Partnership Plans can be an avenue to secure co-funding and expand Member State participation in the EDIC.

LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

The Decision establishing the **Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030**⁵ provides the legal basis for the creation of European digital infrastructure consortia (EDICs) as a vehicle for implementing multi-country projects.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2022/2481 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 establishing the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030. Official Journal of the European Union, L 323, 19.12.2022, pp. 4–26.

The **European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade**⁶ explicitly tasks the Commission and Member States to take into account the rights and principles set out in the Declaration when achieving its objectives. These include putting people at the center of the digital transformation, freedom of choice, a fair digital environment, participating in the digital public space, privacy and individual control over data, and sustainability.

The **European Open Digital Ecosystems Strategy** (forthcoming) builds on the European Commission's previous Open Source Software Strategy (2020-23). The call for evidence indicates a strategic approach to the open source sector in the EU, in recognition of its contribution to sovereignty, security, and competitiveness.⁷ The DC-EDIC is expected to play a key role in implementing the objectives of the strategy.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING INFRASTRUCTURE

The overall operational budget for the DC-EDIC depends on the contributions from Member States that join as participants. Based on current proposals,⁸ the EDIC is expected to operate with a budget of around €5.3 million over its initial phase, with approximately €2.5 million from the EU and €2.8 million from participating member states.

For the 2028–2034 period, this building block recommends maintaining an annual envelope of at least €4 million (approx. €28 million total).

This budget would be intended to cover coordination, governance, and standards development across the substantive intervention areas. The operational budget is separate from the larger funding allocated to the infrastructure projects supported by the EDIC, which will come from the main ECF windows. The DC-EDIC's institutional design positions it to take on a range of functions that enable the development and deployment of Digital Commons. The scale and structure of funding should reflect this potential and ambition.

Co-funding structure for the DC-EDIC:

- **EU contribution:** expected to cover around 40–60% of the DC-EDIC budget. This ensures that the EDIC can perform its cross-border coordination role as a mechanism for strategic multi-country projects.

⁶ European Parliament, Council of the European Union and European Commission (2022). European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade. Official Journal of the European Union, C 23, 23.1.2023, pp. 1–7. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32023C0123\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32023C0123(01)).

⁷ European Commission (2025). European Open Digital Ecosystems (initiative page). Better Regulation – Have Your Say. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/16213-European-Open-Digital-Ecosystems_en (accessed 18 February 2026).

⁸ Netherlands Digital Government (2025). Application for EDIC Digital Commons Submitted. Available at: <https://www.nldigitalgovernment.nl/news/application-for-edic-digital-commons-submitted/> (accessed 18 February 2026).

- **Member state contribution:** Contributions, financial or in-kind, should amount to 40–60% in the aggregate, ensuring national political ownership and alignment with domestic digitalization strategies.
- **Other funding:** Private and philanthropic funding (up to 10–15%) should play a complementary but not determining role, directed toward targeted projects or stakeholder engagement.

POSSIBLE RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

The implementation of the DC-EDIC faces several risks that warrant attention in its design and governance. The first concerns participation: if the EDIC fails to achieve broad Member State buy-in, it risks uneven adoption and the duplication of national initiatives that it was intended to address. Early signs are encouraging: in the process of formalization and since the official launch, the DC-EDIC has seen growing interest from Member States joining as both observers and full members. The observer status pathway in particular appears to serve as a low-stakes entry point, allowing Member States to engage with and assess the EDIC's value before committing to full membership. Sustaining this trajectory will nonetheless require continued outreach to additional Member States, clear demonstrations of value, and keeping administrative barriers to joining as low as possible.

A second, related risk concerns resources. Without sufficient and stable funding, the EDIC may be unable to provide the continuity that long-term support for Digital Commons requires. This can be mitigated by securing multi-cycle funding through funding programmes within the MFF, complemented by national contributions, and by adopting multi-year work programmes that make the case for continuity beyond annual budget cycles.

The EDIC must also navigate the risk of overlapping mandates with existing national or EU initiatives. Rather than displacing them, the EDIC should be positioned as a complement and multiplier, with formal coordination mechanisms and clearly delineated responsibilities that focus its efforts on cross-border services and shared assets.

Governance integrity presents a further concern. Where governance processes lack transparency or accountability, the EDIC risks capture or disproportionate influence by dominant actors. Embedding open governance practices, diverse stakeholder representation, and meaningful participation from civil society and the Digital Commons community in its governance structures is essential to guarding against this risk.

Finally, the multilateral nature of the EDIC carries an inherent risk of administrative bottlenecks and slow deployment. Agile decision-making processes and lightweight administrative procedures—particularly for Digital Commons initiatives and communities interfacing with the EDIC—will be important to ensuring that institutional complexity does not delay operational impact.

IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAY

In the near term, between 2026 and 2028, the priority is to consolidate the DC-EDIC's institutional foundations while moving toward operational delivery. This entails finalizing governance structures and internal procedures, formalizing participation from current Member States, and beginning outreach to potential new partners. A multi-year work programme aligned with the MFF funding cycle should be established early, providing the planning horizon that sustained Digital Commons support requires.

The pilot of an EU Sovereign Tech Fund, to be run by the German Sovereign Tech Agency in partnership with the DC EDIC, offers an early and concrete opportunity to demonstrate the EDIC's role in channeling sustained funding to critical Digital Commons. This pilot can be a key deliverable for the short-term phase, with lessons feeding directly into the design of longer-term funding instruments.

Alongside this, the EDIC should move to operationalize its central expertise hub, develop procurement guidance, and put in place the shared support services needed to strengthen Digital Commons projects in practice.

From 2028 onwards, the focus can shift to scale and integration. Building on the foundations laid in the initial phase, the EDIC should select and onboard Digital Commons that underpin sovereign digital infrastructure—such as secure communication platforms and sovereign workplaces—and coordinate multi-country pilots aligned with Digital Leadership objectives under the ECF. Successful pilots should be progressively scaled into operational public digital infrastructure, with Member States supported in adopting, maintaining, and governing shared components.

Coordination and support mechanisms for public procurement can also be established during this phase, aligned with the upcoming Open Digital Ecosystems Strategy and the broader reform of the Public Procurement Directives. Certification and compliance mechanisms for Open Source and interoperability should be developed to underpin this process. Throughout, the EDIC should maintain alignment across the broader funding landscape—with Horizon Europe for research and experimentation, the ECF for deployment, and national digital strategies for uptake and co-funding—ensuring that its work reinforces rather than duplicates existing instruments.

The Digital Commons EDIC arrives at a key moment for European digital sovereignty. With the institutional architecture in place, the task is to ensure that it is equipped with the mandate, resources, and governance needed to fulfil its potential. The functions outlined in this brief—stewardship of shared digital infrastructure, sustained funding for critical open source projects, consolidated ecosystem support, and coordinated procurement—can be mutually reinforcing. Early signals, from growing Member State participation to the announcement of an EU Sovereign Tech Fund pilot, suggest that the conditions for impact are present. These ambitions should be matched by political commitment and sustained investment.