



Joint G20 Engagement Partners Statement – B20, T20, W20

## Ensuring Inclusiveness in a Digitalized World

We, the Engagement Partners of the G20 – the Business20, the Think20, and the Women20 – believe in the great potential of digital technologies for inclusive, future-oriented, and sustainable development. Digitalization revolutionizes the way we communicate, facilitates new forms of collaboration, accelerates access to knowledge, intensifies innovation, raises productivity, and increases consumer welfare. As recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, digitalization is an enabler for socioeconomic development within and across countries, be it in terms of improving gender equality, boosting growth and employment, advancing health, enhancing energy access, curtailing climate change, or improving food security. Digitalization is a key driver of economic and social empowerment.

At the same time, there is a serious digital divide in various regards: Around half of the global population does not use or does not have access to the internet, with low-income regions featuring particularly low participation rates. Small firms tend to use digital technologies less than large ones. And above all, there is a significant gender gap in the use, access to, and in the development of ICT services. The internet is global, open, and interoperable in nature. International coordination and collective actions are thus key to fully realizing the existing opportunities and to effectively address the challenges. We therefore recommend to the G20:

- 1. Enhancing the Access to and Availability of Affordable Internet:** G20 members should promote the expansion of sustainable ICT infrastructure – both at home and abroad through their development partnerships. This requires public investment in broadband, fiber networks, and hard infrastructure, innovation strategies that encourage private investment in digital technologies and infrastructure as well as competition policies. These prevent distortions of competition and maximize digital uptake. In particular in lower income countries, internet coverage is far from ubiquitous and costs often surpass people's and businesses' means. But in industrialized countries, too, insufficient broadband coverage dampens economic potential. Therefore, G20 members should set ambitious national targets for broadband coverage as well as for its capacity to enable universal internet access and use. Public funds should complement private investments in remote or less developed regions, and governments should cooperate closely with the development community and businesses to find the most effective solutions for fostering affordable broadband coverage in low-income countries.
- 2. Advancing Digital Skills and Literacy:** Digital technologies will lead to rapidly shifting skills requirements and demands. They change the nature of jobs and work. The changing work environment requires modern education and training systems that are consistently aligned with shifting labor market needs and practical requirements. A lack of digital literacy is not only a barrier for individuals but also reduces economic potential. Both young people and current employees need to be empowered to acquire the relevant knowledge and skills, for instance through work-based and life-long learning. Governments and businesses need to shift away from education systems that stop once people enter the workforce, and focus on continuously developing and updating skills and knowledge. We urge the G20 members to advance concepts for life-long learning, professional development, and the possibility of requalification to the center of labor and education policies.



3. **Closing the Digital Gender Divide:** G20 members urgently need to promote e-skills for girls and women. To close the digital gender divide, they should not only focus on ICT use by women. It is just as important to enable women as creators and developers in the ICT branch, to aim for increasing women's employment in leading positions of inventive and innovative industries, and to encourage and increase women entrepreneurship in these areas. The G20 leaders need to swiftly bridge the widening digital gender divide by setting up a comprehensive 5-year plan for gender-equal digital transformation.
4. **Ensuring Open Internet for All:** G20 leaders need to stand up against Internet censorship. Leveraging digitalization to foster economic and social inclusion requires that the Internet remains global, open, and interoperable without compromising privacy needs, data protection or the safety of the digital environment. Restrictions on cross-border data flows and the trans- frontier use of Internet services that pursue a political and protectionist agenda – or even aim at limiting the freedom of information and expression – have to be curtailed.
5. **Cooperating to Improve Cyber Security:** A secure infrastructure is essential for the potential of digitalization to flourish. G20 members should agree to take the necessary steps to ensure inclusive growth and transparent governance.
6. **Enabling Digital Trade:** Digital trade holds huge potential, in particular for SMEs. It lowers transaction costs and scale requirements while giving easy access to a global market place. However, substantial barriers prevent the potential benefits of digital trade from being fully realized. G20 members should align their e-commerce-related policies with existing international principles and guidelines. To identify best practices and ensure interoperability, G20 members should strengthen regulatory dialogues on e-commerce-related policies. G20 members and international organizations should further streamline existing Aid for Trade initiatives towards capacity building for digital trade, such as digital skills, ICT infrastructure, and an adequate legal framework.
7. **Advancing Digital Health:** Digital Health holds a wealth of opportunities for patients, governments, and industry. Big Data can be a powerful tool to devise new personalized medicines and increase our understanding of diseases. Digital healthcare technologies can empower people through unprecedented access to information, connect physicians to patients also in remote areas, and create new sources of data through continuous monitoring of patients. However, these opportunities can only be harnessed in a suitable regulatory environment with the necessary infrastructure. The G20 members should therefore accelerate the provision of a high performance digital health infrastructure by setting clear targets, agreeing on international standards for technical and semantical connectivity, and boosting investment in high capacity and mobile connectivity.
8. **Strengthening Responsible and Sustainable Approaches to Digitalization:** The G20 has to take into account uncertainties that arise with complex digital products. An informed public dialogue is needed on the possibilities, benefits, and challenges, which also includes addressing the potential negative effects of digitalization. The G20 should also explore means to protect individuals, including strong privacy rights.
9. **Enabling Dialogue with G20 Engagement Groups:** Digitization affects not only all economic sectors but also government, civil society, and people's everyday lives. The G20 presidencies need to ensure access for all G20 engagement groups to the G20 negotiation tracks and G20 Sherpa meetings to guarantee the ongoing dialogue with civil society representatives.



Digitalization is transforming our societies, economies, and individual lives. The G20 needs to take concrete and ambitious steps to ensure that it will do so in a way that empowers everyone.

## **G20 Engagement Groups**

G20 Germany holds dialogue forums with business (Business20), civil society organizations (Civil20), trade unions (Labour20), the scientific and research community (Science20), think tanks (Think20), women (Women20), and youth (Youth20). The dialogue forums pick up on pertinent G20 issues and work with international partners to draw up recommendations for the German Presidency.

### **Engagement Groups**

#### ***Business20:***

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jürgen Heraeus".

*Chair:* Dr. Jürgen Heraeus

*Organizing Groups:*

Federation of German Industries (BDI)

Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industries (DIHK)

Confederation of German Employers (BDA)

#### ***Think20:***

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dirk Messner".

*Co-Chair:* Prof. Dr. Dirk Messner

*Organizing Groups:*

German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)

Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dennis Snower".

*Co-Chair:* Prof. Dennis Snower

#### ***Women20:***

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mona Küppers".

*Co-Chair:* Mona Küppers

*Organizing Groups:*

Association of German Women Entrepreneurs (VdU) National Council of German Women's Organizations (DF)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Stephanie Bschorr".

*Co-Chair:* Stephanie Bschorr