MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MoU)
on DATA ANALYTICS – PROJECT ABOUT
Future « Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) »
BETWEEN
THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION (DG COMM)
AND
THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INFORMATICS (DG DIGIT)

Reference: DIGIT-00915-00

The Directorate-General for Communication, hereinafter "DG COMM", represented by Director DG COMM B

and

the Directorate-General for Informatics, hereinafter "DG DIGIT", represented by Director DG DIGIT D

HAVE AGREED as follows:
1. **PREAMBLE**

The *Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC)* is a service that has been run by the European Commission (EC) for over 20 years. It answers citizens’ enquiries by phone or email – and as of, 2021 instant messaging – in any of the EU languages, for free.\(^1\)

**The context: current situation and impact**

The EDCC is operated by an external contractor of DG COMM, acting as the front office, receiving and dealing with queries from the public. The front office is assisted by a network of back offices in the associated entities, which deal with and coordinate the public’s queries in their area of expertise. The associate entities encompass European Commission Directorates-General, executive agencies and other European institutions and bodies, depending on their needs and areas of interest.

The external contractor has always been expected to orchestrate a knowledge management system and a knowledge base as an underlying information repository. Thus far however, the European Commission has not been prescriptive on how the knowledge base was to be organised and where it was to be hosted.

**Impacts of this gap are:**

- the lack of control of the European Commission over the knowledge base and sub-optimal use of a central knowledge repository in terms of continuity, usefulness for other operations and interoperability with other knowledge bases;

- missed opportunities in terms of artificial intelligence (AI) assisted automation for the usage or treatment of the knowledge;

- the risk of developing an insular product, which will be hard to integrate into the future European Commission data management architecture.

**New approach**

DG COMM published in February 2020 the call for tender about “Services Linked to the Operation of the Europe Direct Contact Centre”, to run the next EDCC generation (2021-2025).\(^2\) For the first time, the call for tender entailed a dedicated section on knowledge management. The contractor is expected to build, operate and transfer a new EDCC knowledge base which would have the potential to:

- communicate with other knowledge and content systems of the EU and integrate with the European Commission IT environment;

- pave the way for future developments, e.g. the use of machine learning and AI;

- become a tool for EU services, such as the Representations of the Commission in the Member states, DG Communication social media team, or associated services back-offices or the public;

- have the potential to become a corporate knowledge management tool for the European Commission.

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Importantly, DG COMM wishes to ensure that the knowledge base developed for the future generation of the EDCC follows an approach to knowledge management aligned with the European Commission Digital Strategy, the European Comission Data Strategy and its work programme for 2020-2021.

Opportunities

For DG COMM, there is a wish to pave the way for AI and data-analytics, whilst maximising interoperability with other knowledge sources within the Commission and even beyond.

For DG DIGIT, it is an opportunity to collaborate on project which reaches out to all Commission DGs and to foster the implementation of the European Commission digital and data strategies. As a corporate European Commission service, the EDCC counts on a network of correspondants in all Commission DGs. Notwithstanding the fact that the EDCC project reaches out to other entities beyond the European Commission – i.e. the Council, the European Parliament and a few executive agencies – which could also be of interest for DG DIGIT to contribute to the digital strategy outreach beyond the European Commission spheres.

2. SUBJECT

The subject matter of this MoU is to define the framework of collaboration between DG COMM, as business owner and project manager, and DG DIGIT, as supplier of advisory services, on the future “Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC)” system, as described below.

DG COMM and DG DIGIT will work together in a first phase to ensure:

- The appropriate design of the future EDCC knowledge base;
- The technical readiness for the transfer of the future EDCC knowledge base to the European Commission Cloud.

Simultaneously, DG COMM and DG DIGIT will evaluate how to envisage potential usages of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Second and third phases, on a medium term basis, will focus on the concrete implementation of the knowledge base full potential:

- Effective transfer of the knowledge base to the European Commission Cloud;
- Effective decentralised input to the knowledge base by the network of back-offices in the associated entities, centrally curated by DG COMM;
- Effective connection with other, interoperable knowledge sources and AI-assisted modules;

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4 https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/Arms/realisationDownload.do?itemId=890166e5ba1380a0&ticket=ST-302587-3gZeZcpw0vKPNUTlR3YDiZm-zI5hK663049g5mNh7z2r6DZsmIoJFYjR5HzazsPhQyMCJ
- Developments of pilots of AI-associated facilitators, explored and identified as the result of the first phase, their testing and deployment at a larger scale.

The present MoU sets the overall framework for the cooperation, and specifies in Annex 1 the work, timeline and milestones related to phase 1. Those for phase 2 – Advice and technical assistance for the transfer of the knowledge base to the European Commission, and phase 3 – Developments (remote feeding, interoperability, AI) will be treated separately as part of timely amendments to this MoU.

3. Services

3.1. Solution definition

Context of the assistance provided by DG DIGIT:

The company contracted by DG COMM in early autumn 2020 to run the next generation of the EDCC (2021-2025) is expected to propose and build a knowledge management solution alongside the guidance of DIGIT experts. The call for tender has stressed the importance of a data centric approach and of interoperability requirements, leaving it open to the contractor to propose a solution. The knowledge base is to be transferred to the European Commission Cloud in the course of the framework contract.

As specified in the call for tender, the future EDCC knowledge base is:

- To follow a data and user centric approach;
- To allow for a decentralised approach to knowledge input, with the possibilities for all DGs' EDCC back-offices to feed into the central corporate EDCC knowledge repository;
- To allow for connection to other European Commission knowledge sources;
- To pave the way to AI-assisted developments, including sentiment analysis or data analytics.

The tender of the new contractor is supposed to include plans for this. However, this will only be implemented during a four months phase-in period before the new contractor takes over daily operations. It is therefore essential that the Commission gives qualified and operational advice right after the signature on how the new contractor should adjust their plans.

The proper building and running of knowledge base, as well as the initiation of its transfer by the contractor to the European Commission Cloud, are outside of the scope of this MoU.

After the transfer, the contractor will remain responsible for:

- Continuous update and constant enlargement of the knowledge base;
- Knowledge base adaptations and developments (e.g. new IT connections with other Commission information sources, reuse of EDCC replies and gradual practical introduction of Artificial intelligence);
- Full interoperability with his own and the EC systems specified by DG Communication, including the capability to connect to other information systems or to retrieve data in a readable format without needing proprietary software, thanks to APIs, SPARQL endpoints, etc.

Scope of the assistance provided by DG DIGIT:

The following services are expected to be provided by DG DIGIT to DG COMM:

Phase 1: **Advisory Services (scope of this MoU)**

August 2020 until June 2021.

Advising DG COMM in the setting up of the necessary business use case specifications for the knowledge management system, providing guidance on the implementation and assisting DG COMM in accepting delivery of the finished product.

Phase 2: **Assistance for the transfer of the knowledge base to the EC**

Probably in 2022.

Providing technical assistance, advisory services and project management when it comes to the methods underlying the transfer of the knowledge base to the European Commission Cloud.

Phase 3: **Development Services**

Probably 2022-2025.

Providing:

- The effective **decentralised input** to the knowledge base by the network of back-offices in the associated entities, centrally curated by DG COMM
- The effective **connection with other, interoperable knowledge sources** from the European institutions, and possible plug-ins of already existing AI assisted modules
- The **development of pilots of AI-associated facilitators** explored and identified as the result of the first phase, their testing and deployment at a larger scale.
4. **Management**

4.1. **Entry into force, duration and amendment**

This MoU enters into force on the date of the last signature and remains valid for one year. Its duration may be extended by mutual agreement via amendment.

Any amendment to the present MoU shall be made in writing, and duly signed by both parties.

4.2. **Addenda, evaluations and termination**

Where a party to this MoU wishes to end its co-operation, it shall provide the other party a written notice at least one month before the intended date of cancellation.

In the event of termination, both parties shall take all appropriate measures to prevent business discontinuity, minimise costs and cancel or reduce its commitments.

4.3. **Governance, roles and responsibilities, monitoring and reporting**

Meetings at regular intervals will be held to take the necessary decisions on business, IT and budget matters at two levels:

- At the start of the project, the Heads of Unit of COMM.B2 and DIGIT.D1 will meet to agree on a detailed work plan and final budgetary sheet drawn up by DIGIT. They will approve the progress and budget report at the end of each work package and shall agree on any substantial changes to the initial work plan and budget allocation.

- At the end of each work package, the expert teams in COMM.B2 and DIGIT. D1 will meet under the chair of the Head of Sector for Contact Centre (Europe Direct) in COMM.B2 to take stock of progress made towards monthly milestones, and to review budget allocation and consumption. They will report to the respective Heads of Unit in COMM.B2 and DIGIT.D1.

DG COMM will provide the agreed budgetary resources and will manage the project.

DG DIGIT will provide the advisory services and deliverables listed in Annex I.

DG DIGIT shall report, at regular intervals, on the use of the co-delegated appropriations, in particular:

- At the end of each work package, DG DIGIT will draw up a progress report accompanied with a budget report on budget consumption against the final budgetary sheet agreed at the start of the project, detailing time & means and any other costs.

Both parties commit to implement this MoU in a spirit of cooperation, transparency and efficiency.
5. **BUDGETARY RESOURCES**

DG COMM will provide the total budgetary resources required for the services as described under section 3.

The total amount is 37,250.00 € according to the financial breakdown in Annex 1. This amount will cover all direct and indirect costs incurred in the delivery of the services.

Any unspent appropriations at the end of the project will be used by DG DIGIT for future phases of the project, subject to the signature of an amendment to this Memorandum of Understanding.

6. **FUNDING MODALITIES**

DG COMM will put the funds referred to under Article 4 at the disposal of DG DIGIT via co-delegation on the appropriate budget line(s).

DG DIGIT will authorise the commitments and payments as well as the other underlying transactions incurred to deliver the services under this MoU.

These transactions will be managed under the internal control framework of DG DIGIT, which complies with the Commission's rules and guidelines.

7. **DATA PROTECTION**

Personal data included in or relating to the present MoU and its implementation, including data related to the provision of the services, shall be processed in conformity with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.

Such data shall be processed solely for the purpose of the implementation, management and monitoring of the present MoU by authorised personnel, without prejudice to any possible transmission to the EU bodies charged with a control or inspection mission in applying Union law.

8. **CONTACT PERSONS**

For **DG COMM**:
- Business contact: ____________________________ COMM (DG COMM B.2)
- Administrative Contact: _______________________, (DG COMM B.2)
- Financial Contact: ___________________________ (DG COMM B.2)

For **DG DIGIT**:
- Technical part: ____________________________ (DG DIGIT D.1)
- Administrative part: ________________________, (DG DIGIT D.1)
- Financial part: DIGIT-MOU@ec.europa.eu (DIGIT A.2)

Any changes in points of contact do not require an amendment to this MoU. They will be notified by e-mail to the other signing party.
9. **ANNEXES**

Annex 1: Detailed description of services

Signed electronically in Ares

For DG COMM

For DG DIGIT

[signed]

[signed]

Director DG COMM.B

Director DIGIT.D

Done in Brussels on (see Ares Visa)  

Done in Brussels on (see Ares Visa)
Annex I. Detailed description of services

Phase 1: Advisory services

August 2020 until June 2021.

DG DIGIT experts will assist DG COMM to:

A) Devise the necessary technical specifications and accept and modify the technical proposal from the contractor in order to:

i. Make sure the future EDCC knowledge base is built alongside the European Commission Digital and Data Strategies;

ii. Ensure that the implementation of the knowledge base is fully integrated:
   - it communicates consistently with the customer relationship management (CRM) tool hosted by the contractor, even after its transfer to the EC Cloud;
   - it follows the RDF-model;
   - it can be fed in a decentralised mode by the back-offices within all European Commission DGs – and potentially even outside the Commission (agencies, Parliament, Council).

iii. Envisage future potential usages of Artificial Intelligence within the knowledge base (hosted within the EC Cloud) or within the CRM tool (hosted by the contractor), e.g.:

   ✓ sentiment analysis of incoming enquiries;
   ✓ AI-assistance for qualitative analysis;
   ✓ text classification and entity extraction through natural language processing (NLP) to provide automatic categorisation of enquiries, reference replies and information material, and processing of unstructured content;
   ✓ internal chatbot to help the knowledge base users, with the intention in the long term of an external chatbot made available for a restricted number of specific predefined areas (air passengers’ rights being a first potential test ground);
   ✓ speech to text functionalities;
   ✓ machine translation (automation through DG DGT’s eTranslation service);
   ✓ "question answering" for the drafting of responses to simple, straightforward questions (or at least the automated recuperation of response elements taken from past similar interactions to the current enquiry). As opposed to the internal chatbot, such a tool could be integrated in to the webmail and could automatically propose a draft response for incoming enquiries without the intervention of a communication officer/agent. (NB: this functionality would be plugged into the contractor’s CRM; it might also be tested and linked to the knowledge base. To be defined with DG DIGIT);
B) Assist and guide the contractor by replying to punctual technical questions and assist DG COMM in assessing intermediary deliveries.

C) Assist DG COMM in assessing compliance and taking delivery of the finished product.

Phase 1: Timeline

Workpackage 1 – Business use case specifications (2 months)

August/September 2020

- During August: Assistance to DG COMM in the form of reviews of the Business use case specifications (prepared by DG COMM), as a guidance for the selected contractor to adjust their proposals to meet all the criteria set upfront (as per point A) above).

- Mid & end September: Two dedicated preparatory meetings with DG COMM

Estimated resources:
- Assistance in preparing Business use case specifications: 7 man days
- Meetings: 2 man days

Workpackage 2 – Contractor’s solution (2 months)

October 2020 - December 2020

- End September 2020: Kick-off meeting on knowledge base solution. The contractor has 8 weeks to develop the solution. The expert from DG DIGIT is expected to take part in working meetings with the contractor on this aspect, together with DG COMM, and to support DG COMM in guiding the contractor towards an optimal solution.

- October / mid-November 2020: DG DIGIT is available to respond to technical questions arising from the compatibility matching and further guide the contractor upon the latter’s request.

- Mid-November/ mid-December 2020: case-study compatibility check: assessment of the solution proposed by the contractor and comments, advice on the way forward for implementation.

Estimated resources:
- Meetings: 2 man days
- Assistance and guidance to contractor: 6 man days
- Case study compatibility check: 4 man days

**Workpackage 3 – Running-in (5 months)**

**January – May 2021:**

- **In March and in May 2021:** DG DIGIT recommendations on and validation of the first and second knowledge base beta versions in implementation;

- **Throughout:** DG DIGIT research and advice on potential scope for AI-assisted project:
  - identification of key project areas for development;
  - identification of possible plug-ins;

- **Throughout:** Identification of a first selection of knowledge sources to link to (starting with DG COMM: social media / mythbusting / press).

**Estimated resources:**

- Acceptance of beta versions: 3 man days
- Research and advice on future developments: 15 man days (AI-assisted projects)
- Identification of knowledge sources: 5 man days

**Workpackage 4 – Delivery acceptance**

**June 2021**

- Approval of final knowledge base solution, meeting all criteria set above.

Recommendation and planning for the implementation of AI-assisted projects and linkages to other EC knowledge sources (report).

**Estimated resources:**

- Final acceptance: 4 man days
- Advice/report: 2 man days
DIGIT DELIVERABLES for phase 1

- Written consultation review(s) for the Business use case specifications elaborated by the DG COMM Business Manager.
- Assessment of the contractor adjusted proposal and recommendations on the way forward:
- Participation to Meetings (with EDCC team on preparation of the Business use case specifications, kick-off meeting on knowledge base, follow-up meeting, final meeting), review of meeting minutes provided by DG COMM
- Technical advice (as described above: October / November 2020 and January-May 2021)
- Assistance to DG COMM for the approval of beta (2) and final versions of the knowledge base.
- Report on possible future AI-assisted projects, identification of key project areas for development, identification of existing already existing plug-ins; recommendations on the way forward.
- Report on the identification of a first selection of knowledge sources to link to (starting with DG COMM: social media/mythbusting/press) and recommendations on the way forward.

FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

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