

Harmonised and Inclusive Digital and Data Policies in Africa

The Context

Digital transformation in Africa continues to be a driving force for innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth in Africa's 21st century development. It has already unleashed numerous opportunities for the continent, including job creation, poverty reduction, and the delivery of goods and services to ultimately improve the quality of life of all Africans. At the same time, with just over a third of the African population currently using the internet, digital transformation remains an unfulfilled promise for many.

To fully participate in the social and economic transformation of the African continent, the African Union (AU) has made considerable efforts to enable its Member States and institutions in leveraging the benefits of technology. At the core of these efforts, the AU developed the Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) for Africa 2020 - 2030, envisioning an "integrated and inclusive digital society and economy in Africa".

Inclusion and participatory processes are therefore key to increase meaningful African citizen engagement in governance, policy making and implementation processes. In order to achieve an "integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens" as outlined in the AU's vision, the aim of the project is to strengthen the inclusive and harmonised implementation of the AU's digital and data policy.

Our Approach

DataCipation supports the creation of an African digital single market by strengthening the AU's innovation leadership, developing harmonised data policies, innovative digital products, and building regulatory and institutional capacity. By facilitating inclusive and gender-sensitive stakeholder engagement, DataCipation puts people at the centre of policy, ensuring every voice is heard. The programme supports the

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Budget	EUR 41.3 million
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AU, its Member States, and Regional Economic Communities on the continent to create and implement harmonised frameworks for digital and data policies by:

- Implementing digital innovations and initiatives to promote inclusive digital transformation,
- Strengthening the competences of governmental and non-governmental actors to implement and monitor the AU Data Policy Framework (DPF),
- Harmonising national, regional, and continental data policies in line with the AU DPF,
- Promoting digital participation and communication processes, especially for women and young people.

DataCipation leverages Africa's innovation ecosystem towards a digitally transformed Africa in line with Agenda 2063 and the DTS.

DataCipation's political partner is the Bureau of the Chairperson of the AU Commission (AUC). Implementing partners are the AU's Information Society Division (ISD) in the Department of Infrastructure and Energy (DIE), the AU Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the Information and Communication Directorate (ICD) as well as the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYP).





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The Benefits

In partnership with AU ISD, DataCipation supports the continental roll-out of the AU Data Policy Framework. Support is offered in two main areas: The development of data regulation and strategies on one side and capacity building on data governance on the other side. By organising multistakeholder knowledge exchanges on data governance, the programme seeks to promote mechanisms that enable a free and safe cross-border data flow in Africa. This support for Regional Economic Communities and Member States is provided in close partnership with important regional organisations such as AUDA-NEPAD, Smart Africa, Research ICT Africa, and Strathmore University. When developing data policies, DataCipation ensures participation from government, civil society, and private sector side to develop policies in an inclusive and participatory manner.

Adding to this, DataCipation continues to partner with different AU structures and organs to promote digital innovation within the AUC and the digital ecosystem on the continent. The implementation of concrete initiatives demonstrate the innovative leadership of the AU, harness the potential of systematic linkages with digital actors and position the youth as drivers for digital transformation on the continent. The AU Digital and Innovation Fellowship in cooperation with the AU's Women, Gender and Youth Directorate for instance showcases how young innovators can contribute towards digital transformation within the AU system.

Through the Citizen Engagement Platform (CEP), DataCipation supports the possibility of Africans actively engaging and contributing to policy making processes at different levels. As the first continental platforms for citizen engagement, the CEP is an expression of a conscious attempt of amplifying African voices towards the AU's second Ten-Year Implementation Plan of the Agenda 2063.

Success factors

DataCipation's success is underlined by the following factors:

- Being a trusted partner to the AUC by offering independent, timely and relevant support aimed at achieving strategic interests particularly in data governance and digital innovation.
- Proactive and collaborative engagement with AUC where the AUC provides strategic leadership on prioritised digital transformation.
- Coalition with AUC Organs, Regional Organisations and Member States for the purpose of delivering tailored and tangible support on data policies.
- Systematic approach towards fostering multi-stakeholder engagement on digital and data policies as well as towards establishing structured linkages with digital eco-system.

An Examples from the Field

Unlocking Africa's Data Potential at the AU Data Governance and Innovation Forum (DGIFA)

The Data Governance and Innovation Forum for Africa (DGIFA), hosted by AUC with support of DataCipation in Addis Ababa, set the stage for the high-level Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information Communication Technology. Numerous leaders and experts from public and private sectors, academia, and civil society gathered to explore the pivotal role of data in shaping Africa's digital economy and society.

The spotlight was on the implementation of the AU Data Policy Framework. The DGIFA aimed to facilitate the exchange of ideas, best practices, and solutions among member states, fostering peer-to-peer learning from a multistakeholder perspective. The forum seeks to lay the groundwork for the scaling of data-driven innovative solutions, punctuating its purpose with a key directive: The harmonisation of data policies across the continent. The DGIFA was a newswatch of ideas, collaboration, and the strategic orchestration of data shaping Africa's digital narrative.

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