

# Catalysing digital rights work in Europe

DFF supports the digital rights field to build momentum towards a world in which everyone can enjoy their rights in digital spaces. DFF works closely with digital rights actors across Europe to generate impact through strategic litigation.

**DFF has three thematic focus areas:**



**Advancing individuals' ability to exercise their rights to privacy and data protection**



**Ensuring accountability, transparency and adherence to human rights standards in the design and use of technology**



**Protecting and promoting the free flow of information online**

We should all be able to enjoy our human rights in the digital sphere: digital rights are human rights.

## Digital rights are human rights



From privacy to freedom of expression, our rights apply in the digital context just as they do offline. Law, policy, and activities like surveillance and content regulation can – and regularly do – violate these rights. To protect them, we need the whole toolkit: from campaigning and education, to advocacy and litigation.



**Ensuring that our human rights are protected online is crucial, especially as more and more parts of our lives enter the digital sphere. The Digital Freedom Fund will help reinforce the efforts of those fighting for our rights online, including the right to freedom of expression.**

David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and part of DFF's Group of Friends

## Protecting our digital rights

The digital rights field encompasses wide-reaching, complex areas affecting individuals, organisations and states. Protecting our digital rights raises numerous questions:

How can we ensure freedom of expression and the free flow of information in the digital sphere?

How are governments and companies using our data?

How do artificial intelligence-based systems impact the right to equality and freedom from discrimination?



How do we achieve transparency and accountability in algorithmic decision making?

How can we protect the right to protest and freedom of association online?

How can we prevent hackers from accessing our private information?

When it comes to protecting our digital rights, legislation often moves slowly, but European courts often have the flexibility and discretion to respond more quickly to technological change.



**You cannot rely on legislation – it's too slow. It's up to judges to think about the new tech challenges and apply the law. Strategic litigation is needed and there's lots to do.**

Dorota Głowacka, Panoptykon

## Strategy and approach

### Community, consultation and communication

DFF seeks to catalyse and enhance work in the digital rights field and does this by building genuine participation and shared ownership. DFF's mission is to support and network the efforts of digital rights actors. DFF fuels the engines of change: uniting and driving forward digital rights litigation in Europe.



#### Building a collaborative digital rights community

DFF is catalysing a collaborative and well-connected digital rights field in Europe. It runs carefully designed strategy sessions, which are shaped by intensive pre-event engagement. These ensure that the discussions cover issues about strategic litigation that are of genuine interest to participants.



**DFF has been a great way for us to get pan-European connections – we appreciate the opportunity to hear what other organisations are doing, and to get their perspectives. It'll transform our work, bringing us together.**

Corey Stoughton, Liberty



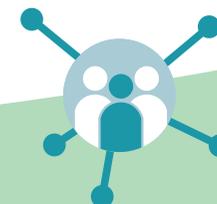
#### Responding to consultations

DFF has encouraged dialogue from the outset, indeed before the organisation was even launched. This involved extensive consultation with digital rights actors, as well as concerted field mapping across the digital sphere. The ideas and needs of the network form the basis of DFF's structure and philosophy.



**Since the initial consultation process, our network has continued to expand. More and more human rights organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the digital aspect to their work and developing a strategy to match. It is very exciting to have this diversification of perspectives in our network.**

Nani Jansen Reventlow, Director of DFF



#### Fostering open and transparent communication

The principle of openness, drawing on the philosophy of open technology, is central to DFF's strategy. A key principle is promoting a strong culture of transparency. DFF maintains an open dialogue with its network and grantees, continually shaping its priorities and strategy according to their input and feedback.



**The process did its job: I feel comfortable knowing that DFF's priorities, process and goals all fit with what it is that we need.**

Hans de Zwart, Bits of Freedom

# Three-track strategy

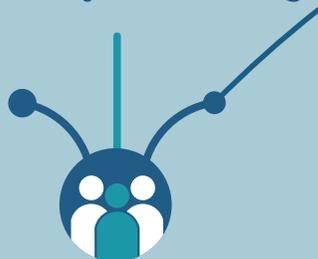
As a result of a collaborative process with its partners, DFF developed a work strategy with a focus on three areas:

## Funding litigation support

DFF provides grants so that litigators are better equipped to win strategic digital rights cases. This includes:

Proactive litigation – initiated by actors in the field, for example a constitutional challenge to a national law; and

Defensive litigation – at the initiative of private party or a State actor, for example defence against the prosecution of an individual under cybercrime legislation.



## Research and scoping

DFF supports research to identify potential legal strategies and to gather evidence and latest developments in the digital rights sphere. DFF’s research support empowers litigators to choose the right cases in the right jurisdictions.



## Skills development and network building

DFF strengthens the work of European lawyers and others involved in litigation (including pro bono support) by facilitating skills development and coordination. Specific efforts include:

Development of an aligned strategy on digital rights in Europe;

Facilitating coordination and collaboration between partners; and

Information and skill sharing with partners and grantees.



DFF’s strategic approach is also future-facing: as well as work on established issues, it explores opportunities to fund new and innovative initiatives at the forefront of the digital rights field.

## DFF is supported by

Open Society Foundations, Adessium Foundation, Luminate, Renewable Freedom Foundation, and receives project funding from the Democracy and Media Foundation