Closing the expertise gap:

How to strengthen civil society's skills to shape Europe's tech future

European
Artificial Intelligence
& Society Fund

Civitates

Executive summary

Civil society organisations play a critical role in making sure technologies are built and used in ways that promote thriving democratic societies.

In Europe, where tech regulation is advanced, public interest groups can counter the increasing power that tech companies have over our lives by informing policy developments, investigating where and how technologies cause harm, and fighting to ensure safeguards are properly enforced.

But to do so effectively, these groups need expertise and capacity to understand, interrogate and challenge the technologies that affect the communities they represent. This report explores the opportunity for European civil society to take on this role, and the skills and conditions required to achieve this.

Europe's public interest community around technology is still young and characterised by small organisations with limited funding, focused on policy, advocacy and legal work. They have punched above their weight to challenge the interests of the biggest tech corporations in the world. And they have helped secure important legal safeguards that protect the public from harm and increase fairness and transparency in the market.

Europe's freshly passed tech regulations are founded on the assumption that civil society will be an investigator and watchdog, scrutinising products and gathering evidence to hold those that build and deploy technologies accountable. Recent civil society research into nudified images of women and children on Grok AI, and gender bias in Facebook job advertising, has led regulators to act, demonstrating how effective this can be in practice. But too few organisations have the skills and capacity to take on this work.

The European AI & Society Fund and Civitates, two philanthropic initiatives that together fund over 80 organisations working on technology in Europe, conducted this research to identify what it would take to properly equip civil society to play this role. Based on interviews with practitioners, focus groups and desk research, this report describes the opportunities for accountability, identifies the skills needed, and the resources and culture for those skills to thrive.

The report recommends:

1 The **European Union** should provide accessible, flexible and long-term funding through the forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and redistribute Digital Services Act (DSA) fees and fines so that civil society has the technical capacity to support effective accountability through European legislation. **National governments** should also make public funds available.

2 **Philanthropy** should replicate successful initiatives in the US by targeting resources to fund multi-disciplinary coalitions in Europe. These would bring together organisations or individuals with technology skills alongside other expertise, creating learning and networking infrastructure to foster a community of technologists working in the public interest.

3 **Civil society organisations** should leverage existing resources from their funders to acquire tech skills and build organisational practices that can help technologists to thrive.

4 **Technologists** in addition to seeking paid work in civil society organisations, should volunteer their expertise pro-bono to support public interest organisations and to join values-driven coalitions working to shape the policy field.

These recommendations are explained in further detail at the end of this report.

The accountability opportunity

That we only have rare glimpses into the mechanics of digital technologies is not by chance but by design: tech companies deliberately withhold information about how their systems work. The mountains of unique data they accrue are their competitive advantage. But knowing how they use that data could lead companies to be held accountable for the harms they can cause.

Digital technologies shape our lives, communities and societies. They capture and process vast amounts of data about our behaviours, yet we know very little about how they work. Why, for instance, might social media platform algorithms promote harmful health information? Why might AI chatbots encourage young people to take their own lives? Why might the price of a flight suddenly rocket? Or even why might we be denied access to vital public services?

Leaks by whistleblowers such as Frances Haugen indicate that big tech is often well aware of the negative impacts their products can have on children's mental health, the spread of ethnic and political violence, and increasing polarisation.[1] Similarly, Amnesty International's investigation into the Dutch welfare system [2] revealed how poorly designed systems in the public sector can hurt the most vulnerable and undermine people's trust in technologies.

Building public trust in digital technologies by holding tech accountable

The adoption of digital technologies into Europe's economy and public services can only succeed if the public is prepared to trust them.

In 2025, 19.95% of EU enterprises and 55.03% of large EU enterprises already used AI technologies[3] but over half the population in several European countries is afraid that AI will be bad for them[4].

A fair and transparent market with clear safeguards is needed to address public anxiety, or it could put a brake on further digital transformation. And as reliance on foreign-owned technologies for Europe's infrastructure becomes a geopolitical liability, it becomes essential to have greater scrutiny of how they work and what their impacts are.

Europe is trying to clear this smoke screen by adopting the most advanced technology regulation globally. The EU rulebook – including the Digital Services Act (DSA), Digital Markets Act (DMA), AI Act and Platform Work Directive – has progressively expanded to protect citizens from the harms of technology and to increase competition and fairness in the market.

How the tech industry is trying to weaken EU regulation

The tech industry poured hundreds of millions into lobbying [5] to weaken these laws during their development. Now they are pushing to water them down further through the Digital Omnibus negotiations[6] – a process framed as an attempt to simplify Europe's tech rules, but which risks "the most extraordinary reversal of digital rights in a generation"[7] in the view of civil society.

As well as having limitless funds, tech industry representatives use their unique access to internal information to position themselves as the sole source of technical expertise about the products being regulated.

With few alternative viewpoints to challenge them, legislators and regulators have come to rely on the tech industry to tell them what measures are feasible and to accept industry benchmarks, fatally undermining their own independence.

Unsurprisingly big tech companies push for the least onerous measures possible – often trying to use current industry practices as a baseline – to avoid having to comply with rules that would actually lift standards, improve product design and change behaviours. For instance, on the AI Act's Code of Practice on General Purpose AI (GPAI) that set out voluntary compliance mechanisms for models like Gemini, ChatGPT and Claude, the industry succeeded in including vague language related to serious incident reporting, to the point that the Code is more lax than the practices many companies already have in place[8].

How civil society can wield EU regulation to hold big tech accountable

Despite these efforts to hollow out the laws, European regulation nonetheless introduces significant protections for consumers, such as mandating the highest level of privacy and safety[9] protections by default on online platforms for children under the Digital Services Act, and prohibiting social scoring under the AI Act.

To ensure the public interest is represented, the regulations were designed with an important role for civil society: from trusted flaggers reporting illegal speech directly to platforms, to civil society monitoring Fundamental Rights Impact Assessments in AI systems.

Analysis from the European Centre for Not-for-Profit Law[10] shows that without civil society playing an active part in monitoring and evidence-gathering, these laws will fail to deliver on their potential.

As the European Commission's Executive Vice-President Henna Virkkunen told a European Parliament debate on enforcing the Digital Services Act: "Transparency is a vital precondition for accountability in democracy, where a facts-based debate is combined with strong third-party scrutiny and cooperation with journalists, civil society organisations, fact-checkers and independent researchers. They play a crucial role in providing accountability and scrutiny of platforms' mechanisms."[11]

This role requires civil society groups to gather and analyse evidence of harms, investigating intensely complex and fast-changing technical systems that are closely guarded by the biggest companies in the world. When they succeed it can have a profound impact.

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>
> **Henna Virkkunen**
> Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy

Civil society in action

Civil society victories are impressive but are too rare. The asymmetry of expertise between tech companies and independent experts is vast, with only a few public interest groups in Europe equipped with the necessary technical skills to hold tech companies to account, and barely any funding for them to do this work. For civil society to play its full role in using Europe's tools for accountability, it will need a wide range of skills to stand up to the companies and institutions that build and deploy digital technologies, and adequate resources to do this work.

Holding X accountable for Grok AI's tool allowing users to sexualise images of women and children

Recently, research by the non-profit AI Forensics into sexualised imagery of women and children on Elon Musk's Grok AI tool contributed to the European Union opening a formal investigation under the DSA, demonstrating how this can work in practice. By combining software engineering, data analysis and policy approaches, AI Forensics collected and analysed 50,000 tweets and 20,000 images[12], and then translated it into actionable insights for policymakers, demonstrating the lack of guardrails for Grok AI.
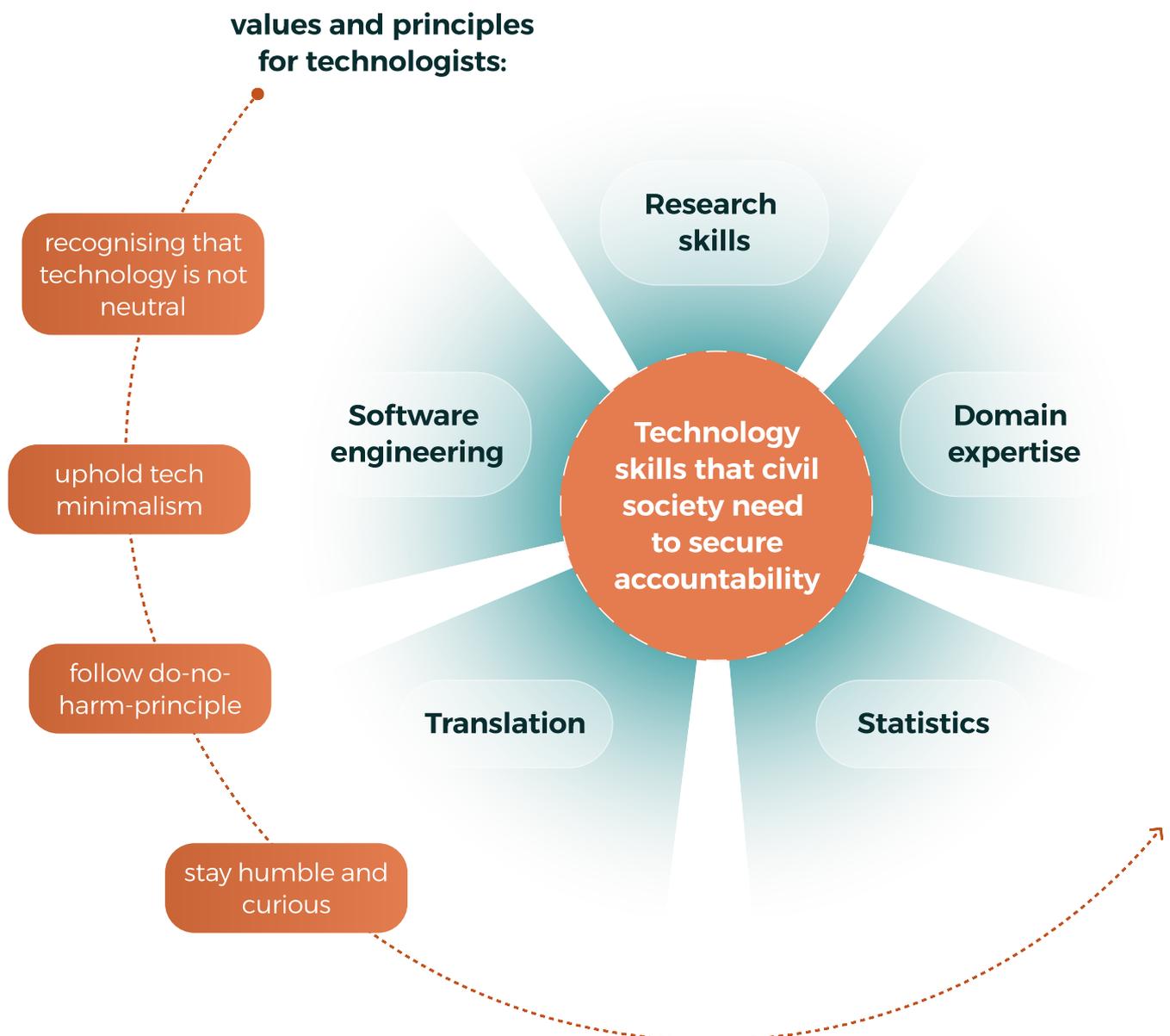
Unveiling how Meta's job ads discriminate based on gender

In a first-of-its-kind decision, the French equality body Defenseur des Droits (Defender of Rights) ruled that Meta was violating the right to non-discrimination enshrined in French equalities law. Meta was showing different job advertisements to Facebook users based on their gender, "constituting indirect discrimination on the basis of sex"[13].

The investigation and ruling by Defenseur des Droits came in response to a complaint submitted by civil society groups Global Witness, Fondation des Femmes and Femmes Ingénieures, who had gathered evidence, including that in France an ad for a job of preschool teacher was shown almost exclusively to female Facebook users (93% of cases).

2 The skills civil society need

Europe's civil society community engaged in holding digital technology accountable is characterised by small organisations focused on policy, advocacy and legal work. In the past, technologists have supported public interest missions primarily through civic tech and tech for good initiatives. But to fully grasp the opportunity to make regulation work, groups focused on securing accountability for harms to people and society will need to develop a range of technical skills. These include:

values and principles
for technologists:

recognising that technology is not neutral

uphold tech minimalism

follow do-no-harm-principle

stay humble and curious

Research skills

Software engineering

Technology skills that civil society need to secure accountability

Domain expertise

Translation

Statistics

1. Software engineering

Knowledge of software engineering principles, architectures, and frameworks can help public interest groups to read and understand technical descriptions of the architecture and design of products for instance, during an investigation or when developing litigation. Software engineers can also use existing libraries for large-scale data analysis and generative AI applications to build and use add-ons and web scrapers that capture data such as political advertising or public procurement information for research. Software engineering skills in combination with domain expertise and a hacker mindset[14] can be used to reverse-engineer algorithms, provide insight into how they're working, and expose abuses.

Reversing.works is a public interest group that supports labour unions with technical expertise and investigations. They reverse-engineered the algorithmic management system of Glovo – a platform that engages around 120,000 delivery workers each month[15] – to show which data about platform workers was collected and processed by apps, both during and outside working hours.

They discovered Glovo misused workers' personal data in ways that violated labour law. The company monitored workers' movements outside of their work shifts, kept hidden scores on workers, and sent detailed monitoring of their work to third parties outside the scope [16]. Thanks to the evidence from Reversing.works, the Italian Data Protection Authority fined Glovo €5 million for a violation of both Italian labour law and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and demanded corrective action from the tech platform.

2. Research skills

Tech companies change their products all the time, meaning civil society groups have to research updates and constantly amend their technical knowledge to keep up with new platform policies and changes to application programming interfaces (APIs). Technical research skills combined with academic rigour are also needed for public interest groups to effectively use the formal data access mechanisms that Europe's Digital Services Act offers to investigate the impacts of social media platforms on people and society.

At the end of 2025, German watchdog AlgorithmWatch announced one of the very first data access requests under the DSA to investigate systemic risks to media freedom: AlgorithmWatch wants to uncover how the "AI Overviews" introduced by Google Search affect web traffic to sources of reliable information, such as journalistic outlets and expert organisations, and what the systemic risk is to the business model of independent media.[17]

3. Domain expertise

Technologists have a range of specialisms, for example, telecommunication, AI, cyber security, privacy, cryptography, and other emerging technologies. Deep knowledge of these domains is beneficial to propose, assess and analyse policies; verify the viability of marketing claims of new products; and review technical documentation that companies must provide as part of legal transparency requirements in Europe. This expertise can also help to interpret technical documentation received from companies during the discovery process in a litigation.

> With input from a technologist expert in artificial intelligence, **ICCL Enforce**, part of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, identified technical errors in the EU AI Act and convinced EU legislators to make corrections. [18] This had a big impact – now the law requires a wider scope of AI developers to meet safety obligations before their products can be put out on the market.

4. Statistics

Expertise in statistics and research methodologies play a key role in uncovering algorithmic discrimination and flawed data modelling[19]. A solid statistical foundation helps organisations investigating AI and algorithms to ask the right questions, gather relevant data, apply effective methods, and ultimately test whether discrimination is taking place.

> Dutch nonprofit **Algorithm Audit** regularly use statistics as a method to detect biases in algorithms used by public institutions and private companies. Based on their experience and technical knowledge, they've developed a public standard for profiling algorithms, that helps public and private sectors to use algorithms responsibly and address possible biases before the algorithms have negatively affected people[20].

5. Translation

Technologists and policymakers generally speak very different languages. The ability to communicate effectively with different stakeholders in their own terms is an important skill that can be a prerequisite for success. Deep expertise in one or more domains needs to be combined with broader technology knowledge, and a sufficient grasp of areas such as policy and law. This combination is essential for successfully communicating across policy makers, lawyers, civil society members of marginalised communities and technologists.

> Polish digital rights watchdog **Panoptykon Foundation** created the Recommender Systems Task Force to reimagine platform design that gives users a meaningful control over their feeds. Policy and tech experts worked hand-in-hand to identify harmful design features and then prototype alternatives that offer more choice and freedom without tracking and profiling users' behaviour[21]. This mix of tech and policy skills within the Task Force allowed them to not only technically experiment with user-centred designs, but also to explain what they did and what is possible to lawmakers working on regulation and online safety, in language that makes sense to them.

3 How technologists can work with civil society

Unless civil society groups have the technical expertise to advance enforcement of Europe's laws, the chances of holding companies and governments accountable for technology caused harms are slim.

Recent mass layoffs in the tech industry[22], worsening working conditions, and growing awareness of big tech's real-world harms have left many technologists disillusioned and searching for purpose outside the industry. Working in civil society offers the potential to have autonomy over their work, which they often lack in large technology corporations, and be part of an organisation with a values-driven mission.

Technologists with a wide range of backgrounds – from academia, governments, startups and big tech – all have the potential to bring these skills to support civil society's important work.

We interviewed technologists who have worked in civil society groups for this report to understand how they can best work together. They highlighted that technologists need to align with civil society on the following values and principles:

Recognise that technology is not neutral:

Technology is political.[23] Technologists should prioritise the public interest over tech hype and over business interests such as profits and scale. They should try to understand how technologies affect people, how they shape society, and shift or reinforce power.

Uphold tech-minimalism:

Technologists should first understand a problem within its context – for example by working with communities, and asking if a technical tool is even necessary, following the principle of tech minimalism. They should recognise that a technical tool does not solve social problems, but it could be part of the solution in some situations.

Abide by a do-no-harm-principle:

Technologists should prioritise transparency, privacy and accountability and always consider how technology use could harm people, especially marginalised communities.

Stay humble and curious:

Technologists should be aware of their own limitations and that of technologies. They should be willing to ask for help. They should be deeply curious and have a security mindset[24] that seeks to identify different ways a sociotechnical system might fail.

4 Unlocking the partnerships between civil society and technologists

There is now an opportunity for civil society to tap into the pool of talent in the tech industry to rebalance the current asymmetry of tech expertise, hold tech corporates accountable and engage with Europe's technology regulations. But what conditions need to be in place to unlock these powerful partnerships?

1. Attracting more technologists to the field with dedicated funding

There are still relatively few, and relatively young European civil society organisations working at the intersection of digital technology and public interest. They consist mainly of small organisations with limited budgets – the average European AI & Society Fund grantee for example has an annual budget of just over €1m.

While it is hard to estimate the total number of public interest groups in Europe that have full-time technologists focusing on technology policy issues, we are aware of fewer than 20 working on AI. In addition, a few organisations in the field of investigative journalism also have full-time technologists on staff. For comparison of scale, in 2024, Meta alone had 30 individuals declared as involved in lobbying in Brussels[25] – in addition to the influence that Meta enjoys through its various trade association memberships and affiliations[26], as well as representation in member state capitals.

Competitive pay

However, technologists who move out of the tech industry face huge pay cuts, a significant barrier to recruitment. While none of the technologists interviewed expected a salary comparable to those provided by Big Tech or FinTech companies, they indicated that pay should be higher than current levels where early-career technologists earn around €50,000–70,000. Civil society salaries in other geographies including the USA, Asia and South America can be more competitive, for instance the Ford Foundation paid early career technology fellows in New York around $130,000.

One interviewee managing technologists within a large civil society organisation said that despite raising the seniority of a role to attract more applicants, an excellent candidate could not "accept [the job offer] because it was 50% of what I was earning in my current [industry] role." Organisations did not face similar challenges when hiring for policy and advocacy positions.

Dedicated long-term EU funding

Despite regulation being founded on civil society participation, the EU has not yet dedicated funding to support civil society to work with technologists.

The Digital Services Act establishes annual fees for the largest platforms and in case of breaches, the European Commission may impose substantial fines on the platform concerned. While these fees and fines could - and arguably should - be used at least in part to support the work of civil society, there are currently no mechanisms to allocate any of these resources to public interest groups.

Accessing resources from the existing EU funding mechanisms, such as Erasmus+ and Horizon programmes is difficult in practice, as their heavy application processes and high administrative burden make the programmes unfeasible for smaller groups[27]. Of the Civitates and European AI & Society Fund community of grantees, less than one third receive any EU funding – and often these funds are dedicated towards work outside their tech accountability focus.

As the European Union prepares to set its forthcoming budget through the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028-2034, there is an opportunity to address this gap by assigning money for flexible, long-term funding that can meet the fast-changing priorities of both regulators and civil society organisations.

Currently €8.58 billion is proposed for a new AgoraEU programme, which would replace the existing Creative Europe's Culture and Media programme and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV). This amount represents a significant increase from previous funding schemes but is also being used to address many competing priorities. The AgoraEU intends to support civil society, independent media outlets and the cultural sector, and "will also accompany existing regulation, such as the Digital Services Act, the Digital Markets Act and the AI Act, by increasing the audiovisual and media content access, strengthening media literacy, encouraging fair competition and platform-neutral access to audiences." [28]

If the EU really wishes to strengthen democratic resilience and economic competitiveness, the next MFF must include support for civil society organisations involved in the ongoing implementation of Europe's new generation of digital regulation. This must include funding groups to acquire the necessary tech skills and capacity to deliver effective accountability.

This will require a new level of flexibility in funding opportunities, as well as a reduction of institutional bureaucracy to allow a greater number of civil society organisations to participate in an open and transparent manner.

Philanthropy backed tech skills programmes, mirroring the US success

There are currently no philanthropic funding programmes dedicated to attracting and retaining technologists in civil society groups focused on policy in Europe. Nor are there specific initiatives providing a broader infrastructure for technologists and civil society to connect and collaborate. Current support for technical capacity is largely incorporated in thematic funding programmes focused on technology justice or socio-technical impacts of technology on people and society. This heavily depends on the understanding and interest of funders to support work that uses technological methods.

This contrasts with the United States where philanthropy has made more intentional investments in civil society's technical capacity for over a decade. One USA-based technologist estimates that the combined strength of technologists at civil society organisations in the USA has grown from about 20 in 2013 to between a few hundreds to a thousand today. This success story can be largely attributed to five foundations - Ford, MacArthur, Knight, Mozilla, and Open Society.

Through their Netgain Partnership[29] they committed $18 million "with the goal of increasing the number of people around the world who are using their technological skills to improve civil society and government at all levels …. [and] working to ensure that the technologies of today and the future maximize its great potential for good while minimizing real harm to individuals, communities, and society"[30]. Other initiatives[31] embedded technologists in social justice organisations and created spaces for technologists to gather along with other civil rights advocates, to build relationships and to strategise.

These technologists have helped shape national policies on issues ranging from net neutrality and encryption to Artificial Intelligence. Their impact, however, depends on cross-organisational collaboration and the ability to speak with a collective voice. For example, technologists at civil society organisations raised concerns about the surveillance risks of Apple's client-side scanning proposal[32] and successfully pressured the company to abandon the technology.[33]

Despite Europe's considerably smaller philanthropic resources at the intersection of technology and social justice, the clear success of the US tech skills programmes demonstrates how targeted resources and programmes bridging technologists and civil society organisations can catalyse lasting, systemic change.

2. Creating a culture that values technologists in civil society strategy

Money alone is not enough; civil society groups also need the right organisational culture and infrastructure to effectively leverage technical skills. Technologists currently working in civil society observed:

Civil society organisations need to manage their expectations and understand that technologists have very different fields of expertise.

Lack of resources and knowledge can lead nonprofits to expect a technologist to cover all aspects of technology "from general IT support, to design processes, to full stack development."[34] Understanding a technologist's specific field of expertise can prevent misunderstandings, manage expectations, and create a welcoming work culture.

Integrating technologists into organisational strategy can offer greater impact.

Recognising the strategic expertise and value that technologists can offer beyond the immediate technical tasks aligns with technologists' desire to have agency over their

work and contribute to a cause. This has been a success factor in programmes for public interest technologists, such as Ford Foundation's fellowships, and is important to motivate technologists to work with civil society groups.

Organisational development and professional growth can encourage technologists to stay.

Ensuring high research quality and rigour of civil society research outputs, as well as high management skills and capacity are important factors in retaining technologists. Tech-literacy among management is important to technologists to guide them towards a tangible output, and so are clear organisational processes and ability to build cohesive teams. Career progression can be limited in civil society organisations, but connecting with other technologists for mentorship and support can encourage them to stay.

Cross-domain translation requires collaboration between colleagues with policy, technical and legal expertise.

A funder of litigation described a common scenario: "When a lawyer asks a technologist a legal question, the technologist comes up with a technical answer. This is where the gap lies. The lawyer needs a smoking gun. The technologist needs to find it and then communicate in a way that the lawyer can use it." At the same time, "the lawyer needs considerable technical understanding to actually argue the case in a court room." Cross-domain translation is challenging. Some technical concepts, just as legal concepts, can be difficult to translate to a non-expert. It requires the ability to distil, but not dilute, the essential information.

With adequate support, infrastructure and resources, civil society can create a culture that welcomes and values technologists in their digital technology accountability strategy.

5 Moving forward: Recommendations

To enable civil society to fully participate in making Europe's tech regulation a proper tool for accountability, public interest organisations need resources and capacity to build and integrate tech expertise. To achieve this, we recommend:

1. Recommendations for the European Commission and EU Member States

- As part of its next Multiannual Financial Framework, the EU should expand resources available to civil society so that they can play their designated role in promoting effective regulation. This includes accessible, flexible and long-term funding opportunities to acquire the range of tech skills required. With EU tools, funding and infrastructure, public interest organisations can defend against growing attacks[35] , sanctions and strategic lawsuits from tech companies and governments trying to undermine the European Union's objectives.

- The European Commission should use part of the big tech platforms' annual fees and fines collected under the Digital Services Act, to support the monitoring and enforcement work of civil society.

- Member States should also contribute to the work that civil society organisations are doing through their own funding programmes at national level. Resources from national budgets could be allocated to relevant national level authorities. Digital Services Coordinators would then disburse them to civil society organisations to fund research efforts and to advance its strategic priorities.

2. Recommendations for philanthropy

- Learn from successful targeted funding in the US which enabled the creation of multi-disciplinary coalitions, bringing technology skills and civil society expertise together. Also consider replicating the fellowship model adopted by Ford Foundation and Mozilla to foster tech skills adoption in civil society organisations.

- When evaluating grant proposals that include technical work, involve technologists in the grant selection panels. This doesn't require in-house expertise – external experts can be contracted to support these processes. Offer budget flexibility on salary scales so organisations can offer a competitive salary to hire and retain technologists.

- To retain talent, consider supporting and offering spaces of connection, learning and community building between public interest technologists and civil society. This could involve regular online gatherings of technologists in Europe working on specific topics, as well as in-person meetings alongside community events such as RightsCon or Global Gathering.

- Consider creating opportunities to bring together technologists, lawyers, economists and members of affected communities for knowledge sharing creating opportunities to improve translation between specialisms.

3. Recommendations for civil society

Explore whether your current funders offer resources such as additional grants or consulting services that can help with upskilling or hiring specific expertise that can make it easier for technologists to become part of your organisation.

When recruiting for technologist roles, be open in communicating the reality of your organisation to support applicants coming directly from the tech industry. Cover the working environment, working hours, expectations, organisational culture, clear roles and responsibilities. If possible, engage technologists in the interview panel when recruiting for technology roles, and consider their specific domain expertise in relation to the job you're recruiting for.

Consider integrating staff technologists into the organisation's processes and strategy, encouraging interdisciplinarity and empowering them to leverage the strengths of the organisation.

4. Recommendations for technologists

Alongside paid employment in civil society organisations, there are opportunities to support the tech accountability movement by volunteering time and expertise to civil society organisations, such as Algorithm Audit. Consider coordinating with other technologists to offer pro bono services and support to civil society in a structured way. Communities like Data for good in France help technologists put their skills to work for public interest projects in organisations working on social justice, democracy and the environment.

Join groups such as the Chaos Computer Club, Integrity Institute or Tech Workers Coalition to meet like-minded technologists that want to address technology's impacts on society and that actively shape the policy debate.

6 About this report

▌ Research Methodology

This report is produced based on research carried out by Dr Kris Shrishak between April and December 2025. Dr Kris Shrishak is a public interest technologist and a Senior Fellow at ICCL Enforce. He advises legislators on emerging technologies and global AI governance. His work focusses on privacy tech, anti-surveillance, emerging technologies, and algorithmic decision making. Previously, Kris was a researcher at Technical University Darmstadt in Germany where he worked on applied cryptography, privacy enhancing technologies and Internet security.

A combination of desk research and 19 interviews were conducted by the researcher. The interviews were conducted with various stakeholders:

1. Technologists who currently work in civil society organisations, government departments and grantmaking organisations;

2. Managers of technologists in civil society and government departments; and

3. Funders without a technical background.

In addition, it incorporates feedback received from a focus group and incorporates insights gathered by the researcher through interactions with technologists who either work at large or small technology companies or within an academic institution.

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Definitions

Technologist is a broad term, which in this report is used to refer to a person who has the capability to understand, research, build, and use different technologies. A specialist technologist has deep expertise in one specific tech skill and can independently complete their work in their domain, can identify the margins of their knowledge and skill, can call upon the relevant expert outside their own expertise and knowledgeably assess the quality of the external experts. A multi-disciplinary technologist is a technologist who has developed multiple skills, might have deep expertise in one or more tech skills, has developed knowledge in other domains like economics and policy and is strategic about social change.

A civil society organisation is "an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens."[36]

Funding is vital for civil society organisations to achieve their goals. The source of the funding could be public or private.

- **Public funding** refers to the financial support in the form of grants from public bodies such as national governments and the European Union.

- **Private funding**, in the context of this report refers to philanthropy, which includes "foundations, corporate funders and individuals using their own financial and non-financial resources for the public good."[37] In the rest of this report, the terms funders and philanthropic funders refer to the latter form of funding.

Footnotes

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