

Action Plan of the CARPE DIGEM Project:

Catalysing Regions in Peripheral and Emerging Europe towards Digital Innovation Ecosystems



Partner: ERNACT

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1 Executive Summary

For project partners producing their Action Plan in their own language please produce the sections highlighted in yellow in English, in addition to a short executive summary (you can of course produce a complete English version if you wish).

2 General information

- **Project:** CARPE DIGEM
- Partner organisations: ERNACT
- Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):
- Country: Ireland
- **NUTS2 region:** Border, Midland & West (BMW)
- Contact person: Margaret Quinn
 - **Email:** Margaret.quinn@ernact.eu
 - **Phone number:** +353 749168212

3 Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name and reference of the policy instrument addressed:

“North West Strategic Growth Plan”, Priority “economic growth and investment”, i.e., “to enhance the region’s innovation ecosystem to capture jobs and enterprises in the next wave of digital innovation

4 Actions/services

4.1 Background

The cross border North West City region in Ireland faces socio-economic challenges of peripheral areas in Europe along with the added challenges of Brexit. The policy instrument we address has the objective to “to achieve a step-change enhancement of the region’s innovation ecosystem to capture jobs and enterprises in the next wave of digital innovation”.

The actions we propose in this Action Plan are intended to enhance the region’s innovation ecosystem by establishing a Digital Transformation Framework for the North West City region. It will make use of existing digital transformation related actions run in both sides of the border on an individual basis: the Donegal Action Plan in County Donegal (Ireland) and Intelligent/Digital) Cities Challenge in Derry and Strabane (Northern Ireland). The vision for the cross border digital transformation actions proposed in our CARPE DIGEM Action Plan encapsulate the separate but synergistic visions for Derry and for Donegal, expressed respectively in the Digital Cities Challenge and in Donegal Digital’s Action plan, but placed in a cross-border context.

The tool of an innovation ecosystem working to develop key research strengths and fostering digital skills of the community to bring digital transformation of target economic sectors is certainly shared and is central to this Action Plan.



The following table gathers the main actions envisaged actions and the challenge they address.

Project / Action	Challenge or Need Addressed
Establish a governance structure for delivering a North-West Ireland digital transformation plan	The need for cross-border governance structures to address existing back-to-back structures restricting achievement of economies of scale in digital transformation planning and delivery.
Develop a sustainable comprehensive digital transformation plan based on consultation and needs assessment	Need to combine scarce digital transformation resources in skills, research, innovation and public services development to achieve economies of scale and unleash development potential
Implement services to sustain a North-West an integrated digital skills portal and digital hub/technology providers’ network.	Need to demonstrate “quick wins” and progress in implementing services from key aspects of the digital transformation plan. Digital skills, digital innovation hubs and more effective and rapid access by SMEs to digital technology providers are key to the plan.

[Annex 1](#): includes a detailed description of the different activities and meetings involving the local stakeholders to reach consensus on this action plan.

4.2 Knowledge applied from CARPE DIGEM

Describe in this section how you are applying the knowledge acquired and lessons learnt from the exchange activities in CARPE DIGEM, in the development of your action plan.

Partner experience and practice (please detail: service name, short description and location)	How this Partner practice has contributed to the services developed in your Action Plan (detail any transfers, full or partial of good practice)
<p>DIHBAI-TUR Good Practice Regional innovation ecosystem . This Good Practice has built an ecosystem involving regional government and other public-private organisations in an ecosystem for the island’s digital transformation. Balearic Islands</p>	<p>The partnership work together with a common governance agreement. A key action is to increase connections with research/academic communities to fill digital gaps. This has contributed to our action plan application across : Action 1 on building a common governance structure and agreement for our NW Ireland ecosystem and Action 2 in the way we will build Research communities into the Digital Transformation Plan as important engines for economic growth and innovation.</p>
<p>4PDIH Good Practice DIH Network supporting regional Digital Transformation This Good practice provides, connects and supports knowledge, business and technology expertise, technologies, experimental and pilot environments, best practices, methodologies and other activities necessary to fully enable Slovene industry, public administration and communities in building digital competencies, innovation models and processes and support their digital transformation</p>	<p>The 4PDIH programme has served for both Action 2 and Action 3. For Action 1 and 2 concerning the Digital Transformation ecosystem and plan, we will implement via involvement of key stakeholders with specific role in digital transformation. Our approach will also entail active participation to local and national policy makers, and other EU projects and initiatives, another key success factor of 4pDIH. We learned about the importance of networking of DIH and technology providers to provide access to expertise which has informed Action 3.</p>

4.3 Action/service description

Description of the action or service planned, including at least:

Main objectives	Value brought by this action into the region	Players involved and role in the implementation and collaboration between them (explanation of their involvement in service design)
Action 1 Establish a governance structure for delivering a North-West Ireland digital transformation plan	Permanent structures and resources, embedded within the regions policy instrument and local authority structures, for driving and delivering digital transformation	ERNACT NWRA Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council ATU (LYIT), UU, NWRC
Action 2 Develop a sustainable comprehensive digital transformation plan based on consultation and needs assessment	Integrated plan (encompassing service delivery, innovation, research diffusion and skills) to effectively and sustainably deliver digital transformation in the North-West area.	ERNACT NWRA Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council ATU (LYIT), UU, NWRC Responsible of DIHs in the region
Action 3 Implement services to sustain a North-West an integrated digital skills portal and digital hub/technology providers' network.	Early delivery of the skills and innovation aspects of the North West Digital Transformation plan to increase regional innovation and competitiveness.	ERNACT NWRA Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council ATU (LYIT), UU, NWRC Responsible of DIHs in the region

Stakeholder Roles

Action 1: The roles for Action 1 are planned as:

ERNACT: Project Management & facilitator role.

Key stakeholders will collaborate to co-produce & agree an appropriate governance structure.

Key stakeholders are the regional authority, the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA)

Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council

Atlantic technological University (ATU) Donegal Campus, University of Ulster Magee, North West Regional College (NWRC).

Action 2: The roles for Action 2 are planned as:

ERNACT: Project Management & lead for the consultation process on the Digital Transformation Plan. ERNACT will supply the structured framework for the Digital Transformation as outlined above. ERNACT will consult with Key stakeholders to establish their prioritization for Digital Transformation actions.

Key stakeholders are the regional authority, the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA)

Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council

Atlantic technological University (ATU) Donegal Campus, University of Ulster Magee, North West Regional College (NWRC), representatives of local businesses such as the Chambers of Commerce, the Digital Innovation Hubs networks in the region, development agencies in the region, business technology clusters in the region.

Action 3: The roles foreseen for Action 3 for both sets of service development are:

ERNACT : Project Management and provision of prototype systems.

For each service an external provider will be used to develop the prototypes further.

Working groups to co-create and guide the service development will be formed for each service and will be appropriate to each service.

For the digital skills portal the working group will be formed by digital course providers in the region such as Atlantic technological University (ATU) Donegal Campus, University of Ulster Magee, North West Regional College (NWRC), Regional skills networks and Skills managers from each local authority.

For the technology provider/Digital Innovation Hubs service the working group will be formed of representatives from each of those sectors such as representatives of technology research centres and representatives from Digital Innovation Hubs..

End-user groups will also be used to co-design each service and will be taken from existing groups in the region e.g. Business clusters/ student groups/Hub client businesses.

4.4 Timeframe and Funding

Include here the timeframe for the project funding application and set-up/implementation Process. Note: this chart will be key for the reporting procedure on the indicators given in the Application Form (Number of Projects and Investments relating to your PI and other Policy Instruments)

Project/Action Investment Line/Funding Source + Amount (please state each source of funding)	Submitted For Funding	Funding Decision	Project Start Date	Other key milestones
Actions 1 & 2 Peace Plus programme Area: Theme 2. Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation Actions for Smart Towns and Villages. To reap the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisation and public authorities ..or Theme 6: Building & Embedding Partnership & Collaboration	02/2023*	07/2023*	09/2023*	
Action 3 Peace Plus programme	02/2023*	07/2023*	09/2023*	

<p>Area: Theme 2. Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation.</p> <p>Areas of Theme 2: Area 2.1. To enhance sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs, including by productive investments. Actions for Academic- Industry Collaboration cross border Area 2.3 Skills development programme</p>				

*Dates are to be confirmed according to the opening of calls in relevant areas under the Peace Plus Programme.

4.5 Workplan

An outline of the Work-plan for each Action is presented here.

4.5.1 Workplan Action 1

Action 1: Establish a governance structure for delivering a North-West Ireland digital transformation plan

WP	Tasks
Work Package 1	Task 1.1 Establish working group
	Task 1.2 Consult on governance structure
	Task 1.3 Issue governance structure
Work Package 2	Task 2.1 Implement governance

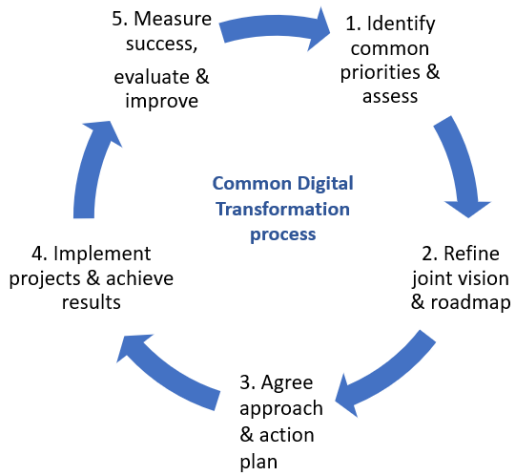
An appropriate governance structure will be developed by consultation with the stakeholder group and the agreed governance will be put in place to support the development of the Digital Transformation plan for the North West City Region.

4.5.2 Workplan Action 2

Action 2: Develop a sustainable comprehensive digital transformation plan based on consultation and needs assessment

WP	Tasks
Work Package 1: Project Management	Task 1.1 Project set-up, roles & responsibilities
Work Package 2 Assessment	Task 2.1 Refine joint vision. Identify common priorities and review work to date
Work Package 3 Action Plan	Task 3.1 Develop action plan in iterative process
Work Package 4 Communications	Task 4.1 Communications plan & its implementation internal and external to project

The action plan will be developed in the following cyclical methodology to identify common cross border priority operational objectives and to allow their incorporation in an action plan. As starting point for identifying common priorities, the current digital transformation actions for Derry & Strabane and Donegal will be reviewed.



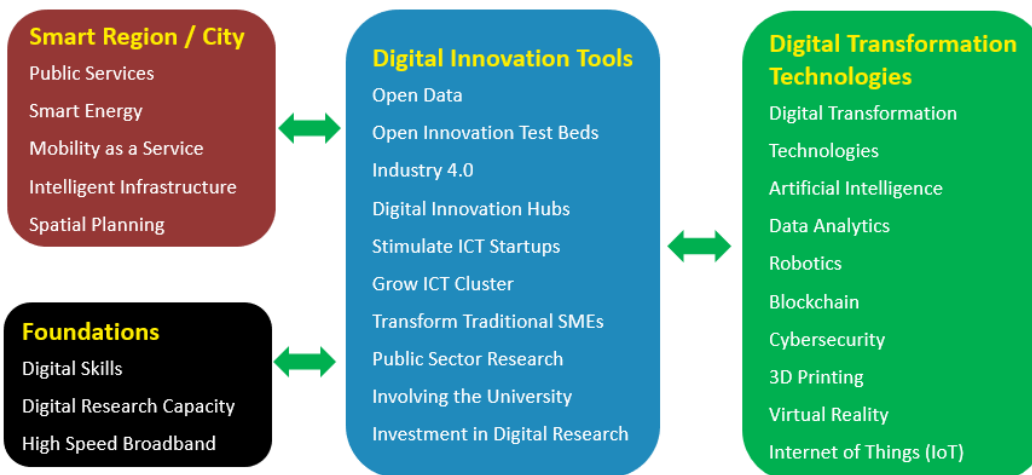
The framework for the Digital Transformation Plan to be utilised will be structured into elements grouped as: Digital Foundations, Digital Innovation Tools, Digital Transformation Priorities, Smart City and Region:

Digital Foundations: Are the basic elements needed to support Digital Transformation.

Digital Innovation tools: Building on these capacities, Digital Innovation tools make use of the basis of Digital Foundations and Digital Technologies to develop ecosystems, channels, linkages and connecting and catalyst mechanisms in order to stimulate economic growth.

Digital Transformation Technologies: Additional strengthening comes from developing capacity around digital transformation technologies, the principle disruptive technologies that are driving the fourth industrial and societal revolution.

Smart Region/City: Is the application of all the other elements to areas that relate to the City or regional level such as intelligent city infrastructure or smart energy management.



4.5.3 Workplan Action 3

Action 3: Implement services to sustain a North-West integrated digital skills portal and digital hub/technology providers' network.

This action is to deliver added value services concerning skills and innovation areas of the North West Digital Transformation plan to increase regional innovation and competitiveness. The two items selected are:

- Service to sustain a digital skills portal integrated with training/educational providers in the North west City Region using an open data approach. The aim is to facilitate individuals to upgrade their skills and to make it easier to find digital/technology courses across multiple training providers on a cross-border basis.
- Service to sustain a network of technology providers and digital hubs in order to support ease of access to SME's for innovation/ technology expertise and to increase their competitiveness. The service will expose the key technology expertise provided by each technology provider in a consistent way to support ease of use by Hub managers and the SME's the Hubs support. We envisage a rich directory with matterport style 3D walkthroughs of centres of expertise, and tools to connect and have exploratory dialogue between the SME's and Technology experts.

For each service:

WP	Tasks
Work Package 1: Project Management	Task 1.1 Project set-up, roles & responsibilities
Work Package 2 Build Ecosystem of core participants for service	Task 2.1 Build group of digital course providers as working group for the first service. Build group of participants technology providers and Hubs for the second service.
Work Package 3 Service development & piloting	Task 3.1 Pilot & test services
Work Package 4 Service Operation	Task 4.1 Move to live operation of service
Work Package 5 Communications	Task 5.1 Communications plan & its implementation internal and external to project

4.6 Budget breakdown for the service/project

Action 1 & 2: Establish a governance structure for a Digital transformation Plan. Develop a sustainable comprehensive digital transformation plan based on consultation and needs assessment. 2022-2025

Category of funding	Expenditure Amount 000's Euro
Salaries	120
Overheads (i.e. calculated at x % of staff costs)	40
Travel & Subsistence	45
External expertise	24

Promotion	10
Equipment	0
TOTAL	239

Action 3

Service to sustain a digital skills portal integrated with training/educational providers in the North west City Region using an open data. 2022-2025

Category of funding	Expenditure Amount 000's euro
Salaries	60
Overheads (i.e. calculated at x % of staff costs)	18
Travel & Subsistence	15
External expertise	45
Promotion	10
Equipment	15
TOTAL	163

Service to sustain a network of technology providers and digital hubs in order to support ease of access to SME's for innovation/ technology expertise 2022-2025

Category of funding	Expenditure Amount 000's euro
Salaries	90
Overheads (i.e. calculated at x % of staff costs)	30
Travel & Subsistence	30
External expertise	45
Promotion	10
Equipment	24
TOTAL	229

4.7 Viability and sustainability

The stakeholder group forming the ecosystem for the actions in this Action Plan include the regional authorities in an active way. This gives potential for access to new programmes/investments to support the Action Plan for Digital Transformation of the North West City region in the medium term of 3-5 years and longer term.

The stakeholders will contribute to durability as they have a vested interest in the action plan's viability and sustainability through alignment with the strategic development plans of the policy instrument, the North West Strategic Growth Plan and with those of each stakeholder organisation. Through involvement in these actions, stakeholders also increase their awareness and understanding of digital transformation activities and their impact which will also provide an enduring result.

The Action plan for Digital transformation will be a living plan, continually updated and reviewed for new opportunities and areas where relevant and impactful initiatives can be undertaken. Also common priorities are likely to shift. Via the cyclical process highlighted above, the Digital Transformation plan will evolve and remain relevant to new circumstances in the region which is another factor supporting sustainability of the action plan.

ERNACT is owned and managed by the 2 local authorities and is a dedicated Digital transformation service agency for the region. Along with the relative modest investments required, this also ensures that plan is viable as the organisational work for the action plan will be undertaken by an existing agency for whom Digital Transformation is a core service.

4.8 Impact expected

A.

‘Self-Defined Indicators’ in the Application Form is :

Number of regional DIH working in network under the CARPE DIGEM approach (6).

We expect to increase this indicator to 15 through the CARPE DIGEM actions for a cross-border Digital transformation Plan under the North West Strategic Growth Plan. The increase will be from additional DIH in the Donegal network and involvement of DIH in the Derry City and Strabane District council area, both existing and new DIH being developed in the next few years.

B. The impact expected of this action/service

Action 1: The impact of the action to establish a governance structure for delivering a North-West Ireland digital transformation plan will be to provide a critical success factor for the creation and ongoing implementation of that Digital Transformation Plan. Without the governance structure to ensure clear roles, responsibilities and decision-making for the NW Digital Transformation Plan, the initiative could face significant challenges.

Action 2: The impact of developing a sustainable comprehensive digital transformation plan will be an acceleration of the digitalisation and innovation in the North West City region. Over the course of CAREP DIGEM we have consulted stakeholders and agreed digital transformation areas that the North West City region should address on a cross-border basis. Examples of areas are:

- Strengthen applied digital Research Collaboration between research centres in the region
- Support regional University-Industry R&D collaboration in digi-tech
- Stimulate Digi-tech skills in the region across all communities
- Develop Digital Hubs network capacity as catalysts for regional digi-tech innovation
- Regional strategy & initiatives on Open Data/IoT for a smarter greener region

Through strengthened cross-border collaboration between research centres /centres of expertise we expect to increase the number of applied digital research and innovation projects in the region. Through actions to increase support for cross-border university to industry we expect to increase the collaboration for innovation with businesses across key sectors for the region such as manufacturing, tourism, fin-tech, med-tech. On the same theme, actions to increase the capacity of the Digital Innovation Hubs to act as innovation catalysts on a cross-border basis will also increase the diffusion of digital innovation through communities in the North West City region.

Action 3:

The services selected under Action 3 are for quick wins, early delivery of the skills and innovation aspects of the North West Digital Transformation plan to increase regional innovation and competitiveness. The services are selected as “low-hanging fruits” which can be implemented in a relatively short time-scale and provide impetus to stakeholders via quick, tangible, beneficial results.

A key issue for the region is the gap between digi-tech skills and the demands of a growing regional ICT cluster. The first service aims to address this. It will aim to sustain a digital skills portal integrated with training/educational providers in the North west City Region using an open data approach. The impact will be to make it easier for individuals to find digital/technology courses across multiple training providers on a cross-border basis. Thus we envisage it will support upgrading/developing digital skills and increase the pool of digital talent in the North West city region.

The second service under this action has the aim of sustaining a network of technology providers and digital innovation hubs in order to support ease of access to SME's for innovation/ technology expertise and to increase SME competitiveness. The impact will be to facilitate local business to find, understand, connect and have dialogue with technology expertise in the region through the Digital Innovation Hubs network. This will also increase the capability of Digital Innovation Hubs in the region to serve their local SMEs by connecting them to the applied research capability in the region's 3rd level sector. It can also serve to link complementary hubs regionally so they can collaborate and share resources more effectively.

4.9 Monitoring activities in Phase 2

Monitoring activities in Phase 2 will be on the key milestones of the workplans for each action falling before July 2023, the end of Phase 2.

All actions: Proposal preparation for each action and submission of funding proposal to Peace Plus programme

Action 1: Set-up/Implementation progress subject to funding

- Development of governance structure.
- Agreed governance structure

Action 2

- Identification of common priorities for Digital Transformation Plan
- Draft Digital Transformation Plan

Action 3

- Ecosystem development for each service



Approval of Action Plan:

On behalf of **Derry City & Strabane District Council**, I would like to confirm our support for the North West Ireland Action Plan developed through the CARPE DIGEM project.

We agree, where appropriate, to promote and give assistance to the delivery and implementation of the projects and other activities as detailed in the North West Ireland Action Plan.

I confirm that I have the required authorisation of to do so and that the required authorisation process of **Derry City & Strabane District Council**, has been duly carried out.

On behalf of: Derry City & Strabane District Council

Signed:

Name:

Stephen Gillespie

Position in Organisation:

Director of Business & Culture

Date:

21 July 2022



INTERREG Europe: Carpe Digem

Action Plan: North-West Ireland

Approval of Action Plan: (on Headed Paper)

On behalf of Donegal Co Co I would like to confirm our support for the North West Ireland Action Plan developed through the CARPE DIGEM project.

We agree, where appropriate, to promote and give assistance to the delivery and implementation of the projects and other activities as detailed in the North West Ireland Action Plan.

I confirm that I have the required authorisation to do so and that the required authorisation process has been duly carried out.

On behalf of:

Signed:

John G. McLaughlin

Name:

JOHN G. MCLAUGHLIN

Position in Organisation:

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Date:

25 JULY 2022



5 ANNEXES

5.1 Annex 1 - List of main activities and meetings with the local stakeholders

Actions 1& 2

Activity	Responsible	Date	Stakeholders involved
Discussion of priority cross border areas from perspective of Donegal	ERNACT	December 6 2022	Stakeholders from Donegal County Council
Discussion on Applied digital research plans and regional impact	ERNACT	28 February 2022	Stakeholder Letterkenny technology Institute- head of development.
Discussion on digi-tech business in cross-border digital skills development	ERNACT	28 February	CEO of the Chamber of Commerce in Derry
Discussion with inward investment agency InvestNI on CARPE DIGEM action plan	ERNACT	3 February	2 stakeholders from Invest NI
Discussion on Business support/Innovation centers in Technology Institute NWRC in Derry	ERNACT	March 9 2022	Lead of Derry's Intelligent Cities Challenge and Innovation manager of NWRC
Action plan discussion and review	ERNACT	10 May 2022	Regional Authority: NWRA Local Authorities: Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council Local 3 rd level institutions:

			Atlantic Technological University (LYIT , campus), University of Ulster Magee, North West Regional College
Planned			
Formal Kick-off & formation Working Group	ERNACT	June 2022	As above
Inception document for the Digital Transformation Approach	ERNACT	August 2022	ERNACT lead in consultation with stakeholders
Governance of Digital Transformation work	ERNACT	September 2022	As above
Workshop 1: Review work to date / Vision and objectives	ERNACT	September 2022	All stakeholders as above
Workshop 2: Identify common priorities and actions for Digital Transformation Plan	ERNACT	October 2022	All stakeholders as above plus target groups in the region: e.g. Economic development & Innovation agencies, Business networks.
Funding meeting (with SEUPB, Councils, NWRA)	ERNACT	November 2022	
Funding Submission	ERNACT	December 2022 (TBC)	

