

REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



Building Effective Partnerships for Digital Transformation

Thursday 14 March 2024, 10:00 – 13:00 CET

Palais des Nations, Room XIX

Background / Scenario

In the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, the persistent digital divide remains a significant challenge, hindering progress and impacting 2.6 billion lives globally.

In order to meet the central promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind, uniting the efforts of various stakeholders is critical to put progress on the SDG's back on track. These partnerships are significant not only for SDG17, but also for the Global Digital Compact, proposed under the Common Agenda and informed by the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. The Global Digital Compact is expected to be agreed upon at the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

In the letter released earlier this year, the co-facilitators of the UN Global Digital Compact made it clear: We need to collectively harness the benefits and manage the risks of digitalization for all.

Simultaneously, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) called for the organization of regional WSIS follow-up activities. This time, they have particular relevance, as the WSIS marks a significant milestone of twenty years of progress. As part of this ongoing review process, a WSIS+20 High Level Event will be held in May 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The focus of the session aligns with the forthcoming Summit of the Future, emphasizing international digital partnerships and reviewing the impact of the WSIS at the regional level. Delving into crucial policy areas, such as infrastructure development, digital skills, data governance, and more, the session aims to foster a safe and inclusive digital environment.

A spotlight on developing countries from the region will provide insights into ongoing digital transitions, achievements, and work on the ground, addressing regional nuances. It will look at factors hindering internet connectivity access and use across communities and locations. It will discuss the importance of robust digital infrastructure as a prerequisite for the successful uptake of ICT solutions. The session will underscore the core role of partnerships across sectors in digital transformation, discussing future trends, challenges, and opportunities to enhance goal delivery.

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Guiding Questions:

1. What are the key policy actions or implementation experiences that have significantly contributed to bridging digital divides?
2. What potential collaborative initiatives or partnerships currently exist or are envisioned for the future that can further accelerate the digital transformation in the region?
3. What are the key policy action solutions to developing resilient ICT infrastructure?
4. Delving into crucial policy areas such as infrastructure development, digital skills, and data governance, what are some best practices and innovative strategies that can foster a safe and inclusive digital environment, especially in developing countries and economies in transition?
5. Exploring innovative elements, what unique approaches or strategies have been employed in your respective contexts to foster digital inclusion and ensure the responsible use of digital technologies?

Programme

Moderator: **Jaroslaw Ponder**, Head, ITU Europe Office

10:00 – 10:05	Welcome Overview of the session and the UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jaroslaw Ponder, Head, ITU Europe Office
10:05 – 10:15	Introductory remarks by the co-organizers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Cosmas Zavazava, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU• Dmitry Mariasin, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE
10:15 – 10:20	Key Note on behalf of H.E. Mr. Nik Gjeloshaj , Deputy Prime Minister of Economic Policy and Minister of Economic Development in Montenegro <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ivona Savicevic, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of Economic Development of Montenegro
10:20 – 10:30	UN processes related to digital: From the past to the future <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peter Major, Vice Chair, United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development• H.E. Ms. Sylvie Bollini, Ambassador, Permanent Observer of the Council of Europe to the United Nations Office at Geneva
Building block 1: Bridging the Digital Divide	

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Round table discussion

The round table discussion will bring stakeholders to discuss the policy actions and recommendations needed to connect the unconnected across the region.

- **José L. Cervera-Ferri**, Senior Project Manager, Universal and Meaningful Connectivity Project
- **Hoa Binh Adjemian**, Deputy Head of EU Thematic Unit, European Commission (*online*)
- **Ben Mansell**, COO and Co-Founder / **Paul Finnis**, Strategy Advisor, Unconnected Foundation
- **Lucie Taurines**, Group Digital Inclusion Director | Group CSR, Capgemini (*online*)
- **Anes Hadzimerovic**, Professor, Founder and President of CERIT (*online*)
- **Yana Panfilova**, Founder and Chair of Board, Teenergizer

Moderator: Jaroslaw Ponder, Head, ITU Europe Office

In-depth case study

The in-depth case studies will provide concrete examples of initiatives that may be scaled up in the region to achieve this objective.

- **Kristine Gyonjyan**, Director of the Union of Operators of Armenia

Q&A and wrap-up of building block 1

The floor will be open to questions from the audience.

Building block 2: Partnerships and Collaborations Resulting in Digital Resilience and Strengthened Confidence in the Use of ICT

Round table discussion

This round table discussion will bring stakeholders to discuss the policy actions and partnerships needed to foster the resilient ICT infrastructure.

- **Mihaela Frăsineanu**, State Counselor in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Romania
- **Sandro Bazzanella**, Director, EU Digital for Development (D4D) Hub
- **Mitja Jermol**, International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI), UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for OER and Open Learning
- **Ralf Ernst**, Deputy Co-ordinator, OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA)
- **Eka Kubusidze**, Department Head, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (*online*)
- **Dr. Irena Dzeletovic Milosevic**, Head, Office for Health of Older Persons at the City Institute for Public Health in Belgrade

Moderator: Jaroslaw Ponder, Head, ITU Europe Office

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11:45 – 11:50

Q&A and wrap-up of building block 2

The floor will be open to questions from the audience.

Building block 3: Accelerating Inclusive Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development

Moderated session

Based on the insights gained throughout the round table, this concluding segment will bring regional and national actors to reflect jointly on the partnerships and mechanisms needed to foster human centric approaches and facilitate sustainable digital development.

- **H.E. Mr. Václav Bálek**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic to the United Nations Office at Geneva
- **Łukasz Różycki**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations Office at Geneva
- **Iñigo de Vicente-Mingarro**, Chairman of the International Coordination Group on PRTRs (ICG); responsible for technical assistance for the management of the PRTR-España register
- **Almudena Alcaide**, Chair of Research, Fundación ONCE
- **Aliya Chynybayeva**, CEO, Halyk Bank Kyrgyzstan; Board of the International Business Council for the initiation of digital information legislative projects and support for women
- **Aizhan Dzhanaeva**, Youth representative
- **Civil Society speaker**, Civil Society Representative

Moderator: Natalia Mochu, Regional Director for CIS, ITU

12:30 – 12:40

In-depth case study

The in-depth case studies will provide concrete examples of initiatives that may be scaled up in the region.

- **Karin Voodla**, Policy Officer, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations Office in Geneva

12:40 – 12:45

Q&A and wrap-up of building block 2

The floor will be open to questions from the audience.

12:45 – 12:50

Partner to connect (P2C)

- **Natalia Mochu**, Regional Director for CIS, ITU

12:50 – 13:00

Wrap up and concluding remarks

- **Jaroslaw Ponder**, Head, ITU Europe Office

Organized by the UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia, under the leadership of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and the contribution of other UN agencies.