

THE ROAD AHEAD FOR DIGITAL SOCIAL INNOVATION

How can the EU support
technology to tackle our
biggest challenges?

26th April 2019

DIGITAL
SOCIAL
INNOVATION 

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FOREWORD

Nesta has been working with the EU since 2013 to explore the myriad ways in which digital technologies are being used to tackle our biggest challenges. We've witnessed an explosion of activity in the field of digital social innovation (DSI), and seen ever more evidence of the essential role it must play in addressing challenges ranging from unemployment to an ageing population, from plastic waste to injustice and corruption.

But we are still far from realising the huge potential of DSI - and, therefore, from tackling these challenges as effectively as we should be. Governments and civil society do not have the capacity to benefit fully from DSI; flexible, patient, socially-oriented funding and investment is sorely lacking; and growing fears about the risks of technology on our democratic societies risk overshadowing those same technologies' potential for good.

At this crucial time not just for the EU but also for our digital societies, we must draw up a path forward for DSI to take its place in the mainstream of research and innovation policy, the public sector and civil society. Not just for DSI's sake, but so that we can rise adequately to the challenges we face today.

Today we are bringing together stakeholders from policy, civil society and business to explore how the EU and the DSI community can work together to achieve real impact at scale. We're delighted to have you with us, and hope you enjoy the workshop.

Geoff Mulgan
Chief Executive, Nesta

ABOUT DSI4EU

Building on five years of work led by Nesta in collaboration with DG CONNECT, the Horizon 2020-funded DSI4EU project is supporting digital social innovation in Europe to grow and scale through a combination of research, policy and practical support.

Alongside our role building and supporting a vibrant DSI community in Europe, we are developing an Index to understand how city ecosystems support the growth of DSI, building scenarios to provoke ideas about the future of DSI, advocating for DSI with civil society, the public sector, governments and funders, and supporting practitioners through events, workshops and learning programmes.

The DSI4EU consortium is made up of partners from different sectors and from across the EU, each with unique skills, expertise and networks. We work with organisations, projects and networks across the continent to build shared agendas, facilitate collaboration and amplify the impact of DSI.

Find out more about our work at digitalsocial.eu/about-the-project, on our blog at medium.com/DSI4EU and on Twitter at [@DSI4EU](https://twitter.com/DSI4EU). Or if you'd like to chat, drop us a line at contact@digitalsocial.eu.

AGENDA

- 09:00 **Registration and refreshments**
- 10:00 **Welcome and introduction**
Geoff Mulgan, Chief Executive, Nesta
- 10:10 **DSI success stories**
A series of short talks showcasing the potential of DSI.
Dr. Rebecca Rumbul, Head of Research, mySociety
Elena Calistru, Chair and Founder, Funky Citizens
Elisa Lindinger, Director, Prototype Fund, Open Knowledge Germany
Nat Whalley, Executive Director, Organise Platform
Karolis Granickas, Senior Program Manager, Open Contracting Partnership
- 10:35 **The view from Brussels**
A panel discussion exploring the EU's role in supporting DSI.
Ruby Gropas, Team Leader, Social Affairs, EPSC
Fabrizio Sestini, Senior Expert, Digital Social Innovation, DG CONNECT
Karel Vanderpoorten, Seconded Officer, Clusters, Social Economy and Entrepreneurship Unit, DG GROW
Susana Nascimento, Policy Analyst, Joint Research Centre
- 11:00 **Introduction to discussion groups**
- 11:10 **Refreshments break**
- 11:30 **Discussion groups**
What role do EU institutions have in supporting the growth of DSI in Europe? In smaller groups, we will be working together to refine ideas for future policy agendas to help DSI reach its full potential.
- 12:45 **Plenary feedback from discussions**
Facilitated by Marleen Stikker, Founder, Waag
- 13:15 **Closing remarks**
- 13:30 **Networking lunch**
- 14:30 **Close**

DSI IN EUROPE: AN OVERVIEW

Digital social innovation brings together people and digital technologies to tackle social and environmental challenges.

Across Europe, thousands of people, projects and organisations are using DSI to deliver real positive change. We have mapped over 2,000 organisations and 1,500 projects working on DSI, and we know there is much more under our radar.

DSI has shown significant impact in a **broad range of areas**, from healthcare, education and employment to democratic participation, migration and the environment. It uses **many different established and emerging technologies** - including collaborative platforms, open data, citizen sensing, digital fabrication, open hardware, blockchain and artificial intelligence. **It takes place across multiple sectors**, from central and local government to civil society, from the private sector to the smallest community groups. You can see DSI in action through our case studies (digitalsocial.eu/case-studies) or by navigating our interactive data visualisation (digitalsocial.eu/viz).

The EU has been a long-standing supporter of DSI, particularly through the **CAPS programme**, which has funded over 50 projects under FP7 and Horizon 2020. The CAPS programme has proven the potential of DSI for tackling Europe's biggest challenges, while also showing that big budgets and flashy technologies are not always necessary to deliver real impact.

The EU must recognise DSI as a key tool for our societies to rise to the social and environmental challenges we face today - and never more so than right now, as we move towards a new research Framework Programme, a new Commission and a new long-term budget. The EU must continue to fund DSI, but also to act as leader and steward - integrating DSI across priority areas, advocating for DSI with member states, and helping the public sector and civil society to get more from DSI.

With the right support, funding and collaboration, the EU can help create a new paradigm - one where digital technologies empower citizens to improve society and create a more inclusive, sustainable future for all. This must be the road ahead not just for digital social innovation, but for Europe itself.



DSI4EU, formally known as DSISCALE, is supported by the European Union and funded under the Horizon 2020 Programme, grant agreement no. 780473. The information and views set out in this publication and at today's workshop are those of the DSISCALE, speakers and attendees, and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission.