

Organisation and Community Operations

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Introduction:

Shield vzw is a cost-sharing non-profit organisation (NPO) established in November 2023 by Ziekenhuis Oost-Limburg, Jessa Ziekenhuis, and Universiteit Hasselt. The goal is to collectively address cybersecurity challenges in the short, medium, and long term.

The non-profit organisation aims to achieve the following objectives:

- A separate structure with its own decision-making and payroll system.
- A knowledge centre focused on cybersecurity and IT.
- An open and receptive member organization for new members who support the mission.
- Transparent operations towards members.
- An accessible purchasing centre for all members through an in-house construction.
- Alignment of technologies and processes to achieve economies of scale.
- Close collaboration with members, driven by community operations.

The governance of the non-profit organisation is described in [the publicly available statutes](#).

Shield initially targets non-private members from the healthcare and education sectors. An annual membership fee is charged to cover the cost of operation and access to a number (4) of selectable framework agreements. Additional fees apply for access to each additional framework agreement. Any “profits” are returned, subject to redistribution, to members. Membership can be initiated via a simple request (info@shield-vzw.be) and is approved by the governing body of Shield vzw.

Shield Reference Architecture:

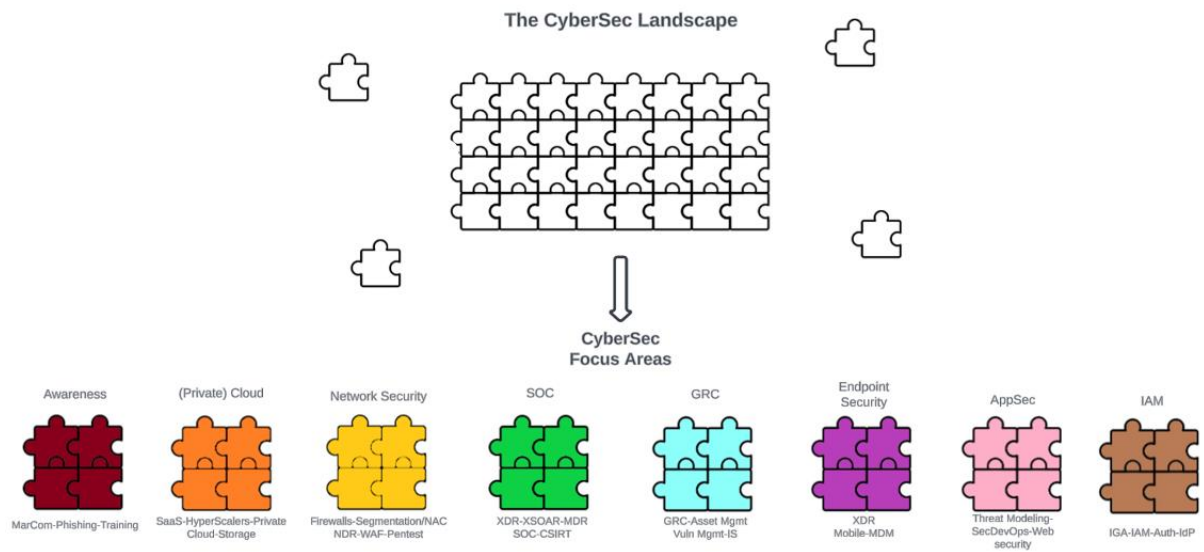


Fig1: Shield Reference architecture

Shield vzw aims to gradually develop a CyberSecurity Reference Architecture that encompasses all elements (Tech/People/Process/Governance) to bring implementing organizations to a maturity level suitable for their respective sectors and situations. One of the goals herein is the pursuit of compliancy under the NIS2 legislation.

The Reference Architecture is a "moving target" and will continuously evolve. Shield vzw will follow necessary evolutions and provide answers through a community-driven collaboration model. This involves:

- Approach the reference architecture as an interplay of underlying, interacting knowledge domains (Focus Areas) (see fig1)
- Naming these Focus Areas and using them as a capstone for working out best-fit solutions (tech/people/process)
- Building these solutions from a bottom-up community approach

The first Focus Areas will orientate around the following topics:

- **Awareness:** Awareness campaigns & branding, e-Learning, MarCom, Phishing platforms, ...
- **(Private) Cloud & Datacenter:** Hypervisors, hardware, DRS, Backup, storage, hyperscalers,...
- **Network Security:** Firewalls, Networks & segmentation, NAC, WAF, NDR, Pentest,...
- **SOC:** X/EDR, XSOAR, MDR, CSIRT, SOC,...
- **GRC:** Governance, Risk, Compliancy, frameworks, Assessments, ISMS, ...
- **Endpoint Security:** XDR, Mobile, Endpoint hardening, MDM, ConfigMgmt, Asset Mgmt, Vuln Mgmt,...

- **AppSec:** Threat Modelling, DevSecOps, Secure Coding, OWASP, WebApps,...
- **IAM:** IGA, IAM, IdP, Auth,...

Within these Focus Areas, various related topics will be discussed and actively worked on.

Shield Community Operations

Community X:

Shield will actively encourage members to delegate their best **experts** to the communities around their respective expertise and subtopics. These delegates will regularly meet in **member forums** of the corresponding communities to share knowledge, debate, set standards, and determine Shield priorities and service portfolios. The community operations are based on working from the expert base towards common answers regarding technologies, processes, and policies. Shield will take on a leading role in this.

Besides member experts, 3rd party stakeholders (interest groups, corporate, partners...) can be added to a community topic within a so-called **observer forum**. They co-sponsor the community's operations and gain the opportunity to follow the discussions and contribute with insights and knowledge. However, they are not part of the decision-making process. Each member gets 1 vote in the member forum.

The community's good functioning is ensured by a **Community Chair** elected by the member forum. The chair is elected from voluntary candidates from the member forum for a period of two years. Candidates for community chair commit to actively participating in the community to achieve concrete results and contributions to the Shield reference architecture and the public Body of Knowledge. The community chair consists of two elected member representatives (chair and vice-chair) and one assigned Shield architect-expert (vice-chair, penholder). Two successors are elected in case of early termination of one of the active member mandates. Shield strives for maximum parity between members/sectors and language groups (without imposing fixed quotas).

The community commits to open and free discussions in a collegial and respectful setting. Results of the community operations are shared in the public domain.

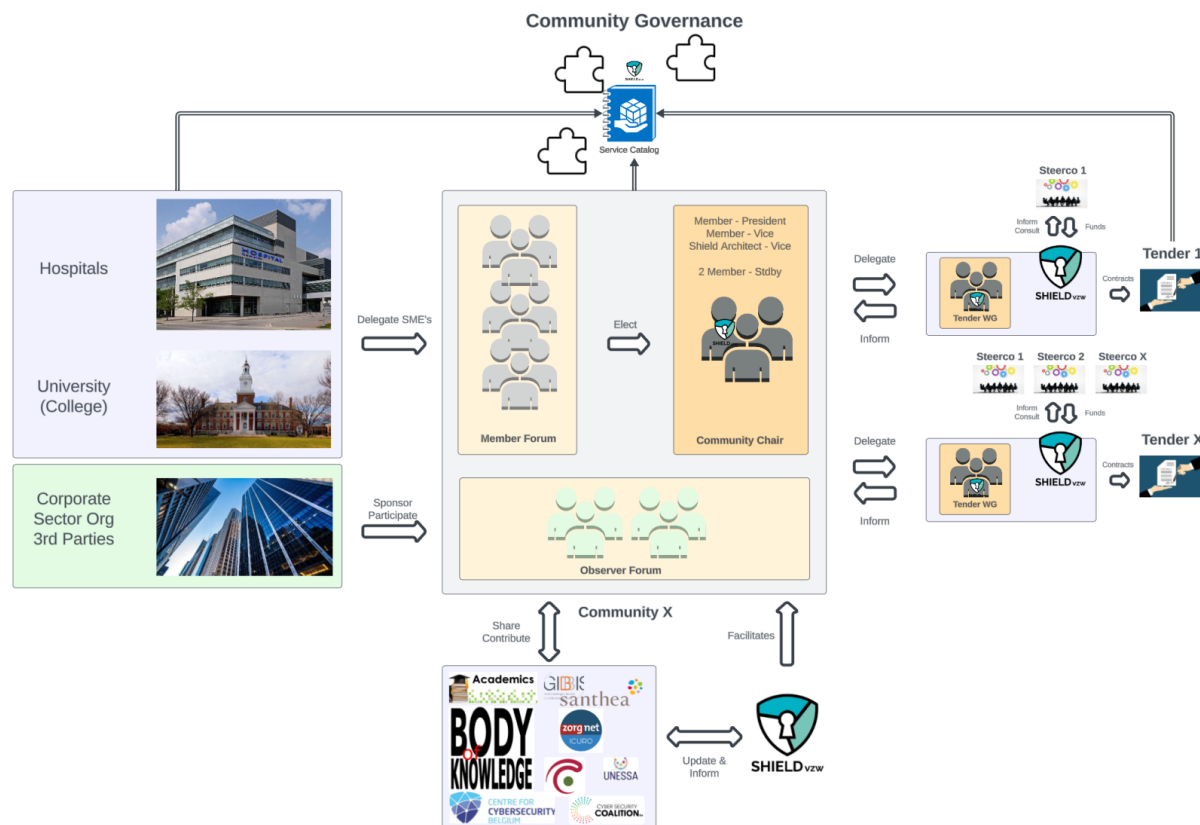


Fig 2: Community operations

Tender Workgroup:

If the Community's work concludes that a public tender is necessary for a desired solution, the Community Chair can submit this request to the Shield Management Committee.

Upon acceptance, the Management Committee, together with the community chair, will form a **Tender Workgroup** that will bring together the technical elements of the dossier, determine selection and award criteria and, as an expert body, prepare an evaluation dossier. This is done within a Shield template framework for public tenders. Shield will provide administrative and legal support throughout the process.

The Tender Workgroup can optionally be supplemented by one or more steering committees from relevant organizations (e.g., umbrella organizations) and/or relevant governments. This is the case when specific dossiers are financially supported by these parties to facilitate their respective members. Agreements on financing modalities are made between the stakeholders and Shield Management. In such cases, the steering committee can delegate an additional expert from the member forum to the tender workgroup.

The tender workgroup and Shield Mgmt inform and consult the respective steerco(s) on the progress and content of the work. Shield Management and the Tender Workgroup strive to meet the questions and advice of the respective steering committees but remain independent in their operations.

The responsibility and decision to award and conclude framework contracts is taken by Shield. If the Steerco does not agree, the financing arrangement made with it will also lapse, as well as any agreed member benefits.

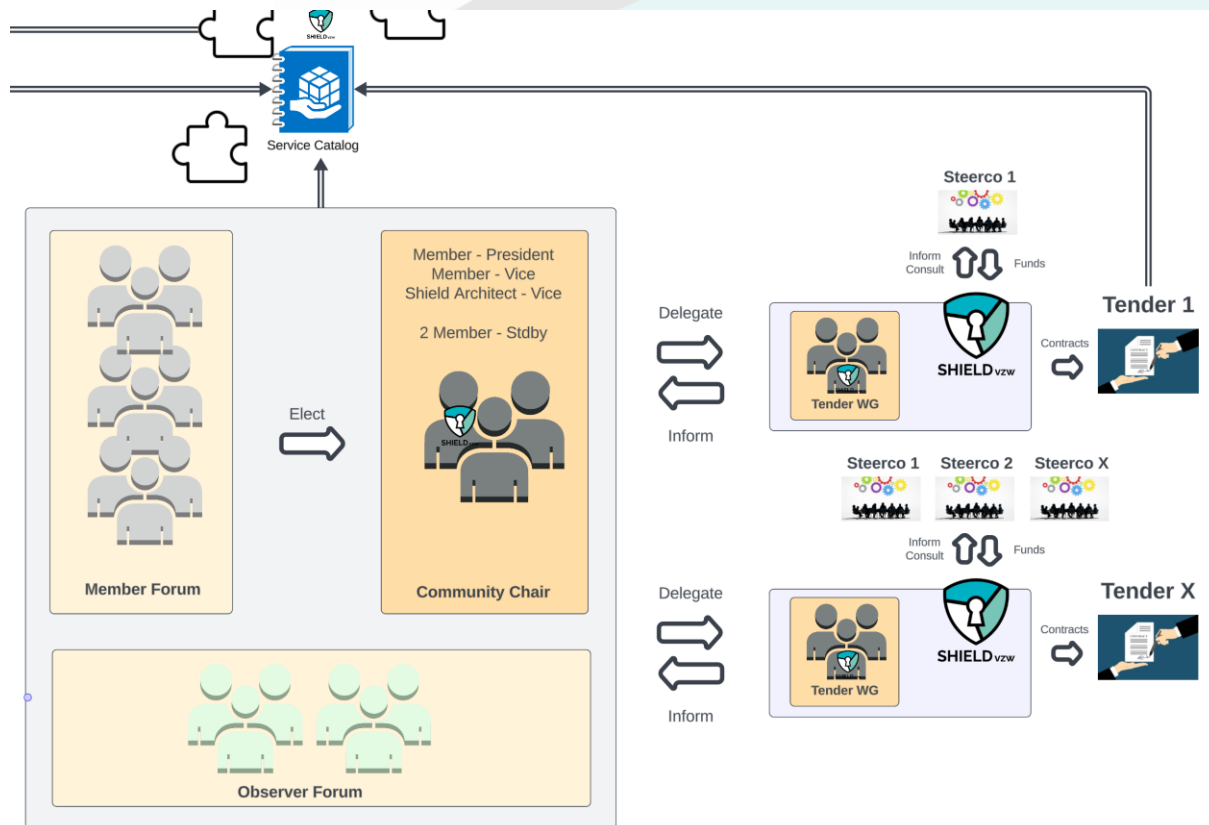




Fig. 3: Tender workgroup

Community Profiles:

- Community Chair – consists of:
 - Community president
 - Community vice-president
 - Shield Architect (vice-president, penholder)

Community President/vice-president	
Role description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active/interactive participation within the Shield community • Expert on multiple domains • Involved in all focus areas of the community, the collaboration and community platform (as moderator) • Build an overall reference architecture containing all focus area's together with Community Contributors, Shield Architects, (Shield partners) and participate on future iterations. • Initiate new tenders
Duration	2 years
Frequency	Depends on community focus
Engagement level	
Location	Preferably in-person, rotating location bases on participant-list

- Community Contributor

Community Contributor	
Role description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Writing of tender(s) ○ Building/maintaining reference architecture on a specific domain/focus area ○ Build/extend/maintain the Body of Knowledge (concepts, best practices, ..) of a specific domain/topic. • Expertise on a specific domain • Collaborate together with Community president/vice-president, Shield Architects and co-contributors (Team of 3 to 5 community contributors)
Duration	Limited in time, depends on scope
Frequency	Depends on topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tender: 3 sessions • Reference architecture: +/- 6 sessions
Engagement level	
Location	Preferably in-person, rotating location bases on participant-list

- Community Reviewer

Community Review	
Role description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and provide feedback on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tender applications ○ Templates/documentation/... ○ Reference architectures ○ Body of Knowledge (concepts, best practices, ..) of a specific domain/topic. • Expertise on related domains • Collaborate together with Community president/vice-president, Community Contributors and Shield Architects or the Tender Workgroup.
Duration	1 or 2 days to review the documentation, tender, ... and to participate the review meeting(s).
Frequency	1 or 2 review meetings
Engagement level	<div><div>MEDIUM</div></div>
Location	Preferably in-person, rotating location based on participant-list

- Community Member

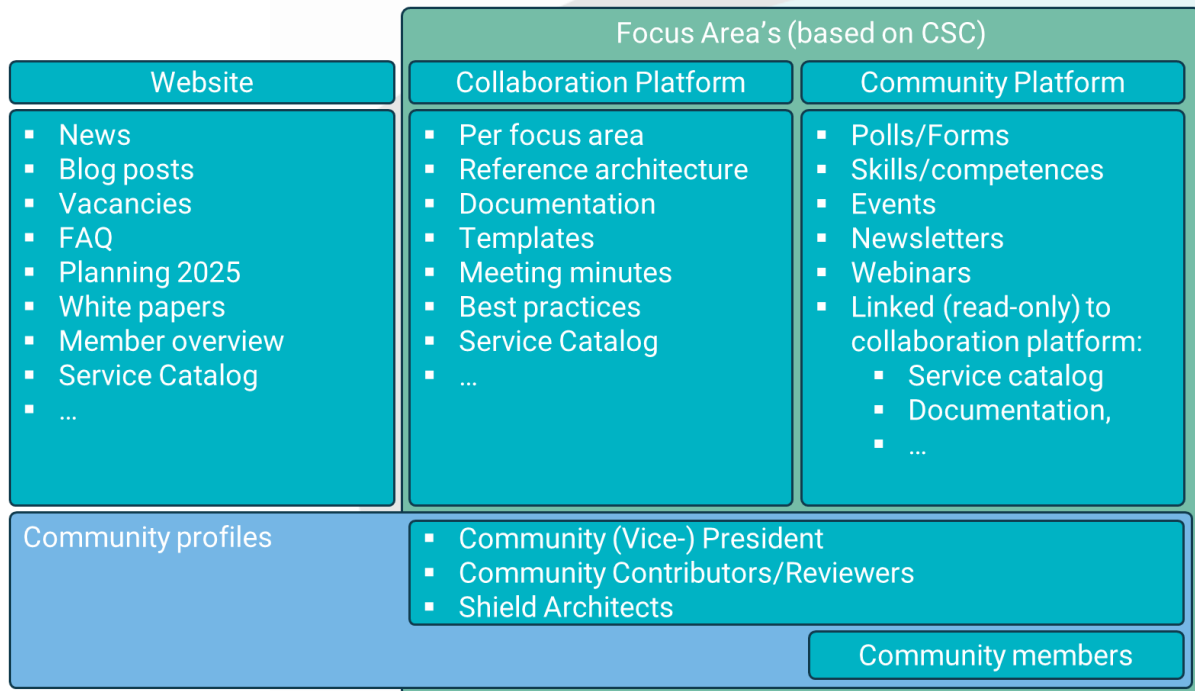
Community Member	
Role description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation on the community platform • All levels of expertise • Share feedback, insights, expertise, ... with other community members or learn from the information available on the platform
Duration	Not applicable
Frequency	Not applicable
Engagement level	<div><div>LOW</div></div>
Location	Not applicable

We are aware these type of engagements require extra effort/time from our community members, therefore we're constantly looking for **incentives** via our partners to show appreciation towards these members who engage actively in the community platforms. Some incentive examples (non-exhaustive list): training vouchers, invite to vendor events, company visits, lab devices, ...

Community Framework:

The community framework is built around 3 main pillars, each with their own goal:

- Website
- Collaboration Platform
- Community Platform



Both the collaboration and the community platform are designed based on the focus area's described above. Per focus area there will be a dedicated Teams-environment for chat, meetings, ...

Community, Service Catalog, and Reference Architecture

The solutions and services resulting from the community operation on the one hand and the tender workgroups on the other are brought together by the Shield architects into the overarching Shield reference architecture. The Shield architects monitor the internal coherence, mutual consistency and future-proofness of the whole within the ever-evolving CyberSec world. The Shield reference architecture will be made available to members via a service catalogue. Together with the members' individual cyber roadmap, this should provide the local IT Manager/Director with sufficient guidance and solutions to be able to arrive at a targeted action plan and implement it in an easy way.