

European DIGITAL SME Alliance

Internal Regulation

DRAFT

September 2020

1. **Scope**

This internal regulation sets out general rules, working guidelines, and ethical principles for the participation, functioning and governance of Working Groups, Task Forces, Focus Groups, and the development of position papers as well as any other activities carried out on behalf of the association, especially but not limited to support the objectives of the association as set out in Article 3 of the association's [statutes](#).

2. **Entry into force & amendments**

The internal regulation is issued by the Board of the association. Changes to the internal regulation can be proposed by DIGITAL SME members with voting rights, by the Secretary General or by the President and need to be presented to the Board for approval.

3. **Ethical principles**

3.1 **General terms**

In addition to the membership criteria and objectives set out in the statutes of the association, members agree on a set of ethical principles that inspire the ways of working of the association. In line with the objectives set out in the statutes of the association (Article 3), European DIGITAL SME Alliance seeks to represent European SME associations and SMEs active in the ICT sector and to promote sustainable policy goals that support SME competitiveness and create a level-playing field for digital SMEs. The work of the association and its members, when acting on behalf of the association, is guided by these values.

3.2 **Principles of engagement**

- a) The association works in the interest of all DIGITAL SME members and/or SMEs in the ICT sector in line with general terms set out above and the statutes of the association.
- b) While representing DIGITAL SME, efforts shall be focused on the common interests of the ICT sector and SMEs and not the interests of individual Members or group of Members.
- c) By membership in DIGITAL SME any member and all the persons and companies mandated by that member to take part in DIGITAL SME activities, such as participation in Working Groups or contributing to position papers, commits to the values of the association and its objectives set out in the statutes. It also commits not to act against or in conflict with the association and its activities.
- d) The general spirit shall be one of co-operation. Differences and rivalries between members and/or experts shall, when possible, be resolved by consensus.
- e) In the case of conflict of interest between the aims of the association and members, this conflict should be resolved by the Board in an amicable fashion. Should a member actively act against principles and interests of the association, this member can be excluded upon decision of the Board.

4. **Working Groups**

4.1 **Role of the Working Groups**

DIGITAL SME Working Groups support the development of policy positions and serve as a room for discussion and sharing of information about policy developments, standardisation, ICT-related projects, and initiatives that are of importance to ICT SMEs and their associations to support the objectives set out in Article 3 of the statutes of the association. DIGITAL SME Working Groups shall be established to give members and experts the opportunity to discuss the European SME position on a specific policy area relevant to the association's members and/or the ICT sector and/or SMEs overall.

4.2 **Establishment of Working Groups**

Each Group shall cover a specific topic or wider area of topics and can be created for a fixed or

an indeterminate period. Working Groups shall be created either (1) upon decision by the Secretary General for topics that are in the association's scope or (2) upon a decision by the Board for any topic that the members deem relevant. Any member has the right to propose the creation of new Working Groups.

Specific tasks (non-exhaustive):

- a) To exchange information between the different experts and members on relevant policy and standardisation developments.
- b) Provide input and to prepare draft position papers and replies in relation to EU policies and consultations within their field of competence.
- c) To respond on questions addressed to them in matters of their competence.

4.2 Composition of Working Groups

It is the vision of Working Groups to gather SME experts from across Europe that will represent interests of SMEs in the ICT sector. To become a member of a DIGITAL SME Working Group, experts have to comply with the following requirements:

- a) have a proven experience, knowledge, and interest in one or more of the topics covered by a specific Working Group, and;
- b) represent companies or organisations that are members or members of the members of DIGITAL SME, or of the European Digital Innovators Club.

Observers can be appointed to join a Working Group if agreed by the Chair of the Working Group and by the Secretary-General.

4.3 Terms of reference

Terms of reference of each Working Group define the scope and specific ways of working of each group, e.g. the list of topics, election of the chairperson, confidentiality rules, the specific role of the secretariat, etc. The terms of reference are decided by each group by majority vote and are approved by the Board. The Board has the final word in case of conflicts of interest or disagreements within or between different Working Groups as concerns the scope of the group, the topics covered, procedural disputes, or any other matter that may cause disagreement.

4.4 Chairperson

Each Working Group shall include a Chair. A Working Group may decide to appoint more than one Chair, i.e. one or several co-Chairs, and one or more Vice Chairs. Each Working Group may decide the duration of mandates for Chairs and Vice Chairs. Anyway such duration may not exceed three years and Chairs and Vice Chairs can be re-elected.

4.5 Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Working Group shall be provided by the DIGITAL SME Secretariat. The Secretariat of the Working Group shall fulfil the following functions (non-exhaustive):

- a) calling the meetings (agenda and invitation), distributing documents and drafting meeting reports.
- b) ensuring the smooth functioning of the Working Group and maintaining an up-to-date list of the Group members;
- c) carrying out any other tasks that may be necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the Working Group.

4.6 Decision-making

The Working Group shall make every effort to draw up their proposals based on consensus. In the absence of consensus, decisions shall be made by a simple majority of the votes cast by those Working Group members present at the meeting. Working Group meetings shall be organised physically or virtually. Each Group shall meet according to a timetable and agenda. As far as possible the agenda should be distributed at least one week in advance.

4.7 Role of the Board

The Board shall consider and approve terms of references issued for each Working Group. The Board has the authority to dissolve Working Groups and to decide on conflicts that may arise among Working Groups.

4.8 Task forces and subgroups

Task forces are ad-hoc experts groups focusing on one particular topic that may be of interest to members of different Working Groups or members of the association. They have a specific aim, e.g. the development of more expertise on a specific topic, a position paper, suggestions for standardisation activities, guides, etc., and are more flexible in terms of membership and aims than Working Groups. They can be initiated on decision by the Secretary General, upon the request of a DIGITAL SME member, or of a Working Group. In principle, they follow the same principles as set out for Working Groups. They are chaired by convenors appointed by the relevant Working Group(s).

4.9 Focus Groups

Focus Groups fulfil similar purposes and follow the same principles as Working Groups set out above with the difference that they can be initiated jointly with another organisation and that their composition can include SMEs that are not directly members of the DIGITAL SME network, (i.e. companies or organisations that are members or members of the members of DIGITAL SME, or of the European Digital Innovators Club)

5. Development of position (papers)

5.1 General terms

Position papers can be initiated by DIGITAL SME members, the Secretary General or DIGITAL SME Working Groups.

5.2 Scope

Position papers can cover a list of non-exhaustive topics, and should contribute to voicing the opinion of ICT SMEs from across Europe.

5.3 Procedure

5.3.1 Step 1

A position paper is initiated and drafted by DIGITAL SME members, the Secretary General, the DIGITAL SME Working Groups with support of the DIGITAL SME Secretariat.

5.3.2 Step 2

A position paper draft is shared with DIGITAL SME members, including the relevant Working Groups, for feedback.

5.3.3 Step 3

After reviewing comments received during the feedback period, a final draft is shared with DIGITAL SME members for approval.