

**COVID-19
RESPONSE**

**Accelerating digital
development through
multistakeholder
partnerships**

SDG 17 Peer-learning session

6 April 2022 | 15:00-17:30 CEST

Follow us on Twitter
@ITUEurope
@ITUCISRegion

Join us online!



REGIONAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION





With the contribution of

Organized by

Coordinated by



UN Digital Transformation Group
for Europe and Central Asia
(#RUNDTG4ECA)



Peer-learning roundtable on SDG 17

Accelerating digital development through multistakeholder partnerships

Executive outcome report

- The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the inequalities that can be worsened by the digital divide. Policy development focusing on digital inclusion, access, security, skills, and sustainability is a defining characteristic to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. Multistakeholder partnerships and cross-sectoral cooperation are required to ensure a human-centered, whole-of-ecosystem digital development.
- Multistakeholder initiatives, such as the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition, launched with the UN Tech Envoy and directly responding to the UN Secretary-General Roadmap on Digital Cooperation, is a game-changing opportunity to take a holistic approach, catalyze new partnerships, and mobilize the resources needed to connect the 2.9 billion unconnected. The engagement of all stakeholders in such efforts is of strategic meaning.
- To capture the role of ICT as development enablers, special attention should be paid to four pillars:
 - **ACCESS – connecting people everywhere:** ICT infrastructures facilitate the backbone for global supply chain integration, the opportunity for citizens to improve their options in the workforce, the ability for students to gain skill sets, and many more positive externalities. There is a need to ensure that high-speed, reliable, affordable, and safe internet connectivity is provided for all communities and in all types of territories, including remote and rural areas and countries with particular geographical situations. More policies and regulations around infrastructure development are needed, and new business models should be implemented in the private sector to support last-mile connectivity. The unequal infrastructure in households and schools contributes to the digital divide which mainly affects marginalized children. This requires enabling the same digital infrastructure standards in all schools. Partnerships across Ministries of Education, Ministries of ICTs, and the Regulatory Authorities together with local governments are of strategic importance to spur this change.
 - **ADOPTION - Empowering communities:** Countries are recommended to undertake a flexible approach to digital services adapted to end-users needs, including ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and adaption to the local languages. Stakeholders are encouraged to include targeted communities and their representing organizations in the design and decision-making process. Digital skills are increasingly required in all areas of work. Governments are encouraged to include STEM and ICT in the education curricula, starting from the elementary school level, as well as to apply a whole-of-ecosystem approach to digital skills. Special attention should be given to teachers' digital skills being at the forefront of providing quality education. To foster women and girls' participation in ICTs and STEM fields, stakeholders are encouraged to undertake a personalized and competency-based approach, including through ICT-related extra-curricular activities. To counter the vertical segregation experienced in the employment sector, stakeholders are recommended to undertake a personalized-based approach through formal and extra-curricular education, by offering career guidance, self-confidence, and self-perception training, as well as increasing caregiving support. Governments are also encouraged to develop data-driven policies and programs.
 - **VALUE CREATION - Building digital ecosystems:** A clear ownership of the digital agenda at the governmental level, paired with a unified strategy across all ministries, is of prior importance to fostering digital ecosystems. Building digital ecosystems also require a multi-stakeholder engagement, continuous calls to action to incorporate market trends, and proposing new concepts to be endorsed by the market with a top-down strategy to foster collaborative innovation mechanisms. There is also a need to

form and disseminate common interoperable standards for experts for easier digitalization of services and sectors. The use of UN/CEFACT standards for international information exchange in agriculture and food trade is recommended by international organizations and conventions such as IPPC, Codex Alimentarius, FAO and CITES. During the pandemic, the UN/CEFACT based electronic information exchange was crucial to keep the international food supply chains operational and to avoid food waste on a global scale. They will become increasingly important to mitigate the abrupt changes in the supply chain due to shortage of raw materials and trade sanctions. Countries are encouraged to step up efforts in implementing digital solutions for sustainable use of resources underwater, such as Vessel Monitoring tools and Electronic Reporting, and to follow the guidance of UN/FLUX. Existing and future underwater and on-land ICT tools can serve to mitigate the environmental impact of human activities and use them as disasters warning. Countries are encouraged to implement electronic data interchange as an eWaste standard for efficient handling of real-time business-to-administration data flows.

- **ACCELERATION - Incentivizing investments.** 428 billion USD are needed globally to bridge the connectivity 'Grand canyon' by 2030, of which 33 billion USD is only for Europe and Central Asia. Public and private investments must target both the supply and demand side to close the rural digital divide and increase technology adoption rates. Incentivizing investments needs to be done through national strategies and coordination mechanisms for multistakeholder partnerships. Public-Private Partnerships offer a solution to attract long-term investment in and financing of digital infrastructure. Projects should be designed with the aim of replicability to ensure smart and sustainable investment. International standards developed by international organizations are always needed to enhance investments and make them secure.