NCC-DE

GERMANY CYBERSECURITY
COORDINATION CENTRE

First Report on
NKCS Information Days

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1 Executive Summary

The NCC-DE has conducted a series of information days for German cybersecurity professionals. This document provides a summary of the structure and content of these events, which took place within the first twelve months of the project. The information days gave participants the opportunity to learn about forthcoming cybersecurity topics in the European framework programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe, and about the specifics of the participation rules and the application process in these programmes.

The participants consisted of a diverse mix of representatives from various sectors, including academia, industry, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups. This blend of backgrounds ensured a rich exchange of ideas and perspectives during the events, fostering a comprehensive discussion on cybersecurity issues and opportunities.

2 Introduction

This document presents the first comprehensive report on the NKCS information days, through which the German cybersecurity community was informed about the various funding opportunities available under the "Horizon Europe" (HEP) and "Digital Europe" (DEP) programmes.

3 Description of the events

3.1 "Civil Security for Society" in Horizon Europe: Information day on the 2024 calls for proposals on 12.03.2024

3.1.1 Purpose and scope

On behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the National Contact Point for Security Research held an on-site information day in Bonn on 12.03.2024. During this event, the community was informed about the calls for proposals for 2024 in Cluster 3 "Civil Security for Society" of the Horizon Europe funding programme. This includes the calls for proposals in the field of cybersecurity in Horizon Europe, which is why the German NCC (DLR) was also involved in the event.

In addition to information on the specific calls for proposals, the programme included further content on cross-cutting issues that applicants must consider in their Horizon Europe proposals. In addition, the focus was on networking among participants, including through the presentation of institutions and ideas for proposals.

3.1.2 Participants

Around 65 participants from the German security community took part in the event. They came from universities, research institutions, the private sector and from public bodies. Representatives from the European Commission, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the National Contact Point for Security Research and the NCC-DE were also present on-site and were available to answer questions and discuss issues with participants.

3.1.3   Agenda

09:30   Registration and welcome coffee

10:00   Welcome, opening of the event and information on the schedule

10:15   Who am I? Getting to know each other at the speed of light

10:50   Calls 2024 - A look between the lines: Information and Q&A session

11:15   In conversation: Quo Vadis? Future challenges for European security research

12:15   Lunch break

13:15   Pitch & Match

14:30   Coffee break

15:00   Information on further dates and funding opportunities

15:15   Open Science: meeting expectations and eliminating reservations: Keynote speech and Q&A session

16:00   Ready for Europe - but how? - Panel discussion

17:00   Farewell and end of the event

3.1.4   Contents

In addition to the agenda briefly outlined in the previous section, all participants in the event were sent video recordings of presentations by email in advance. In these videos, the calls for proposals with a submission deadline in 2024 in Cluster 3 of Horizon Europe were presented. There was one video for each destination of the work programme. The NCC-DE (DLR) created a video on the destination "Increased Cybersecurity" and presented the calls in detail.

3.2   Information day on 17.04.2024

3.2.1   Purpose and scope

The "Horizon Europe" and "Digital Europe" research framework programmes have a total of € 438.4 million available for cybersecurity funding measures in 2024. In order to increase the success rate of German applicants and their potential related consortia, on 17.04.2024, the NCC-DE project conducted an online information day. The information day aimed to inform German cybersecurity actors about the specifics of the open and forthcoming cybersecurity-related topics in 2024 and participation rules in the European framework programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe. Furthermore, the aim of the Information day on 17.04.2025 was to provide the German community with initial information on the 2025 calls in Horizon Europe and Digital Europe in the area of cybersecurity at an early stage. Unfortunately, no information was available at the time of the event that could be shared with the community. In addition to presenting the details of the 2024 open and upcoming cybersecurity tenders and the application process, the event also highlighted the role and services of the German National Coordination Centre (NCC-DE), as well as the European Cybersecurity

Competence Centre (ECCC) and its network of National Coordination Centres (NCCs), and included question and answer sessions.

3.2.2 Announcement of the event

The information event was announced and promoted through the NCC-DE channels, as well as through the channels of the participating institutions, such as the DLR. More specifically, it was advertised through the following channels:

- The "News" website of the national contact point for digital and industrial technologies (NKS-DIT), operated by DLR.[1]
- The "Events" website of the national contact point for digital and industrial technologies (NKS-DIT), operated by DLR.[2]
- The "Events" website of the German national coordination centre for cybersecurity (NCC-DE).[3]
- Via newsletters and social media channels like:
    - Promotion of the information day via the DLR newsletter, as the National Contact Point for Digital in Cluster 4 "Digital, Industry and Space" and in Cluster 3 "Civil Security for Society" in Horizon Europe. The newsletter reaches more than 1600 subscribers.
    - The event was advertised on X.com, by the official NCC-DE X account (@nkcs_de).

3.2.3 Participants

The information day was attended by 21 participants (out of 26 registrants), representing 19 different institutions, excluding the organizers. The participants were members of the German cybersecurity community, and included actors from the academic and private sectors and from public entities. There was one non-German participant from the University of Geneva. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the participant institutions.

Table 1: Breakdown of the participating institutions, 17.04.2024

Category	Percentage of participating institutions
Academic/Research Institutions	36%
Private sector	32%
Public sector	32%

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[1] NKS-DIT News – Information day 17.04.2024
[2] NKS-DIT Events – Information day 17.04.2024
[3] NCC-DE Events – Information day 17.04.2024

3.2.4 Survey of Registrant Interests

We wanted to give the participants the opportunity to communicate their interests to us. A thematic core of our workshop was the presentation of forthcoming cybersecurity topics in the European framework programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe. We asked the registrants of the workshop which of the forthcoming topics they were interested in. A total of 26 registrants filled out the questionnaire.

Table 2 shows the 2024 topics and the percentage of registrants who have expressed interest in these topics.

Table 2: Breakdown of the registrants' interest in the different calls, 17.04.2024

Topic:	Percentage of expressions of interest
HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-01: Approaches and tools for security in software and hardware development and assessment	62%
HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-02: Post-quantum cryptography transition	58%
DIGITAL EUROPE: Incident Response Support	30%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-KEYTECH: Development and Deployment of Advanced Key Technologies	30%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-SOC: National SOCs	27%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-SOCSYS: Strengthening the SOC ecosystem	23%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-LARGEOPER: Preparedness Support and Mutual Assistance, targeting larger industrial operations and installations	23%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-CYBERSEC-02: Support for Implementation of EU Legislation on Cybersecurity and National Cybersecurity Strategies (2024)	19%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-SOCPLAT: Enlarging existing or Launching New Cross-Border SOC Platforms	19%
DIGITAL: Joint Acquisition of Infrastructure, Tools and Services with the Cross-Border SOC Platforms	15%

Evidently, there was considerably more interest in the Horizon Europe calls, **HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-01** and **HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-02**, than in the Digital Europe calls. This suggests that the registrants overall had more interest in the research topics of Horizon Europe and less in the capacity building supported by Digital Europe. In Digital Europe, the topics that attracted the most interest were **Incident Response Support** and **Development and Deployment of Advanced Key Technologies**.

3.2.5 Agenda

09:45: Participants join online

10:00: Welcome

10:10: Presentation of specifics and opportunities in the area of cybersecurity in 'Horizon Europe' and 'Digital Europe'

10:55: Questions

11:05: Participation rules and application process in 'Horizon Europe' and 'Digital Europe'

11:50: Questions

12:00: Outlook + Farewell

12:10: End of the event

3.2.6 Contents

There were three main presentations and two question and answer sessions.

In the first presentation, the ECCC and the NCC-DE were introduced to the attendees. Their history, functions, and composition were discussed.

The second presentation provided an overview of the European framework programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe, and then described the forthcoming cybersecurity topics in each of the programmes. For each topic, the objectives and expected outcomes, the funding instrument, the opening date and the deadline were described.

The third presentation covered the participation rules and the application process of both framework programmes. This included descriptions of the application forms, and provided the attendees with an overview of the most important points to consider when applying.

During the Q&A sessions, attendees asked a wide range of questions about the information presented. For example, questions were asked about the function of the Security Operations Centres (SOCs) and the exact nature of their collaboration, as envisaged in the calls of the Digital Europe programme.

3.2.7 Discussion

The information days on April 17 and June 28 were two closely tied events. Therefore, in this document there is one discussion section for both events, which can be found in Section 3.4.7.

3.3 Workshop "Writing Proposals in DEP" as part of the external event "CYBERsicher Zukunftstag" on 06.06.2024

3.3.1 Purpose and Scope

The NCC-DE had the opportunity to hold two short workshops on *Proposal Writing in Digital Europe* as part of the Cybersecurity Transfer Centre's specialist congress "CYBERsicher Zukunftstag" on

06.06.2024 in Berlin. The workshops were carried out by the German Aerospace Centre (DLR) and the German Federal Office for IT-Security (BSI).

The workshops were included in the agenda under the title "Beantragen von Fördermitteln mithilfe des NKCS ". The aim of the workshops was to familiarize participants with the following aspects:

- Inform about the NCC-DE and the support options
- Introduce the Horizon Europe and Digital Europe funding programmes
- Outline the application process in Digital Europe
- Group work to develop the first draft of an application

3.3.2 Announcement of the event

The event was announced in the programme of the Cybersecurity Transfer Centre[4] and via a blog post on the webpage of the Cybersecurity Transfer Centre[5].

3.3.3 Participants

The participants were German cybersecurity actors, mainly from IT-Service Providers, but also some participants from academia and public entities. Excluding the organisers, there were a total of 25 participants in both workshops.

3.3.4 Agenda

Each workshop was designed to fit into a 1-hour-slot. The agenda of each slot looked as follows:

1. Introduction of NCC-DE
2. Presentation of European funding programmes
3. General procedure for submitting an application in Digital Europe
4. Presentation of a specific EU call
5. Moderated group work: Work on the presented call in small groups: Brainstorming of ideas for the respective chapters of the DEP Proposal
6. Discussion of the group results and conclusion

3.3.5 Contents

The first half of each workshop consisted of a short presentation followed by hands-on group work. The presentation introduced the participants to the work of NCC-DE, the ECCC and the European Funding Programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe.

The main audience were representatives of German SME's, especially from IT Service Providers. Therefore, the workshop focused on the proposal submission in DEP. The presentation showed the steps from the first idea towards the grant and put special emphasis on the proposal itself. That gave

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[4] Cybersecurity Transfer Centre programme
[5] Cybersecurity Transfer Centre blog post

the participants a very quick overview on what they have to expect when they decide to apply for funding.

The presentation concluded with an introduction of the call "Uptake of innovative Cybersecurity Solutions" selected for the workshop. The organizers decided to take the closed call from 2023 because it was close to the interests and expertise of the audience. The essential information was put into keywords and translated to German to support the workflow of the group work.

The group work happened in a total of four groups supervised by DLR and BSI. The organizers prepared flipchart-papers with the general structure of a DEP proposal as a mind map. The participants had to decide for a project idea within the group and start thinking about what a proposal could look like and should consist of.

Finally, the results were discussed in the group, including a Q&A-Session to the organizers about successful proposal writing.

3.3.6 Discussion

The Proposal Writing workshop was the first of its kind executed by NCC-DE. It had a very ambitious agenda, considering that participants were asked to sketch a proposal for a DEP call. However, it appeared to be successful. The participants gave overall positive feedback and were happy about the methods and the contents.

Taking the feedback and the experiences from these small workshops, NCC-DE decided to carry out larger workshops of their own to address broader audiences interested in funding via DEP.

3.4 Information day on 28.06.2024

3.4.1 Purpose and Scope

On 28.06.2024, the NCC-DE conducted an online information day. The contents, structure, and purpose of the information day were similar to the information day on 14.04.2024. We deliberately planned and conducted two information days in the first six months of 2024 to achieve an optimal level of information dissemination and consultation. By spacing the two information days two months apart, we aimed to ensure that interested parties would be informed and advised early on in April about the content of the calls and the specifics of the application process in the HEU and DEP. Additionally, we intended to provide an outlook on future measures beyond 2024. The second information day in June 2024 was strategically scheduled after the Horizon Europe Cluster 3 National Contact Point Meeting on 11.06., the Cluster 3 Info Day and Brokerage Event[6] on 12.06., and the 4th training on the Digital Europe programme for National Contact Points, to potentially provide German applicants with new information and insights that might not have been known to us by that time. Furthermore, June was consciously chosen to give potential applicants sufficient time to assemble a consortium and prepare their funding applications.

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[6]Cluster 3 Info Day and Brokerage Event

3.4.2   Announcement of the event

To attract participants, we used similar channels as for the information event on 14.04.: The event websites of the NKS-DIT[7] and the NCC-DE[8], and the NKS-DIT newsletter. Once again, the newsletter was sent out to more than 1,600 subscribers.

3.4.3   Participants

The participants were German cybersecurity actors, and included participants from the academic and private sectors and from public entities. Excluding the organisers, there were a total of 15 participants (out of 23 registrants). Table 3 shows a breakdown of the participant institutions.

Table 3: Breakdown of the participating institutions, 28.06.2024

Category	Percentage of participating institutions
Academic/Research Institutions	53%
Private sector	27%
Public sector	20%

3.4.4   Survey of Registrant Interests

Similarly to the workshop in April, we conducted a survey of the registrants in advance of the workshop, to better understand which of the forthcoming topics they are interested in. 23 registrants responded to the questionnaire. Table 4 shows the 2024 topics and the percentage of registrants who have expressed interest in these topics.:

Table 4: Breakdown of the registrants' interest in the different calls, 28.06.2024

Topic:	Percentage of expressions of interest
HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-01: Approaches and tools for security in software and hardware development and assessment	65%
HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-02: Post-quantum cryptography transition	39%
DIGITAL EUROPE: Incident Response Support	30%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-KEYTECH: Development and Deployment of Advanced Key Technologies	30%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-SOC: National SOCs	30%

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[7] NKS-DIT Events – Information day 28.06.2024
[8] NCC-DE Events – Information day 28.06.2024

DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-SOCSYS: Strengthening the SOC ecosystem	30%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-LARGEOPER: Preparedness Support and Mutual Assistance, targeting larger industrial operations and installations	26%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-CYBERSEC-02: Support for Implementation of EU Legislation on Cybersecurity and National Cybersecurity Strategies (2024)	26%
DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-SOCPLAT: Enlarging existing or Launching New Cross-Border SOC Platforms	17%
DIGITAL: Joint Acquisition of Infrastructure, Tools and Services with the Cross-Border SOC Platforms	17%

As we can see, there was once again, as on the Information day on 17.04.2024, considerably more interest in the Horizon Europe calls. This time, the topic **HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-01** drew particularly broad interest. The greater interest in research topics in Horizon Europe was probably due to the fact that more than 50% of the participants came from the academic sector. With regard to the Digital Europe topics, in this workshop there was a bit more interest in the **SOC**-related topics, as well as **Support to EU Legislation**. **Development and Deployment of Advanced Key Technologies** once again attracted considerable interest.

3.4.5 Agenda

09:45: Participants join online

10:00: Welcome, and presentation of the National Coordination Centre for Cybersecurity (NCC-DE)

10:20: Presentation of specifics and opportunities in the area of cybersecurity in 'Horizon Europe' and 'Digital Europe'

11:20: Questions

11:30: Break

11:40: Participation rules and application process in 'Horizon Europe' and 'Digital Europe'

12:20: Questions

12:30: Outlook + Farewell

12:45: End of the event

3.4.6 Contents

The content of the presentations in this workshop was based on the content of the April workshop. The structure and order of the content was optimised, the data and facts on the calls were checked

for topicality and updated if necessary. Furthermore, the presenters swapped roles on content in order to further spread the expertise within the NCC-DE.

Once again, a number of questions were discussed in the question & answer sessions, such as questions seeking clarification of the participation rules of the Digital Europe programme.

3.4.7 Discussion

This is a discussion of the two info days on 17.04.2024 and 28.06.2024. The info days were a success and achieved their goal of communicating information about cybersecurity in the European framework programmes to their participants.

Most of the participant institutions were research/academic institutions (15 out of a total of 34 participant institutions). Public and private sectors were almost evenly matched, with 10 and 9 institutions respectively.

Based on our surveys of the participants, the Horizon Europe calls HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-01 and HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-02 attracted considerably more interest than any Digital Europe call. For example, in the survey we conducted before the first info day, about twice as many participants expressed interest in each of the Horizon Europe calls than the Digital Europe calls with the most significant interest.

This makes a great deal of sense when considering that research and academic institutions were so heavily represented, and Horizon Europe is aimed at them far more than Digital Europe, which is more focused on the deployment of digital technologies and capacity building than research.

However, there was also considerable interest in the Digital Europe programme, which became apparent in the Q&A sessions. One question that was discussed, for example, was whether academic and research institutions actually can be funded at all under Digital Europe. The answer was *Yes,* despite the different focus of the programme.

In addition, the low funding rate in the DEP was discussed by the academic sector. Funding rates of 50% make it difficult for universities to participate on Digital Europe programme.

This suggests something important: Many organizations seem to be confused about the participation rules of existing framework programmes. If such organisations understood these rules better, they would show considerably more interest in Digital Europe than we would have expected from our survey results alone. This underlines the value of such information events.

Other questions that were discussed, among others, were the thematic scope of proposals that is demanded for some of the topics (in particular HORIZON-CL3-2024-CS-01-02), and the nature of the collaboration among different Security Operations Centres (SOCs) under the Digital Europe programme (Is it just an exchange of information, or is there collaboration at an operational level?)

3.5 RI CODE Annual Conference 2024, Workshop on 10.07.2024

3.5.1 Purpose and scope

The RI CODE (Research Institute Cyber Derence) Annual Conference took place on 10.07. and 11.07.2024 on the campus of the University of the Bundeswehr Munich. Under the guiding theme

"Together with AI against new cyber threats", a wide-ranging agenda with innovative lectures, top-class keynotes, exciting panel discussions and interactive workshops on a wide range of topics related to cybersecurity, smart data and quantum technology awaited participants over two days.

The NCC DE held a workshop at this conference, which offered participants two perspectives on EU funding opportunities for cybersecurity projects through the Horizon Europe and Digital Europe programmes. On the one hand, from the perspective of the applicants and, on the other, from the perspective of people who use their expertise to help evaluate project applications and shape EU research funding on the part of the European Commission in a targeted manner.

3.5.2 Participants

Around 30 participants from universities, research institutions, the private sector, from public bodies and from the military took part in the workshop.

3.5.3 Agenda

The workshop was launched with a presentation of the EU ecosystem for the promotion of cybersecurity research. The entire workshop was designed as an interactive game between speakers and participants.

1. Presentation of the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre Germany (NCC-DE)
2. Supporting cybersecurity research through proposal submissions and networking activities
3. Support for cybersecurity research through reviewer/evaluator/expert activities

3.5.4 Contents

The European Cybersecurity Competence Centre (ECCC) in Bucharest/Romania was presented as the central anchor in Europe. The ECCC's goals of promoting cybersecurity research and strengthening Europe's digital sovereignty were presented. To achieve them, the ECCC works closely with the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centres (NCCs) in the EU member states. The basic activities of the NCC Germany (information and advice on EU funding opportunities for cybersecurity projects with the help of the EU funding programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe) were presented: These range from initial advice to support with project applications. Furthermore, the NCCs support the networking of all those interested in funding in the cybersecurity community, including the search for potential organisations for joint projects. In addition, feedback on funding requirements and necessary topics from the cybersecurity community is provided to the ECCC via the NCCs in order to shape future EU funding opportunities in line with demand.

From the EU ecosystem, the thematic focus was passed on to the next topic, the support of cybersecurity research through application submissions and networking activities. There was a presentation of the two EU funding programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe with their respective content and budget focus. After explaining the differences between the two programmes, the workshop moved on to the application process and participation rules. In addition to proven recommendations for EU project applications, the important information sources EU Funding & Tenders Portal, the NCC-DE website including contact options and the cybersecurity topic sheet of the National Contact Point Digital and Industrial Technologies (NKS-DIT) were also explained. At the end

of the game section, the advantages of networking activities within the cybersecurity community (finding project partners for joint projects, finding topics, exchanging experiences, feedback on EU funding opportunities, etc.) were presented.

The game perspective then turned from the applicants to experts for the European Commission to take on assessment, evaluation and advisory activities. First, the general process from the publication of the EU funding programmes to the European Commission's call for experts was explained. Volunteers receive an allowance and can join a pool of applicants by submitting personal details, work experience, training and publications. The European Commission will be notified if the application matches upcoming calls for applications. As soon as the submission deadline for the relevant calls for proposals has expired, a specific request is made for participation as an expert to assess and evaluate the project applications. After evaluating all feedback, the European Commission makes a final selection and the contract is signed. After an EU briefing, the project applications are assessed and evaluated.

3.6 Workshop "Proposal Writing in Digital Europe" on 12.09.2024

3.6.1 Purpose and Scope

It is one of the most important tasks of every NCC to support the national cybersecurity communities in their writing of proposals for projects in the Horizon Europe and Digital Europe programmes. DEP is a rather new programme with a slightly different target group than Horizon Europe, i.e., a clear focus on SMEs as project partners. However, SMEs tend to be very reluctant to apply to European funding programmes because of the perceived complexity of the application process.

Therefore, NCC-DE will offer special workshops to teach and provide guidance in the process of writing a proposal in DEP. This will encourage more SMEs to propose innovative projects. The first full workshop of this kind was held on 12.09.2024 in Bonn.

3.6.2 Participants

The participants were German cybersecurity actors, mainly from IT-Service providers and cybersecurity companies. Participants also included members from academia and public entities and associations. Excluding the organisers, there were a total of 19 participants at the workshop.

3.6.3 Agenda

09:30: Participants arrive at the workshop location

10:00: Welcome, and presentation of the National Coordination Centre for Cybersecurity (NCC-DE) including a short welcome of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action

10:10: Introduction round of the participants

10:20: Introduction to DEP and the general procedure of submitting a proposal

10:40: Short pitches about the currently open calls to introduce them to the participants

10:55: Coffee break

11:10: Group work phase 1 to create a proposal sketch including short pitches every 20 minutes about different parts of the proposal form

12:45. Lunch break

13:30: Group work phase 2 to create a proposal sketch including short pitches every 20 minutes about different parts of the proposal form

14:45: Coffee break

15:00: Short presentation: What is Part A?

15:30: Final discussion & take-aways

16:00: End of event

3.6.4 Contents

The workshop consisted of three major presentations, short pitches, two group working sessions and one large discussion round.

The first presentation introduced the Digital Europe programme, showed the principal guidelines of the proposal submission and introduced the participants to how "Part B" of the proposal is structured and what is required. The introductory presentation was then followed by short pitches about the currently open calls in the cybersecurity work programme of DEP, i.e. "Development and Deployment of Advanced Key Technologies" (topic id: DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07-KEYTECH) and others. Therefore, participants were able to start with the process of finding a suitable idea for the call and continue their work on it.

After the coffee break, the participants were asked to choose a certain call to work on. During the group work phase the moderators used various shorts pitches to trigger the idea finding process of their group and to make them create a first draft sketch of a proposal. After the lunch break the second group continued the work from the first phase.

After the lunch and the afternoon break, the agenda proceeded with short presentations to gather the participants and provide them information that is otherwise difficult to teach via hands-on sessions. The first presentations dealt with the contents and requirements for "Part A" of each proposal. The second presentation showed the steps that follow after the successful submission, i.e., the examination and graduation of the proposals, the documents required to set up before the project starts and finally the start of the project.

The workshop concluded with a short presentation of the results and a discussion of all participants including the organizers.

3.6.5 Discussion

The workshop was the first in-depth workshop of the NCC-DE that aimed to support SMEs as well as start-ups within the proposal writing process. Overall, the goal of the workshop was to give the participants a better insight into the opportunities of the Digital europe programme as well as information about current calls. A secondary goal was to give the participants the chance to network

and find new partners for business an potential proposals. All of the goals were reached within the workshop. The NCC-DE received very good feedback both on the organization and content of the workshop, which was captured by a feedback form handed out at the end of the workshop:

- "Inspiration to apply. A new perspective on the potential of EU funding."
- "I now understand what EU applications look like."
- "Appreciation of the NCC's help with applications."

These quotes undermine the feeling the NCC-DE team had during the workshop: participants are eager to learn more about EU-funding opportunities, but have a lot of open questions and often little experience with proposals at EU-level. One main task of the project team therefore was to answer numerous questions about the proposal form and general application process during the group work.

At the same time, limitations of the workshop were also collected within the feedback of the participants:

- "The application now seems more feasible, but still at the limit for a startup."
- "Guided networking/pitch: What type of funding are participants interested in?"

Here, specific formats to better address the needs of start-ups and networking seem to be needed. The NCC-DE plans to establish the workshop as a recurring format, in accordance with the publication of new calls be the EU. During future workshops, a higher focus will be put on networking, giving the community building a dedicated slot in the agenda.

3.7 Information booth at the German Start-up Summit on 17.09.2024

3.7.1 Purpose and Scope

The German NCC has a strong focus on start-ups with explicit tasks revolving around consultation, information spreading and mentoring start-ups. Furthermore, NCC-DE is listed in the German Start-up Strategy as an initiative that supports German Cybersecurity Start-ups.

The Start-up Summit is one of the measures of the federal government to support the start-ups in Germany. The event was held on 17.09.2024 in Berlin. The NCC-DE contributed to this event with an information booth. In that way, start-ups could learn more about NCC-DE as well as the European funding programmes Horizon Europe and Digital Europe.

3.7.2 Participants

Participants at the start-up summit included representatives of the German government, public organizations and associations as well as start-ups from various backgrounds. At the booth of the German NCC, around 25 in-depth discussions were held with startups and other companies, and various informational materials about EU-funding opportunities and the NCC were distributed among the target group.

3.7.3 Contents and materials

The information booth consists of several information materials:

- Roll-up/Information banner about NCC-DE in general
- Monitor with presentations about the NCC-DE as well as DEP and HEP, including current calls
- Flyer about the process to submit a proposal in DEP
- Postcard with a QR code that leads to the website of NCC-DE
- Booklet about DEP and HEP, including current funding opportunities

On the day, members of NCC-DE provided information about the European funding programmes and advised those start-ups and organizations who were interested in funding to seek help through the NCC-DE.

3.7.4   Discussion

The start-up summit was the first of its kind in Germany. The prominent event featured numerous political actors such as the Federal Chancellor and the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. Therefore, the summit presented a good opportunity for the NCC-DE to present itself as well as its services to a broader community. Even though cybersecurity was not the main focus of the events, a substantial amount of in-depth discussions were held and further contacts established that should lead to more consulting activities with start-ups going forward. The NCC-DE also took the chance to connect with other public entities that offer funding advice to start-ups, such as the national representatives of the EIC Accelerator and the cyber innovation hub of the Bundeswehr.

4   Attachments / Links

4.1   Presentation of the information day on 17.04.2024

The presentation is available at:
https://nkcs.bund.de/sites/default/files/2024-08/InfoDay_20240417.pdf

4.2   Presentation of the information day on 28.06.2024

The presentation is available at:
https://nkcs.bund.de/sites/default/files/2024-08/InfoDay_20240628.pdf

List of Tables

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