

The first Trans-continental Networking Academy for
African and European Digital Innovation Hubs.

D4.2 Engagement strategy and activities reported



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 101016687.

Document details	
Project Acronym/ Name:	AfriConEU
Project URL:	www.africoneu.eu
Project Type:	Innovation Action (IA)
EU CALL:	H2020-ICT-2018-20 (Information and Communication Technologies)
Grant Agreement No.:	101016687
Project Start Date:	February 2021
Project End Date:	January 2024
Workpackage:	WP4 Roll out implementation and assessment
Deliverable:	D4.2 Engagement strategy and activities reported
Due date of Deliverable:	30/04/22
Actual Submission Date:	24/06/22
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Revision:	7.0
Dissemination Level:	Public

Document History			
Version	Date	Comment	Modifications made by
1.0	28.02.2022	Template for the document	Ade Olowojoba (ECA)
2.0	22.03.2022	First Review	Magda Bakali (Stimmuli)
3.0	25.04.2022	Implementation of 1 st Review	Peace Odili, Husseinat Etti-Balogun (ECA)
4.0	28.04.2022	Second Review	Magda Bakali (Stimmuli)
5.0	28.04.2022	Third Review	Ana Aleixo, Tânia Moreira (INOVA+)
6.0	28.06.2022	Fourth Review	Peace Odili (ECA), Tânia Moreira, Ana Aleixo (INOVA+)
7.0	03.07.2022	Final Version	Peace Odili (ECA)

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Acknowledgements

This deliverable was developed based on collective efforts from all partners of the AfriConEU consortium.

Glossary and Abbreviations	
DIH	Digital Innovation Hub
Q&A	Questions and Answers
DGF	Digital Governance Framework
ECA	Emerging Communities Africa
YMH	Youth Makers Hub
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
NESG	Nigerian Economic Summit Group

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	6
1. Introduction	7
1.1. About AfriConEU	7
1.2. Objectives of D4.2	7
1.3. Targets of D4.2	7
1.4. Methodology	7
1. Engagement Strategy objectives	9
2. Stakeholders Mapping	10
2.1. Target groups	10
2.2. Target groups' interests and benefits from AfriConEU activities	11
3. Barriers and Enablers to engagement	15
3.1. Barriers to engagement and collaboration	15
3.2. Enablers to engagement and collaboration	15
4. Engagement Activities, Channels and Tools	17
4.1. Engagement Approach	17
4.2. Engagement Tools	18
5. Engagement activities in detail	20
5.1. Phase 1: Pre-engagement [Jan-Apr 2022]	20
5.2. Phase 2: Engagement [May-Sep 2022]	25
5.3. Phase 3: Follow-up engagement [Jul-Sep 2022]	30
5.4. Phase 4: Continuous Engagement and Follow-up [Oct 2022 – Oct 2023]	30
6. Conclusion	32
ANNEXES	33
Annex 1 - Invitation Letter for Government Officials	33
Annex 2 - General letter for engaging target groups	34

List of Figures

Figure 1 - AfriConEU Stakeholders Engagement Strategy Phases	17
Figure 2 - Location of each AfriConEU consortium partners	18
Figure 3 - Synergies between the Stakeholders Engagement Strategy and other AfriConEU tasks	18
Figure 4 - AfriConEU Pre-Stakeholders Engagement - #Session 1	22
Figure 5 - AfriConEU Pre-Stakeholders Engagement - #Session 2	23
Figures 6 - Virtual Stakeholders Engagement Session, held on the 23 rd February (pre-engagement phase): poster and pictures	24
Figures 7 - Online environment interactivity/community-process model	26

List of Tables

Table 1 - Primary and secondary target groups of the AfriConEU Engagement Strategy	10
Table 2 - Value-added to the local African and European ecosystems by the AfriConEU Networking Academy	11
Table 3 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in brief.....	19
Table 4 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: Academy Teasers	27
Table 5 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: Academy Preview.....	27
Table 6 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: AU & EU DIH success stories	28
Table 7 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: meetings with stakeholders	28
Table 8 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: Ambassadors.....	29
Table 9 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: AfriConEU website – “Community of Practice”	29

Executive Summary

The main goal of AfriConEU is to develop, test, and validate the “AfriConEU Networking Academy”, an innovative mechanism for connecting and sharing best practices, experiences, and resources between DIHs in Africa and between DIHs in Africa and the EU, in a comprehensive, replicable, and self-sustaining way.

To motivate the involvement of stakeholders in the AfriConEU Networking Academy and cultivate a collaborative attitude between them, an engagement strategy was designed.

This deliverable presents the strategy designed by the project partners, reporting the activities delivered and describing the actions to be implemented during the next months. Coordinated by Emerging Communities Africa (ECA), the AfriConEU Stakeholders Engagement Strategy has been categorized in four (4) phases:

1. Pre-engagement phase
2. Engagement phase
3. Follow-up engagement phase
4. Continuous Engagement and Follow-up

A total of three (3) sessions and a pool on Twitter were held as part of the pre-engagement strategy with the aim of gaining perspective from key players in the ecosystem with focus on plights and resource sharing to augment their positions in the digital innovation ecosystem whilst leveraging access into their network. The other phases are fully explored later in this document.

The document also provides an analysis of the main barriers and enablers to engagement, as well as a detailed mapping of the stakeholders and the intended plan for engaging them during the period of peak activities with utmost efficiency.

The intent of this document is to provide an overall context and description of the activities conducted culminating in the design of strategies from feedback during engagements for the use of the AfriConEU Networking Academy.

The key expected impacts of the strategy are as follows:

- Increased participation in pre and post-event activities
- Sustained curiosity and interest in Academy activities
- High Turnout at all AfriConEU planned activities
- Increased membership in the AfriConEU Community.

This document enumerates how the engagement strategy aims to engage DIHs and digital ecosystem stakeholders in the project activities both from Africa and Europe as well as to present the engagement activities that will help to fulfil the KPI targets.

1. Introduction

1.1. About AfriConEU

The AfriConEU project was created with the intent to reinforce, foster, enable and strengthen the digital innovation ecosystems in Africa through international partnerships and collaborations by targeting DIHs in selected African and European countries to build a meaningful network of people to ensure the growth and a thriving digital innovation ecosystem in both continents.

The main goal of the project is to develop, test, and validate the “AfriConEU Networking Academy”, an innovative mechanism for connecting and sharing best practices, experiences, and resources between DIHs in Africa and between DIHs in Africa and the EU, in a comprehensive, replicable, and self-sustaining way. Through two flagship programmes — “Capacity Building” and “Transcontinental Partnership Development” —, the AfriConEU Networking Academy intends to empower and enable African DIHs to best serve their local industry, boost their startup ecosystem and empower the youth population with the necessary skills to thrive in a digitalized world.

1.2. Objectives of D4.2

This deliverable was developed in the context of Task 4.2 (WP4), which aims at (i) contributing to the involvement of stakeholders in the AfriConEU Networking Academy, but also (ii) cultivating a collaborative attitude between the stakeholders enabling them to thrive together in the long term. Deliverable 4.2 presents the engagement strategy designed by the project partners to achieve these goals. Furthermore, this deliverable also reports on the engagement activities delivered and/or to be delivered.

1.3. Targets of D4.2

This deliverable is addressed mainly to (i) AfriConEU consortium members, and associate partners; (ii) and stakeholders aiming to organize engagement activities linked to capacity building and/ or networking and partnership building activities. Deliverable 4.2 intends to be a tool offering practical guidance to support the planning, coordination and implementation of engagement activities.

1.4. Methodology

The AfriConEU Engagement Strategy is drawn from the findings of *WP2 - Context and state of the art analysis*, concretely the ones reported in *D2.1 - State of play in African DIHs: The case of Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana and Tanzania* and *D2.3 - Lessons from existing initiatives and good practices for enforcing DIHs capacities*. It has been designed considering the target groups

that the AfriConEU project seeks to reach and engage. Furthermore, it was designed in line with the Implementation and Monitoring Plan presented in D4.1, in close collaboration with all the involved partners, thus ensuring that the two strategies are coherent. The engagement activities are therefore not part of AfriConEU Networking Academy but are interlinked with the roll-out implementation. This will allow a successful implementation of the engagement strategy that in its turn will result in the promotion of the AfriConEU Networking Academy activities among all interested stakeholders, illustrating the significance of the project and its objective of creating synergies and collaboration between the European and African DIH ecosystems.

1. Engagement Strategy objectives

The AfriConEU Stakeholders' Engagement Strategy pursues the following objectives:

- **To raise awareness** about the AfriConEU project and to ensure that AfriConEU target groups are aligned with the public at whom the AfriConEU Networking Academy activities are aimed;
- **To engage** all the AfriConEU stakeholders from all target groups in the period before and after the activities' implementation and ensure the continuous involvement and participation in AfriConEU Networking Academy Activities;
- **To promote** the AfriConEU Networking Academy and the offered learning journey;
- **To maintain** the interest of stakeholders in engaging other members and key players in the digital innovation ecosystem and contributing towards a vibrant economy and new opportunities for the benefit of both Africa and Europe;
- **To ensure** an active knowledge sharing and sustainable Community of Practice for the AfriConEU Networking Academy;
- **To operate complementarily** with the Dissemination and Communication Strategy to ensure the wider impact of the project.

2. Stakeholders Mapping

The objective of this section is to map stakeholders to be targeted by the engagement activities. By mapping and exploring the stakeholders and their interests, needs, stakes, barriers, etc., the AfriConEU consortium will be able to carefully target and tailor its activities to the target audience, thus ensuring their engagement and participation in the Academy activities and motivating them to collaborate with others stakeholders in the long term.

2.1. Target groups

The AfriConEU Engagement Strategy address the target groups identified in *D2.1 - State of play in African DIHs: The case of Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana and Tanzania*. Table 1 presents the targets with additional details and adjustments considering the specific needs of the engagement strategy. The targets were divided into 2 different groups accordingly to their impact level: primary and secondary. Those in the primary target group are the final beneficiaries of the Academy activities (i.e. the trainees who participate in the Academy activities). Those in the secondary target group are the multipliers of the Academy activities that will aid in spreading the word about the activities and thus help engage more participants.

Table 1 - Primary and secondary target groups of the AfriConEU Engagement Strategy

Impact Level	Private	Academia	Government
Primary (final beneficiaries)	Private Sectors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-ups (digital or otherwise) Founders Innovation/ Tech Hubs Co-Working Spaces Entrepreneur communities Entrepreneurs (digital or otherwise) Freelancers DIHs and ecosystem builders from both continents Business Incubator Networks Accelerators Local entrepreneurial and start-up community supporter SMEs ICT professionals Young innovators 	Centres of Entrepreneurship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation Hubs located within the academic environment Students group/Communities e.g. Google Developer Groups, Microsoft Student Partners, ENACTUS, AIESEC, Students Union Government etc. Regulatory body for Universities Professors/ Lecturers Persons of interest (Strategic/High Level) Vice-Chancellor Dean of Student Affairs Head of Centres of Entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Governments - Office of Innovation/Technology Universities Commission - Federal Ministry of Youth, Office of the Vice President, National Information Technology Investment Agency (NITDA). Federal Government - Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investors & Financiers Banks Capital Companies Venture Capitalists Angel Investors Philanthropy Donors Large Corporations Big Tech Companies Mentors 	Persons of interest (Others) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head/Lead of Innovation Hub Head/Executives of relevant student groups Student Union President 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Board for Technical Education – Regulatory body for polytechnics TETFUND: Tertiary Education Trust Fund (education and training organisations) Public officers/ policy stakeholders (incl. EU & AU)

Impact Level	Private	Academia	Government
Secondary (multipliers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Society group communities • Education and training organizations • General public • Pan-African Networks of innovation stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local governments • Public officers/ Policy stakeholders (incl. EU & AU)

2.2. Target groups' interests and benefits from AfriConEU activities

When organising engagement activities, identifying target groups' key interests and potential benefits is crucial to be successful. The following table illustrates the value added to both local African and European ecosystems from participating in the Networking Academy activities and becoming part of the AfriConEU Community of Practice.

Table 2 - Value-added to the local African and European ecosystems by the AfriConEU Networking Academy

Value-added to the local African ecosystem	Value-added to the European ecosystem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Networking Academy capacity building and partnership activities will improve the competitiveness of the local economy by stimulating digital transformation. • Since the AfriConEU Networking Academy sub-programmes were tailor-made accordingly to the local needs and challenges of the targeted African ecosystems, these will be fully met. • Academy member hubs are provided with the platform to network and collaborate without necessarily leaving their countries and maximization/optimization is guaranteed because they speak the same language and can easily understand each other. • The AfriConEU Networking Academy will be a means to promote excellence developed locally to other regions in Europe. Furthermore, it will open new markets for the companies involved in the innovation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIHs will improve their offer by acquiring new knowledge and capacities through their participation in Digital Europe DIH. The benefit of the European ecosystem is the access to a pool of tech talents from Africa which will in turn boost and improve competitiveness. • DIHs networking provides opportunities for investments because facilities are opened up for use outside the local boundaries. It reduces duplication in both continents and optimises investments in infrastructure, talents (human resources), ideas and projects. • European DIHs will have access to experts, government officials, departments and agencies as well as well-established tech firms for collaboration and provision of opportunities to expand their work and businesses into Africa. • European DIHs can employ African workers that have adequately digital skills and are looking for opportunities.

Next, we address the AfriConEU target groups interests in detail, in particular addressing the following questions:

- What are the target groups' interests and expected benefits concerning the project?
- What are the Academy activities that might be of each target group's interest?
- What are the best channels to reach each target group? What is the best path to engage each target in the AfriConEU activities?

Educational Institutions – entrepreneurship centres

The aim of academic entrepreneurship centres is to bridge the gap between the theoretical knowledge being passed to students and provide hands-on experiences that can be used to stay sustainable after graduation. Establishments such as these have plans that make use of the population and labour-power of the student body. Engaging with AfriConEU would give the centers access to potential mentors and keep them up to date on the real-world entrepreneurial practices that can be adopted. As communication is going to an institution, the method of engagement is best kept formal with emails, newsletters, and frequent website redirection. Official invitation letters to AfriConEU events are required to allow them to feel their presence is paramount and in these letters the link to the AfriConEU Newsletter will be included so that they can be kept up to date with the AfriConEU news.

Educational Institutions – academic innovation hubs

As with academic entrepreneurship centres previously mentioned, academic innovation hubs rely heavily on the student population. The activities are mostly aimed at the student body with only the rare few trying to engage external participants. Projects and start-ups that go through these hubs are fuelled by student interaction. As innovation hubs are the primary targets of engagement to the mission of AfriConEU, it is paramount that these hubs be engaged in most events. The benefits these hubs would derive from being a part of AfriConEU include exposure, fund source network building, and opportunities for technology transfer. As most hubs have Twitter and Instagram accounts, engagement could include virtual hub tours, manager and client interviews, and intercontinental hub member and manager conversations.

Educational Institutions – Lecturers

All lecturers, regardless of their positions, background and course of practice will be engaged via formal invitations specifically emailing and in-person visitations. They include those who will benefit personally from the Academy as a result of their direct practice and day-to-day activities, those engaged in courses indirectly linked to planned academy activities and interactions with other stakeholders or who seek benefits from more engaging lectures, access to the Academy should be made possible through the above-mentioned mode of communication.

Educational Institutions – Students

Prospective graduates in higher institutions are the prime audience. Those looking to upskilling and for employment opportunities wherever possible. Being that the average student is consumed with subliminal messaging about jumping onto the tech train,

membership in the Academy hastens the journey of finding qualified and competent mentors or local communities. It also will help them feel more confident in their decision. Most youths in tech find Twitter the most prominent avenue for premium unsolicited advice and opportunities. Engagement through Twitter seems the most effective for this target group.

Digital Innovation Hub Managers

All brands aim to create as big an online presence as their local presence. Most hubs and persons who interact with these hubs for one reason or the other have social media accounts. These accounts are for the promotion of hubs' events, activities, networking and engagements. Therefore, to involve the hubs and highlight the benefits of participation in academic activities, engagements through social media are expected to prove most effective for this target group.

Government Agencies

The most outstanding benefit of participation in the academy activities for this target group is networking. Others include opportunities for collaboration with other govt officials in other countries as well as in Europe, participation of government officials, ministries, departments and agencies in capacity-building courses for their benefit, stay updated on current challenges and trends affecting the digital innovation ecosystem. Majority will feign a busy schedule to events that are not perceived to bring immediate remunerations to their interests. In order to facilitate their engagement, in-person invitations would be the preferred method to reach this type of stakeholders however this would be time-consuming and hard at a logistic level. Therefore, the AfriConEU partners will attempt the following approach:

- The consortium partners will try to participate in events where these stakeholders will be participating (a list of events will be created together with the communication manager of the project and partners will volunteer to participate in at least 1 event). The attending partners will have then the responsibility to present the AfriConEU project and enumerate a shortlist of benefits for stakeholders to join the AfriConEU community and participate in its activities.
- Virtual meetings will continue to be a method used to approach relevant stakeholders. Nevertheless, and recognising that these types of entities are harder to reach via this approach, a clear and concise invitation should be prepared in advance stating the value proposition that the AfriConEU project offers.

Government Personnel – Policy Makers

Their jobs preclude the motivation of wanting to improve the local economy therefore innovations such as the academy trying to elevate the digital ecosystem should be of prime interest. As they stand in the way of such a networking organisation succeeding with the

current policies in place that are detrimental to the digital ecosystem's health and the ability to implement more beneficial policies, their presence at events should be emphasized to them. Similar to what was stated concerning Government Agencies, in-person invitations would be the most viable option for a positive response in event participation. Nevertheless, the same approach will be followed in order to reach them.

Start-up Founders

They are the backbone of any innovation ecosystem. Their interest and benefit of participation in academy activities include capacity building for staff, networking and opportunities for collaboration with other startup founders, brainstorming sessions with founders from around the Europe and Africa on how to tackle/solve problems affecting the digital innovation ecosystem and provision of a platform to showcase talent and upskill whilst joining the AfriConEU community of practice. The primary measure of the force of a digital innovation hub is how many successful start-ups or 'unicorns' have passed through them. Founders are the ones with ideas and solutions that aim to help society and without their vision, DIHs have no clients as there would be no need for the rapid skill development.

Financiers

Official correspondence through emails is imperative. Members of the consortium that already have such personnel in their circles are also encouraged to advocate for the Academy to these persons during social opportunities. Financiers stand to benefit in the aspect of having access to a pool of talents with ideas they can support and the opportunities to listen to projects they can back whilst being able to recruit tech talents for their companies.

Big Tech Companies

Established organisations within the local digital ecosystem have expertise that is invaluable because they would have experienced the ups and downs regarding the policies, locale, technology adoption etc.

The most relevant channel of engagement for this stakeholder will include interactions on social media, emailing and in-person visitations - Twitter or LinkedIn events/activities to raise awareness of technology transfer opportunities would be optimal ways of engaging them in Academy.

The purpose of this stakeholder mapping was to ensure the strategies plan for each stakeholder group will be most effective, considering the needs and expectations of each one. The engagement strategy takes all the above into account and presents specific engagement activities and tactics for the target groups.

3. Barriers and Enablers to engagement

To design the most suitable strategy addressing our goals, we have analysed the barriers and enablers to engagement and collaboration of the target groups, based upon the results presented in *D2.3 - Lessons from existing initiatives and good practices for enforcing DIHs capacities*.

3.1. Barriers to engagement and collaboration

The identified potential barriers to the engagement and participation of the target groups include:

- Lack of familiarity with the AfriConEU project, structure of the community of practice and the facilitators for the academy activities, classes and courses;
- Lack of clarity on the stakeholder roles, as well as on the value proposition of the AfriConEU project, in particular the Networking Academy. Unclear roles and added value might impede stakeholders to participate in the activities;
- Limited work time - reluctance to take on new tasks due to a large burden of work or other issues;
- Lack of perceived immediate compensation – when stakeholders feel no incentive to spend their time on something, usually they do not provide any answer/feedback at all;
- The lack of knowledge on the benefits of the transcontinental partnership;
- Feeling of repetitiveness in aim with no forthcoming justification;
- Low perceived self-efficacy;
- Lack of alignment to mission;
- Limited financial and human resources and competing priorities can lead to substantial challenges.
- Lack of interest;
- Stigma at the institutional, community and individual levels was also identified as a substantial barrier to engagement.

3.2. Enablers to engagement and collaboration

The proposed strategy considers these barriers and suggests creative ways to overcome them by adapting the perception of each into one that benefits and encourages engagement with the AfriConEU Networking Academy so that they become drivers/enablers for collaboration. The following points present the key actions considered by AfriConEU:

- The core of the engagement strategy activities will occur during the first months of the AfriConEU Networking Academy. This will allow them to share knowledge on the Academy

and trigger stakeholders' curiosity before the event, motivating them to take part in the live events.

- One identified barrier to engagement is that target groups are unfamiliar with the collaboration opportunities with European DIHs. To tackle this, the AfriConEU engagement strategy foresees clear communication activities both on the promotion of its activities and the benefits of their participation. The effective use of the already established communication channels between stakeholders is crucial in order to avoid lack of clarity and explicitly explain their role.
- To curb lack of alignment, stakeholders need to understand the reason for the existence of the AfriConEU Networking Academy and ensure it is aligned with their own set of life and/or business values. People want to participate in and be a part of communities that reflect their own individual ethics and values so organizations must have them clearly communicated to them regularly.
- The challenge of achieving active participation from stakeholders and diverging expectations about the nature of participation were identified as barriers while providing opportunities for meaningful participation and empowerment act as enablers.

4. Engagement Activities, Channels and Tools

4.1. Engagement Approach

The AfriConEU Engagement Strategy has three main phases that comprise the core AfriConEU efforts to attract the attention of stakeholders towards the Networking Academy activities, and a fourth phase aiming to ensure the continuous implementation of activities that encourage the active engagement and motivation of stakeholders on the Academy events. The figure below summarizes the engagement strategy phases.

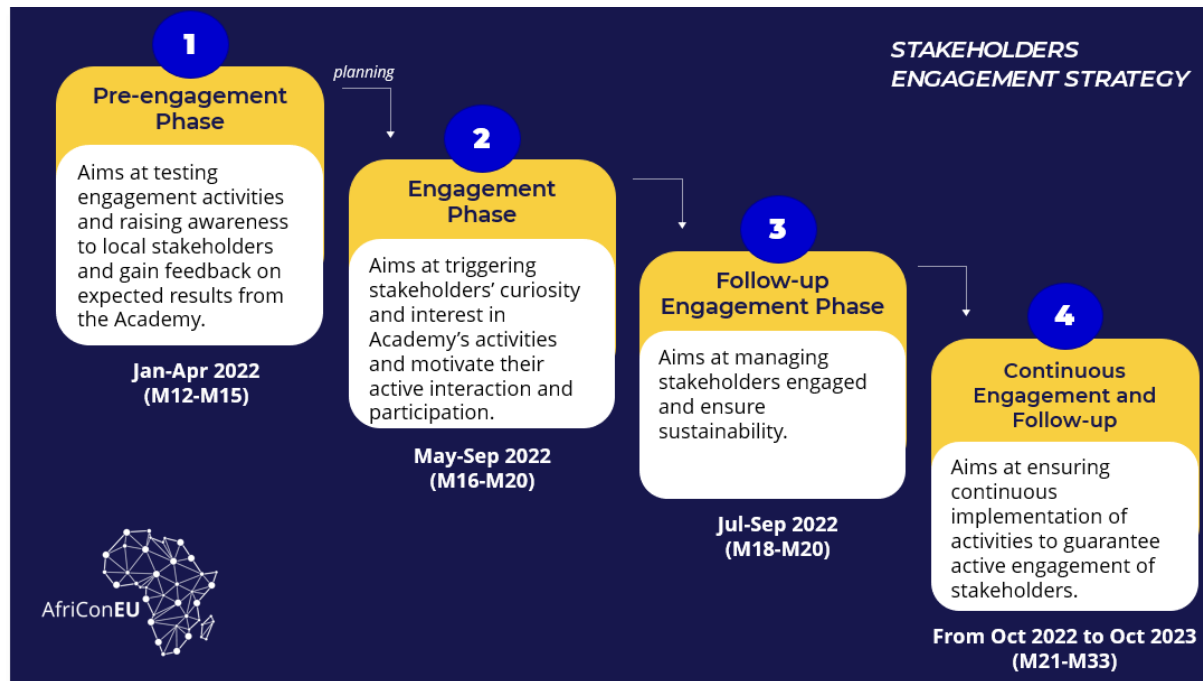


Figure 1 - AfriConEU Stakeholders Engagement Strategy Phases

The engagement activities will be promoted by the different AfriConEU partners, both virtually and physically. For instance, dedicated activities will be performed in Akure, Kampala, Kumasi and Tanzania with the aim to gather local ecosystem players, inform them about the Academy's resources and activities and trigger their participation. In Europe, partners will also target DIHs as well as networks of investors, diaspora communities and other stakeholders who have a mutual benefit to establish collaborations and connections with the African stakeholders. The partner ECA coordinates the engagement strategy design and monitors its implementation, supporting the other partners. ECA, Outbox, BUNI and Hapa have an active involvement in the delivery of the engagement activities in their respective countries. The other EU-based partners target engagement activities to European stakeholders.



Figure 2 - Location of each AfriConEU consortium partners

4.2. Engagement Tools

Several methods and tools will be employed to ensure stakeholders are appropriately informed and engaged to participate in the AfriConEU Academy activities. The engagement strategy will be implemented in close collaboration not only with the **Networking Academy Planning and Implementation (D4.1, T4.1 and T4.2)** but also with the **Communication Strategy** of the project (**D6.1, WP6**), as well as the **Community of Practice** development (**D5.1, WP5**). It will create adjusted content and take advantage of the communication and dissemination channels already in place, besides using specific tools created for the purpose of engaging the stakeholders.

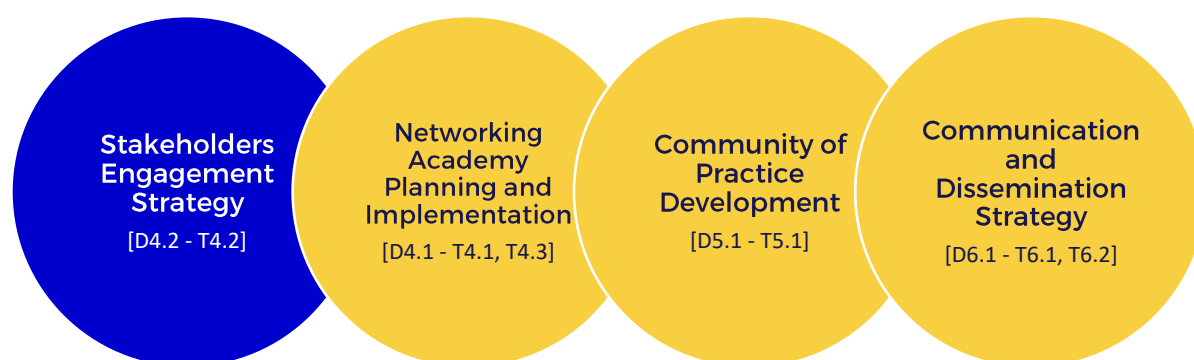


Figure 3 - Synergies between the Stakeholders Engagement Strategy and other AfriConEU tasks

The following table identifies the engagement tools to be utilised:

Table 3 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in brief

#	Activity	Short Description
#1	Academy Teasers	One (1) min. video teasing each Academy activity.
#2	Academy Preview	Virtual and physical presentations of the AfriConEU Networking Academy programmes, within meetings and events organised by AfriConEU partners and the extended community.
#3	AU & EU DIH Success Stories	Short interviews with EU & AU DIH and other stakeholders with inspiring trajectories and stories. Video and written formats.
#4	Meetings with stakeholders	Meetings and establishment of collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
#5	DIH Ambassadors	Recruitment and onboarding of volunteers willing to multiply the benefits of AfriConEU Networking Academy.
#6	AfriConEU website – “Community of Practice”	Animation of Community of Practice space in AfriConEU website, by including engagement activities, its calendar and novelties.

5. Engagement activities in detail

This section presents concrete engagement activities, channels, and tools for the different engagement phases of the project and the different target groups.

5.1. Phase 1: Pre-engagement [Jan-Apr 2022]

A total of three (3) sessions were held in Nigeria and online as part of the pre-engagement strategy with the aim of gaining perspective from key players in the ecosystem with a focus on plights and resource sharing to augment their positions in the digital innovation ecosystem. This phase comprised also the organisation of a pool on Twitter, aiming to understand the expectation of AfriConEU followers.

5.1.1. Aim and target groups

The focus of the pre-engagement sessions was to gather key stakeholder representatives within the private, government, and academic sectors together to discuss the most effective ways to ensure continued participation in the AfriConEU Networking Academy activities. During these sessions, it was also discussed what collaborative ways to improve the local digital economy through the initiative could be capitalised on and implemented. The pool on Twitter intended to collect a first set of inputs from the project followers in this social media, concerning their preferences for engagement activities.

5.1.2. Activities, channels, and tools

Email correspondence was used to invite all stakeholders for the three sessions organised during the pre-engagement phase and Zoom meetings helped facilitate the discussions. Half of the initial participants in Nigeria were made privy to the opportunity from an online advertisement by a popular online advertising Agency. After gaining the interest of people, word of mouth within networks helped bring in more participants to the next sessions.

5.1.3. Results

The preparedness to pull actionable solutions from discourse such as those that were planned helped focus time and resources on what can be achieved. The sessions organised took place on the 27th of January, 11th of February, and the 23rd of February all in 2022.

The outcomes of the three sessions were as follows:

- All participants shared their willingness to attend events where knowledge and experience sharing within the digital innovation ecosystem would be the main areas of focus;
- Effective promotion was labelled as a crucial factor in raising stakeholder awareness and involvement in the Networking Academy. The proper channelling of publicity within the academic, government and private sectors was also an issue discussed;

- Training and awareness prospects were also emphasised as a welcomed initiative to be advertised within the various groups present;
- Advocacy is best suited in this region as people are influenced by the words of those they trust and look up to. Words and opinions weigh heavily so the invitation of high-level people will captivate the locals' attention and willingness to engage with the project.

All these points were factored in the creation of the engagement strategy. The discussions had proved very helpful in mapping the thought processes of these stakeholders to understand how best to recruit them and keep them engaged in the planned activities.

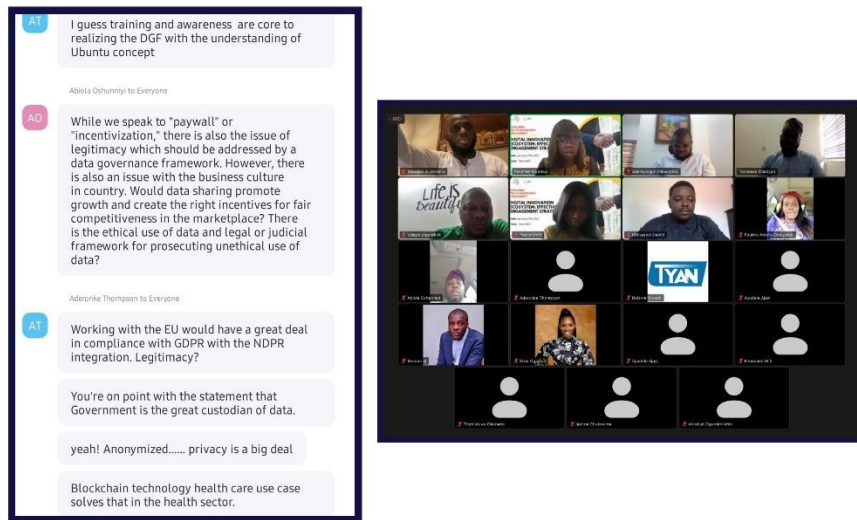
Session 1 – Pre – Stakeholders engagement Session

This closed session was held on the 27th day of January 2022 with the topic “*Effective Engagement Strategies for Digital Innovation Ecosystems*”. The aim was to kick-start conversations about the AfriConEU project amongst key stakeholders in Nigeria to get their buy-in while tapping into their network for bigger engagements for the purpose of: identification of possible collaborative areas for DIHs in Africa and Europe and development of effective and sustainable strategies.

Participants were specifically selected as representatives across the private sector, government, and academia. The partner ATBN had pinpointed the challenges faced by African DIHs and based on the results from *D2.1 – State of play in African DIHs: The case of Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda*.

Summary: Creating and maintaining networks with stakeholders was the initial priority of this session with the discussion of the engagement strategy as a next focus. To create as many synergies and structured exchanges as possible among the stakeholders the need to incentivise must be understood. The need for training and awareness sessions focused on the social and public sectors was also pointed out. The group gave the impression that they were ready to help guide participation in local-level events which all stakeholders would benefit from, to facilitate community building and dissemination of information. Even though regional specificities are essential for concrete joint action, cultural understanding would help in the creation of a member referral system. Consistent education of DIHs across the country with specifically designed programs for women entrepreneurs on design, ideation, incubation and business acceleration was also discussed.

AfriConEU Pre-Stakeholders Engagement



Topic:
Digital Innovation Ecosystem: Effective Engagement Strategies.

emergingcommunitiesafrica emergingtechaf @africoneu

Figure 4 - AfriConEU Pre-Stakeholders Engagement - #Session 1

Session 2 – Digital Innovation Ecosystem Co-Creation Session

This closed session was held on the 11th day of February 2022, titled “*Identification of Sustainable Ecosystem Strategies*”. This co-creation session had key players in the ecosystem specifically handpicked across the private sector, government and academia.

The discourse held conversations around engagement improvement. It was suggested that professors of practise should be encouraged by academia for some sort of adjunct lecturing scheme.

Start-ups joining the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) to be in a space of prestige where they can alleviate biases around them. The NESG network would be a very profitable place to have stakeholders within AfriConEU.

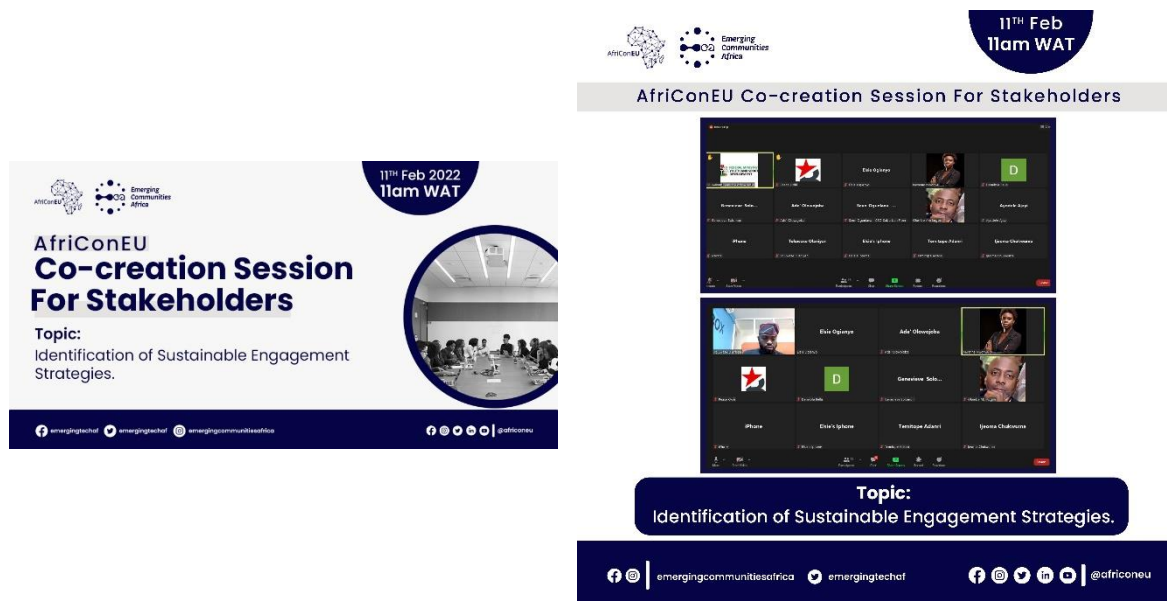
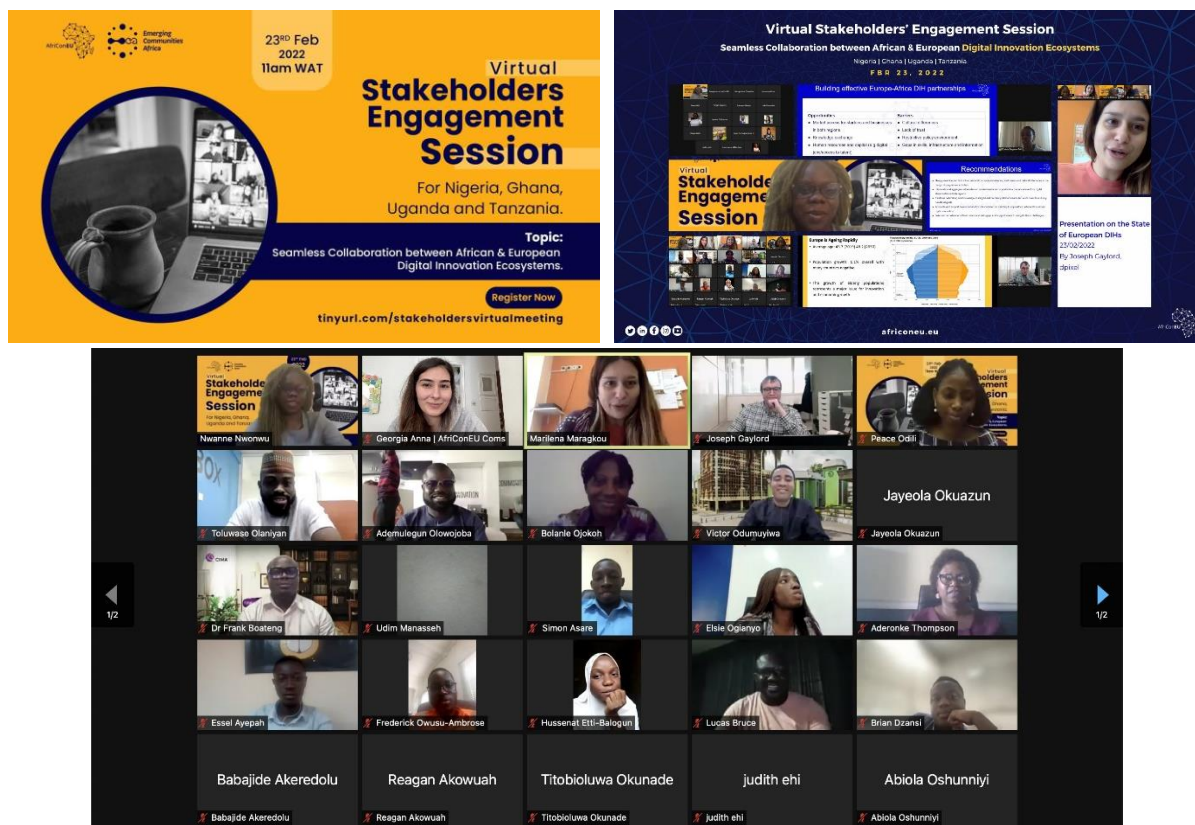


Figure 5 - AfriConEU Pre-Stakeholders Engagement - #Session 2

Session 3 – Virtual Stakeholders Engagement Session

This was the first open session to include Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda and all consortium partners, held on the 23rd day of February titled “*Seamless Collaboration Between African & European Digital Innovation Ecosystems*”. The major objective of this session was to bring together stakeholders from the four African Countries as well as Europe on the project for a strategic dialogue on stimulating rapid digital transformation with attention to socio-economic development in Africa through DIHs.

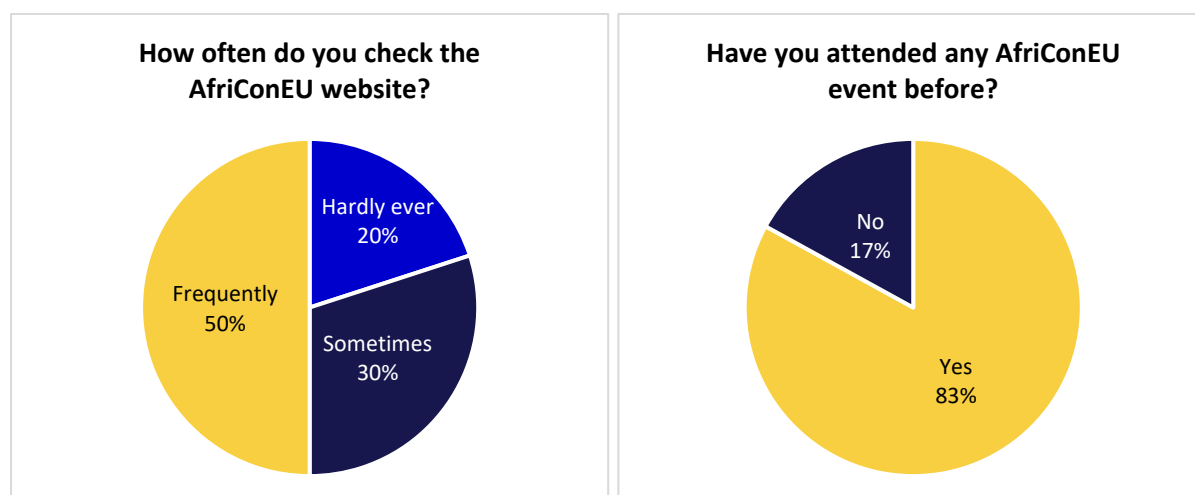
As this session had more participants from across both continents, the conversation took a broader direction. Talent matchmaking with academia and the private sector was ought to be encouraged. Any development of programmes to harness young talents would be supported. Aiding DIHs with funding, self-sustainability, and enlightenment to European bodies on the advancement of these DIHs so there is no air of inferiority based on biased notions of a preconceived Africa was also discussed.



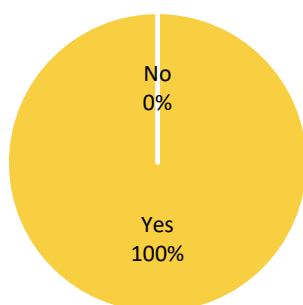
Figures 6 - Virtual Stakeholders Engagement Session, held on the 23rd February (pre-engagement phase): poster and pictures

Besides the sessions, a pool on Twitter was also organised. It gathered the opinion from 69 AfriConEU followers on this social media channel. The results are presented next:

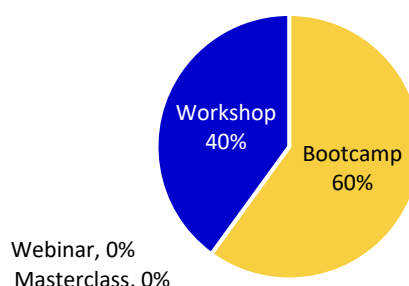
AfriConEU Twitter Poll Engagement Questions



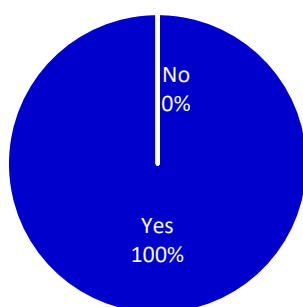
Are you looking to participate in events about leveraging the digital innovation ecosystem?



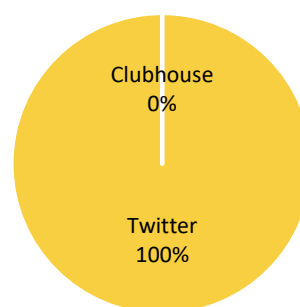
Would you more likely attend a webinar, bootcamp, masterclass, or workshop for something you're interested in?



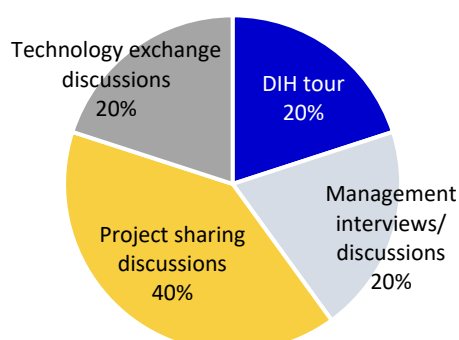
Would you join a twitter space on leveraging transcontinental digital innovation ecosystems?



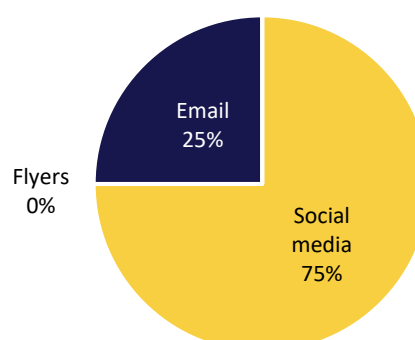
Twitter or Clubhouse, which would you prefer to have conversations on Digital Innovation Ecosystems?



What would you like to see in a live DIH exchange?



How best do you like to be contacted on digital innovation discussions?



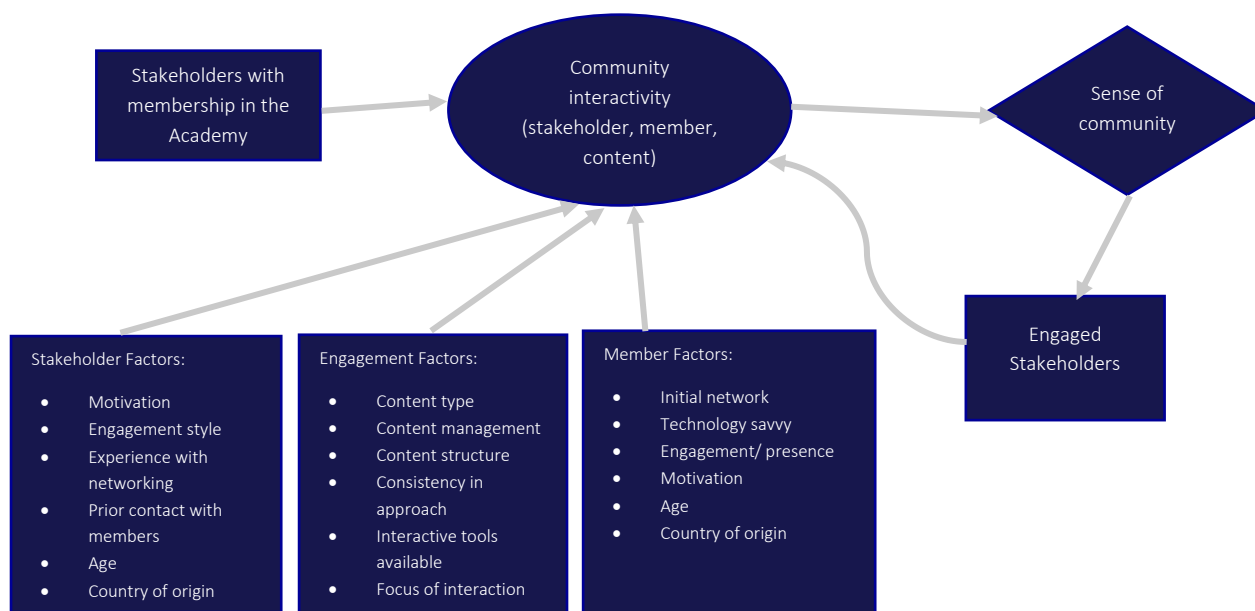
5.2. Phase 2: Engagement [May-Sep 2022]

This section presents the planned activities that will run in parallel to the implementation of the Academy activities¹ to ensure the engagement and participation of target groups in the Academy workshops, webinars, masterclasses etc. It is important to create clear

¹ AfriConEU Networking Academy timeline of activities can be consulted in *D4.1 - Implementation Plan*.

communication activities to inform participants about what is coming through the AfriConEU Academy.

The scheme below was designed based on the interactions and discussions with the key stakeholders during the 3 pre-engagement sessions that were held in January and February 2022. This way, organising partners of the Academy events will have a support basis for participants' engagement and identification of what to look out for and the best methods of delivery to employ.



Figures 7 - Online environment interactivity/community-process model

Stakeholder factors are the determinant factors that work for each stakeholder grouping (e.g. *Motivation* - a startup founder will be more interested in a workshop/webinar that addresses startups' specific needs and challenges than any other type of stakeholder; Young entrepreneurs/DIH managers will most likely be more interested in physical Academy activities that target capacity building than more experienced ones). **Engagement factors** focus on the content/strategy of delivery of the Academy activity. The type of content and interactive tools will most likely determine if the stakeholder will attend another activity by the same organizing partner as well as determine if they will prefer a workshop over a masterclass or a webinar. **Member factors** determine participation based on location or the combination of both stakeholder and engagement factors (e.g. internet connectivity in Africa cannot be compared to the one that exists in Europe).

In this sense, Figure 4.2 depicts the online environment interactivity/community-process model showing the relationship between interactivity, sense of community, and the engaged stakeholder. It has been found that interactivity and the sense of community correlate to general stakeholder engagement.

5.2.1. Aim and target groups

The aim of the engagement strategy is to facilitate the most effective model of ensuring sustained participation of stakeholders in the planned activities and recruit new members into the AfriConEU Community by the identification of preferred and most effective channels of engagement tailored for each stakeholder group.

5.2.2. Activities

Table 4 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: Academy Teasers

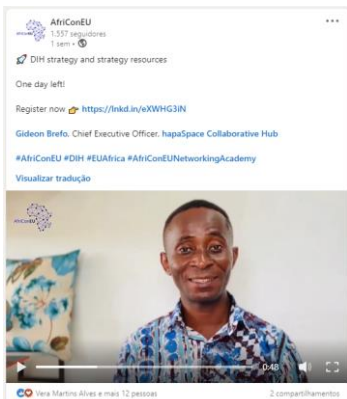
#1. Academy Teasers	
WHAT	1 min video teasing each Academy activity.
WHEN	May 2022 to October 2023
WHO	Activities' Organizing Partners , under the coordination of ECA. INOVA+ and YMH to provide support.
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECA coordinates videos production: Approach: 1 min video recorded under a free and attractive approach, to announce upcoming activities. Basic information to announce includes: the title of the activity, main topic, timeslot, location, and speakers. Teasers to be produced for all Network Academy Activities. Videos to be shared with ECA/ YMH/ INOVA+ 10 days before the activity delivery day.
KPI	+40 videos (~1 video per Academy activity)
Results	<p>1 teaser recorded, by Hapa (URL)</p> 

Table 5 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: Academy Preview

#2. Academy Preview	
WHAT	Presentation of the Academy at virtual and physical events.
WHEN	May to September 2022 (mostly)
WHO	ALL PARTNERS , under the coordination of ECA. INOVA+ and YMH to provide support.
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation introducing Networking Academy at virtual and physical events organised by AfriConEU partners and the extended community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation prepared with informative and engaging activities, with space for Q&A from the audience. ECA prepares the presentation. • Events: organized by the ICT-58 funded projects, etc. ECA coordinates, with other partners, events selection.
KPI	At least 4 presentations at events.

Table 6 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: AU & EU DIH success stories

#3. AU & EU DIH success stories	
WHAT	Short interviews with EU & AU DIH and other stakeholders with inspiring stories.
WHEN	May to October 2023
WHO	<p>ECA, with the support of other partners.</p> <p>INOVA+ to make a final review of interviews in written format (editing review).</p> <p>YMH to provide technological support to video interviews.</p>
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of success and inspirational cases: ECA coordinates identification and selection, asking partners to provide suggestions and organising a “call for stories”; • Preparation of interviews scripts: ECA prepares the script of 4-5 questions (to be reviewed by INOVA+, BUNI, ATBN) and other basic guidelines; • Interviews in video and written formats. ECA, with the support of partners: (i) schedule the interview for recorded interviews; (ii) or ask stakeholders to answer questions in written format.
KPI	<p>8 video interviews (50% from Africa).</p> <p>15 written interviews (50% from Africa).</p>

Table 7 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: meetings with stakeholders

#4. Meetings with stakeholders	
WHAT	Meetings targeting the establishment of collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
WHEN	May to September 2022 (mostly)
WHO	ALL PARTNERS , under the coordination of ECA.
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of relevant stakeholders, events and activities (ECA coordinates, monitoring number and type of meetings organised by partners); • Organization of meetings with stakeholders and establishment of collaborations (ALL PARTNERS), namely for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participation in Academy activities or other AfriConEU activities (as guests/speakers); - organization of Academy activities; - cross-promotion. • Support materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invitation Letter for Government Officials: All partners are encouraged to invite government officials and policymakers. An email template is available in Annex 1. - General letter for engaging target groups: All partners are encouraged to invite the identified target groups. An email template is available in Annex 2.

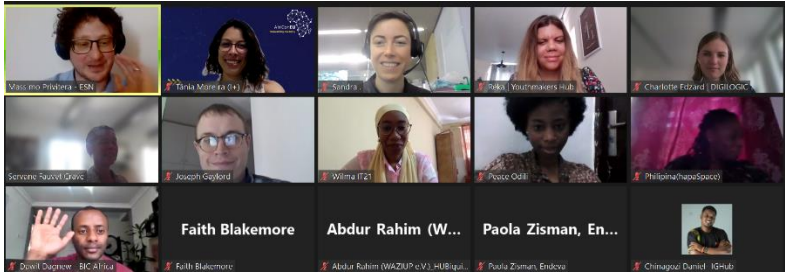
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Press release: ECA will create one press release announcing the Academy activities. This press release will be used to contact media stakeholders and ask them to promote AfriConEU Academy in their channels.
KPI	Meetings with +20 stakeholders.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of AfriConEU Networking Academy, with emphasis on Brokerage Event (call for speakers), and Call for Success Cases at ICT-58 Projects Family Meeting, on 14 June 2022. The meeting counted with the participation of the following projects: HUBiquitous; DIGILOGIC; AfriConEU; AEDIB NET; mAkE – African Europe Maker Innovation Ecosystem. Also, other projects participated: ENRICH in Africa; and BIC Africa. 

Table 8 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: Ambassadors

#5. Ambassadors	
WHAT	Meetings targeting the establishment of collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
WHEN	May to September 2022 (mostly)
WHO	ECA, and other partners.
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever pertinent, partners will recruit Ambassadors to support the promotion of AfriConEU and the engagement of new stakeholders. • This will be the case in Nigeria.
KPI	Recruitment of +5 Ambassadors.

Table 9 - AfriConEU engagement phase activities in detail: AfriConEU website – “Community of Practice”

#6. AfriConEU website – “Community of Practice”	
WHAT	Meetings targeting the establishment of collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
WHEN	May 2022 to October 2023
WHO	ECA, with support of INOVA+. YMH uploads contents.
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animation of Community of Practice space in AfriConEU website, by including engagement activities, its calendar and novelties.
KPI	Community of Practice space updated according to the engagement activities organised.

5.3. Phase 3: Follow-up engagement [Jul-Sep 2022]

Follow-up engagement means Stakeholders' management which is fundamental to ensuring sustainability. This section holds the plan for how engaged stakeholders will be managed during all the activities to ensure the future uptake of the project's results and outputs.

After the recruitment of more community members, engagement is expected to be continuous and sustainable. Recruitment, it may be claimed, is only the beginning. Maintaining stakeholders' engagement is just as vital as attracting new stakeholders. In this regard, the follow-up engagement tools presented are critical; they allow community members' enthusiasm to be tracked and changes in it to be responded to. The biggest issue for maintaining the attention of the recruited community members in the early stages of the observatory, before the roll-out of the platforms, may be the dynamics and feedback loops that are not yet operational. The sessions will be the primary points of contact with the engaged members, but they will almost certainly be insufficient to instil a sense of ownership.

Regular updates once engaged

- Follow up after their first activity with the Academy; ask them if it was received well and if their input makes a difference (the use of feedback surveys and questionnaires).
- Send updates even if there is not much happening and (especially) if the community members have not been active, it is important that they receive a message about the Academy with a certain regularity.
- Remind them to stay active and keep sharing opinions through surveys or questionnaires to demonstrate how relevant their activities are.
- Be reachable in the case of questions and clarifications, the community members should have the contact details of the community manager for assurance of availability. This can be implemented by partners.

5.4. Phase 4: Continuous Engagement and Follow-up [Oct 2022 – Oct 2023]

The core of AfriConEU engagement activities will be held between May and September 2022. Nevertheless, as described in the previous phases, the engagement strategy and activities will follow the entire AfriConEU Networking Academy and, thus, some of the activities are planned to be delivered after the core period. To successfully accomplish this, the engagement strategy has previewed a “continuous engagement and follow-up” phase, identifying the activities to be delivered, the role and commitments of partners. During this period, the following activities will be performed (completed details can be consulted in Phase 2 of the strategy):

- **#1. Academy Teasers:** May 2022 to October 2023
- **#3. AU & EU DIH success stories:** May to October 2023
- **#6. AfriConEU website – “Community of Practice”:** May 2022 to October 2023

ECA will coordinate the delivery of these activities, supporting and monitoring partners' performance.

6. Conclusion

The summary of the proposed engagement strategy, objective and tools lie herein.

The Stakeholder Strategy Engagement programme of the AfriConEU Academy aims to create awareness among all key stakeholders by planning and developing events that include policymakers, hub operators, start-ups, academic dignitaries and others from such backgrounds.

This document has presented the learning objectives, discourse and outcomes provided for each strategy engagement session held so far.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Invitation Letter for Government Officials

{DATE}

The Honourable {FULL NAME},

{FULL TITLE},

{ADDRESS}.

Dear {TITLE, LAST NAME},

I am writing on behalf of AfriConEU to invite you to {SPEAK, PARTICIPATE} at {ACADEMY ACTIVITY} scheduled for {DATE} in /on {CITY/ONLINE} with focus on {TOPIC/OBJECTIVE OF EVENT}.

The AfriConEU project aspires to create the first Trans-Continental Networking Academy to support African and European Digital Innovation Hubs in capacity building, knowledge sharing, networking, collaboration, joint projects, and venture development.

Participants cut across private, academic and government sectors. {COUNTRY}, represented by, {ORGANISING PARTNER}, will host and contribute to technical and digital innovation related topics, and other AfriConEU Academy activities. These activities include workshops, webinars, masterclasses and bootcamps.

These activities border around public policy issues affecting start-ups, entrepreneurs, digital innovation hubs, and others within the digital innovation ecosystem. Accordingly, we would be delighted to have your contributions to research and development on digital technology issues at the event. Find attached a brochure on past and future AfriConEU Academy activities.

We expect about {XXX} members to attend this event. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

{CONSORTIUM MEMBER NAME, TITLE}

{CONSORTIUM MEMBER ORGANIZATION NAME}

Annex 2 - General letter for engaging target groups

{DATE}

{FULL NAME},

{ADDRESS}.

Dear {TITLE, LAST NAME},

I am writing on behalf of AfriConEU to request your presence at {EVENT TOPIC/ FOCUS} in our community. The event is hosted by {ORGANISING PARTNER} and is designed to have {EXPECTED OUTCOMES}.

The AfriConEU project aspires to create the first Trans-Continental Networking Academy to support African and European Digital Innovation Hubs in capacity building, knowledge sharing, networking, collaboration, joint projects, and venture development.

Participants cut across private, academic and government sectors. {COUNTRY}, represented by, {ORGANISING PARTNER}, will host and contribute to technical and digital innovation related topics, and other AfriConEU Academy activities. These activities include workshops, webinars, masterclasses and bootcamps.

The event will take place on {DATE} in {CITY/ONLINE} by {TIME/HOURS}. Please commit to lending your expertise to this event. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by replying to this mail. Finally, please let me know if you are able to attend so that appropriate plans can be made to accommodate you and others within your network.

We expect about {XXX} members to attend this event. Thank you in advance for your commitment to participate.

Sincerely,

{CONSORTIUM MEMBER NAME, TITLE}

{CONSORTIUM MEMBER ORGANIZATION NAME}