

Digital Innovation Hubs Day yields many valuable inputs for the European Digitisation Community

The event in Stuttgart, Germany on May 14th 2019, brought together more than 70 representatives from European Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs). In several interactive “share and learn” sessions they presented the concepts, impacts and further plans of their individual initiatives and discussed experiences and future cooperation possibilities. Chairman Max Lemke (DG CNECT, European Commission) set out the European Context and Perspective of the DIH community. Key note speaker Peter Mendler (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Baden-Württemberg) expressed the desire for concerted actions and a sustainable network supporting the digital transformation of the regional, national and European industry.

Digital Innovation Hubs are one of the key elements of the “Digitising European Industry Strategy” of the European Commission. They provide e.g. access to digital technologies and competences, maintain facilities and infrastructure where companies can test digital innovations and support these companies with training to develop digital skills as well as with market intelligence, financial advice and networking opportunities.

The event in Stuttgart focussed on networking between DIHs situated in Baden-Württemberg and its neighbouring countries France, Switzerland and Austria. The aim was to compare the different concepts of these initiatives, to share experience gained so far and to explore possible collaborations between them reaching out to the overall European network of DIHs.

It was evident that especially the national and regional funding authorities set their priorities in industry policy to the support of branches and especially smart and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that strengthen their individual industrial landscape. They use the establishment and start-up funding of DIHs or DIH-like competence centers as part of their basic digitisation agendas expecting concepts for a self-sustaining operation after a comparatively short development phase.

Several DIHs are already part of one of the big European Digitisation initiatives “Smart Anything Everywhere” (SAE Initiative) focussing on smart products and services and “ICT-Innovations for Manufacturing SMEs” (I4MS) focussing on digitised production processes. Mayte Carracedo (I4MS) and Rainer Günzler (SAE Initiative) introduced the offers, cooperation and funding possibilities and further benefits as e.g. a membership in the digitisation-community initiated by the European Commission.

The afternoon sessions discussed topics like optimised DIH offer and organisation, fostering the European network of DIHs and the sustainability of digital initiatives and their projects. A particular focus was set on the needs of SMEs and how they can benefit from DIHs to upgrade their products and services or improve their processes by digital innovations. Information about special funding instruments addressing SMEs like the “Cascade Funding” and a “How to apply” - outline to the related Open Calls completed the agenda.

The event was organised by Hahn-Schickard and Steinbeis 2i who will summarise the results as part of a “White Paper” addressing politics and industry. Hahn-Schickard as research institute in Baden-Württemberg provides access to the latest digital technologies and is deeply involved in the operations of several regional and European DIHs and related projects. Steinbeis 2i as spin-off of the Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum (SEZ) stimulates, manages and supports international research and innovation projects to promote transnational technology transfer. Both organisers acted on behalf of the SAE initiative (www.smartanythingeverywhere.eu). The event was a dissemination action of the project “Smart4Europe” that has received funding from the European Union’s HORIZON 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 761448.

<p>Mayte Carracedo (FundingBox, representing the Digitisation Initiative “I4MS” of the EU Manufacturing Industry)</p>	<p>Max Lemke (Head of Unit Technologies and Systems for Digitising Industry, DG CNECT, European Commission)</p>	<p>Peter Mendler (Head of Unit Industrial and Technology Policy, Digitisation, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Baden-Württemberg)</p>

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