



OUTCOME REPORT

WORLD SUMMIT
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SOCIETY



**ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and
Sustainable Societies and Economies**
*(WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable
Development Goals)*

Europe Region

16 April 2021 | 12:00-13:00 CET

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ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies (WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals) – Europe Region 16th April 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The thematic workshop “ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies (WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals) - Europe Region” was organized by ITU and held online on 16 April 2021 within the framework of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2021. The WSIS Forum represents the world's largest annual gathering of the ICT for development community and is co-organized by ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, and UNCTAD, in close collaboration with all WSIS Action Line facilitators and co-facilitators together with multiple stakeholders from academia, private sector and government bodies. The 2021 edition of the Forum will provide a platform to track the achievements of WSIS Action Lines in collaboration with the UN Agencies involved and highlight information and analyses related to the implementation of WSIS Action Lines since 2005.

Particularly, the special workshop “ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies (WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals) - Europe Region” drew attention to the ongoing efforts of ITU and its partners in implementing ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe, focusing on connectivity, digitalization, digital inclusion, innovation, and cybersecurity. Driven by the Regional Initiatives, the ITU Office for Europe is determined and dedicated to foster digital transformation across the region, in accordance with WSIS Action Lines and capturing the full potential of ICTs in reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda.

Particularly, the thematic workshop presented a series of flagship actions undertaken recently by the ITU Office for Europe in the areas of Connectivity, Digital Skills, Child Online Protection, Digital Accessibility, and Digital Services.

The main outcomes of the WSIS thematic workshop “ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies (WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals) - Europe Region” are outlined in this report, which structures the key points that emerged during each segment of the workshop.

PARTICIPATION

The WSIS thematic workshop “ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies (WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals) - Europe Region” was a public event mainly targeted to representatives of governmental bodies, regulatory agencies, academia, and the private sector, all cohesively cooperating towards achievement of the ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe, the WSIS Action Lines and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through ICTs. The participation of eminent speakers allowed for an exchange of cross-sectoral viewpoints and the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach towards enhanced connectivity, digital skills development, strengthened child online protection regulation, fostered digital accessibility and broader availability of digital services. 7 speakers presented and discussed during the thematic workshop. Details about the [agenda](#), as well as [biography of contributing speakers](#) can be found on the event's

website¹. The thematic workshop also benefitted from a livestream retransmission on [Facebook](#).

Figure 1 - Virtual Group Photo 1

WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

WSIS FORUM 2021

ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies
(WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals)

Europe Region

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Headshots of participants:

- Man in suit and glasses
- Man with beard
- Woman with blonde hair
- Woman with blonde hair
- Woman with blonde hair
- Woman with blonde hair
- Man with dark hair

WSIS Action Lines and SDGs:

WSIS ACTION LINE 1 PROMOTION OF ICTs FOR DEVELOPMENT	WSIS ACTION LINE 2 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE	WSIS ACTION LINE 3 ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE	WSIS ACTION LINE 4 CAPACITY BUILDING	1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION
WSIS ACTION LINE 5 BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY IN THE USE OF ICTs	WSIS ACTION LINE 6 ENABLING ENVIRONMENT	WSIS ACTION LINE 7 E-GOVERNMENT	WSIS ACTION LINE 7 E-LEARNING	5 GENDER EQUALITY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
WSIS ACTION LINE 7 E-HEALTH	WSIS ACTION LINE 7 E-AGRICULTURE	WSIS ACTION LINE 11 INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION		12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	

¹ <https://bit.ly/32WQOTQ>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The thematic workshop “ICTs for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies (WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals) – Europe Region”, organized by the ITU Office for Europe within the framework of the 2021 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum, provided key recommendations to accelerate achievement of all [ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe](#) and [WSIS Action Lines C1](#) (the role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development), **C2** (information and communication infrastructure), **C3** (access to information and knowledge), **C4** (capacity building), **C5** (building confidence and security in use of ICTs), **C6** (enabling environment), **C7** (e-government), **C7** (e-learning), **C7** (e-health), **C7** (e-agriculture), and **C11** (international and regional cooperation) in the Europe region.

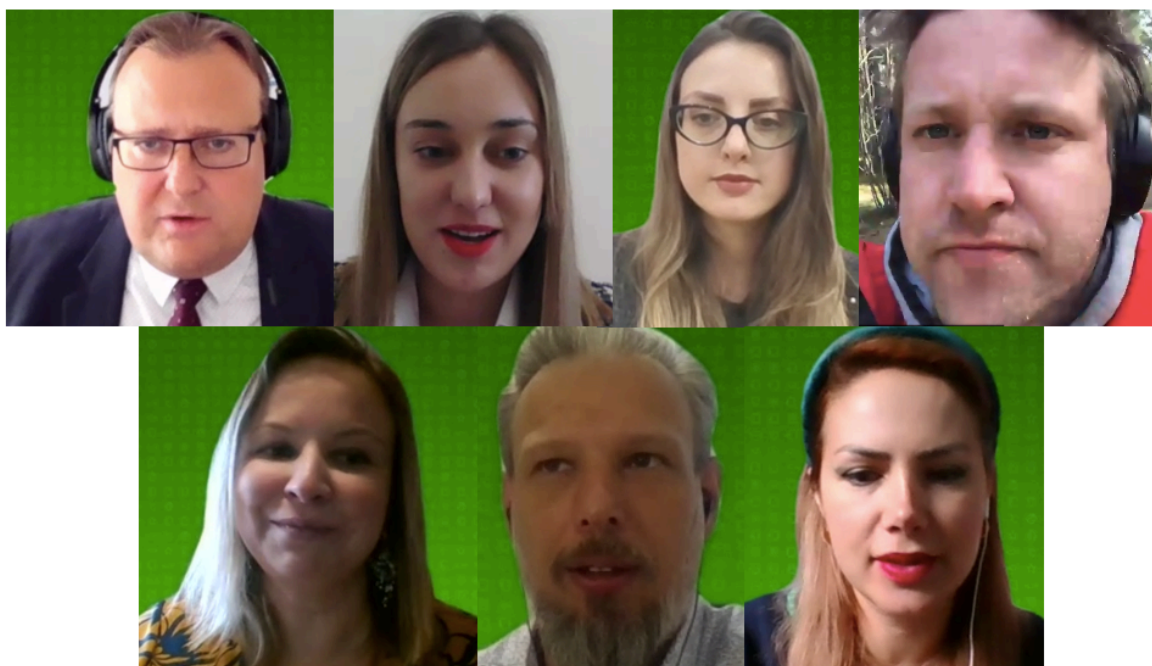
Particularly, the thematic workshop highlighted how universal meaningful connectivity could be ensured by scaling up the existing digital infrastructure and advancing the internet speed through the introduction of last generation technologies such as 5G and EMF. Moreover, in an increasingly digitalized world, digital skills and literacy could successfully foster participation of youth, women and girls in the job market, promoting a culture of innovation, investments in R&D, learning of STEM subjects and increasing the rate of start-ups foundation. The thematic workshop further underlined how ITU Child Online Protection (COP) guidelines are key to ensure that children, constantly exposed to the risks associated with internet usage, rely on digital tools and online platforms to enhance their learning opportunities. Increased digitalization would result from the use of up-to-date ICT-based solutions, responding to the demands of citizens and workers from all walks of life, while, on the same grounds, being accessible, user-friendly, and adaptable to stakeholders’ sectoral priorities. Finally, online government services constitute a meaningful ICT-based response to the need of integrating digital transformation advancements in the work of public administrations, enhancing social inclusion through the digital substitution of paper-based solutions.

In conclusion, the thematic workshop underlined how ITU would continue its cooperative work with Member States towards the comprehensive achievement of ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe and their related WSIS Action Lines. To bridge the persisting digital divides, foster digital transformation and enhance connectivity in the Europe Region, the [Regional Preparatory Meeting for Europe \(RPM-EUR\)](#), held on 18-19 January 2021, constituted a regional coordination platform to identify issues in the digital domain which must be addressed to foster the development of ICTs, taking into account key priorities of European Member States and European Sector Members.

DOCUMENTATION

The thematic workshop “ICTs for for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Societies and Economies (WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals) – Europe Region” was held virtually. Relevant documentation was made available in electronic form on the event webpage: <https://bit.ly/3sWFngQ>. The thematic workshop has also been livestreamed on [Facebook](#). Proceedings are available at the link above.

Figure 2 - Virtual Group Photo 2



From left to right, top to bottom: Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder; Ms. Nevena Manić ; Ms. Romina Kostani; Mr. Marten Kaevats; Ms. Katalin Baracsi; Mr. Grzegorz Czwordon; Ms. Florensa Haxhi.

1. OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe

In his opening speech, **Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder**, Head of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Office for Europe, introduced the WSIS thematic workshop, inviting all participants to view it as a meaningful opportunity to accelerate comprehensive achievement of **WSIS Action Lines** and **ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe** across the Region, enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation and the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach. Particularly, Mr. Ponder highlighted how, during the COVID-19 crisis, the role of ICTs and services, and the digital infrastructure that they ride and scale on have become central to continued economic and societal activity and to lessening the pandemic's impact. Through his words, it was underlined how ITU recognizes that infrastructure does much more than sustain mobile and broadband connections. It facilitates the backbone for global supply chain integration, the innovative use of critical health information, the opportunity for citizens to improve their options in the workforce, the ability for students to gain skillsets previously unavailable to them, the introduction of digital solutions to manage natural resources without waste and sustain agricultural development.

Furthermore, Mr. Ponder underlined how the [five Europe Regional Initiatives](#), defined during the 2017 Buenos Aires World Telecommunication Development Conference, set the current

Roadmap of ITU Europe. In agreement with governments, they provide all stakeholders with a path for the development of ICTs. Regional Initiatives are intended to address specific telecommunication/ICT priority areas that require special action of ITU at the regional level. Under each of them, a set of activities, partnerships, and projects has been developed to meet the region's needs. Specifically, the ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe include the following: **EUR1**: Broadband infrastructure, broadcasting and spectrum management; **EUR2**: A citizen-centric approach to building services for national administrations; **EUR3**: Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development; **EUR4**: Enhancing trust and confidence in the use of information and communication technologies; **EUR5**: Information and communication technology-centric innovation ecosystems. Each of them contributes to the achievement of the **WSIS Action Lines** and the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** at the regional level. Through his introductory words, Mr. Ponder reinforced the ongoing efforts of ITU and its partners in implementing the Regional Initiatives, subsequently leaving the floor to speakers from Poland, Albania, Hungary, Serbia, and Estonia to discuss key country-level projects and initiatives to enhance connectivity, digital skills development, child online protection, digital accessibility and digital services.

2. ICTs FOR INCLUSIVE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES AND ECONOMIES (WSIS ACTION LINES FOR ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS) - EUROPE REGION

Focus: Connectivity, Digital Skills, Child Online Protection, Digital Accessibility, Digital Services

Moderator: Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe

Speakers: **Presentation 1**, Mr. Grzegorz Czwordon, Deputy Director of the Telecommunications Department at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Poland; **Presentation 2**, Ms. Romina Kostani, Director of Innovation and e-Gov IPA Funds at the Albanian National Agency of Information Society, Albania; **Presentation 3**, Dr. Florensa Haxhi, Director General of the Development Programs and Cooperation Unit at the Prime Minister's Office, Albania; **Presentation 4**, Ms. Katalin Baracsi, LL.M lawyer specialized in Family Law and Internet Safety Issues, Social Media Trainer, Hungary; **Presentation 5**, Ms. Nevena Manić, Advisor, Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia; **Presentation 6**, Mr. Marten Kaevats, National Digital Advisor in the Government Office of Estonia.

Key points

- Emerging technologies - such as **fifth-generation wireless communication networks (5G)** and **Electromagnetic Field (EMF)** (white paper on the EMF, presented during the thematic workshop, is available [here](#)) - are needed to foster digital transformation and ensure universal meaningful connectivity. In March 2020, the government of **Poland** adopted the **National Broadband Plan**, setting goals to be achieved by the end of 2025 and aimed at extending 5G

coverage to all urban areas of the country by the said deadline. According to the Plan, by 2025 Poles will have universal access to internet at a minimum of 100 Mb/s bandwidth or higher. In addition, internet with a minimum of 1 Gb/s bandwidth will be available in selected areas seen as the driving force for social and economic development such as schools and universities, transportation hubs, areas with high demand for public e-services as well as companies heavily utilizing internet in their business. The government further allocated investments totaling 1.5 billion euros to implement an **Operational Digital Program** and connect 2 million households currently lacking access to the country's extensive fiber network.

- The COVID-19 pandemic largely affected the job market's structure, its underlying rules and mechanisms. Boosting national innovation ecosystems, fostering the acquisition of digital skills (particularly for young people, women, vulnerable groups), improving business models driving activities of Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs) became central priorities for **Albania** to continue grow and stay competitive in the global economy. Particularly, the country's **Start-up and Innovation Program** supports training of young people who aim to start their own business, while granting funds to SMEs to increase their investments in research and development (R&D) for innovation. In this regard, the country's Council of Ministers is about to sign the draft of a new law for start-ups, introducing tax incentives for innovators and fostering training opportunities in multiple ICT-related subjects. Additionally, a **Multi-Functional Center** was established in Tirana and allowed for the implementation of the project **TUMO**, designed to engage high school students in coding courses and digital skills trainings, fostering participation of Albanian women in job-related online courses and teaching the country's artisans and manufacturers how to sell their products internationally through the use of ICT solutions and e-commerce platforms.
- In Albania, 95% of public services are provided online. **E-Albania.al** is the national e-government portal, offering video tutorials and infographics to educate citizens on how to practically access online government services. The **Albanian National Agency of Information Society** provides ICT solutions for the public sector and is responsible for training employees who are working in the country's Public Administration (PA) so that they can make the best use of e-government solutions, fostering citizens' prioritization and facilitation in access.
- **Tech Space** is a digital innovation hub located at the center of Tirana. It is a budget funded initiative and constitutes a co-working space accessible to national ICT start-up founders and STEM students for free. The center offers informative sessions, trainings and workshops on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Blockchain. It also financed and promoted the incubation program "**Start-up Program – Road Map to Silicon Valley**" to advance start-ups development, share advice and best practices on start-ups funding with key experts in the sector.
- In **Hungary**, ITU Office for Europe provided support in the roll out of the ITU 2020 Global **Guidelines for Child Online Protection (COP)**. After translation of the materials in the country's official language by national stakeholders, the Guidelines were launched on 3 December 2020, with the Hungarian Ministry of Innovation and Technology. Additionally, the "**Sango and me: Internet safety through drawing**" competition was launched at the national level, in order to raise awareness on Child Online Protection. Children between the ages of 9 and 12 were invited to share their artwork showing how Sango, ITU mascot for COP, helped them navigate the online world safely and productively. Following the success of this initiative, a new "Sango and Me" competition has just been launched, pursuing the same objective to raise awareness on online safety. A series of trainings and conferences targeting Parents and Educators on Child Online Protection, using ITU COP Guidelines, were also held.

- In **Serbia**, improved social inclusion and enhanced investments in digital skills development and accessibility constitute key requirements. In 2017, digital textbooks were introduced in all schools, while coding and programming became mandatory subjects since primary education. Investments to advance adults' digital skills are needed to guarantee access to ICT-based tools and platforms for all social groups. The **ITU Study on the Assessment of Digital Accessibility Policies in Serbia** will provide an overview of digital accessibility policies and initiatives in the country, framing a set of best practices and recommendations to foster advancements in the domains of e-government, e-health and e-education.
- ITU and the Government of **Estonia** developed the [GovStack initiative](#), an expert, community-driven and multi-stakeholder effort aimed at deriving common technical practice and understanding on fundamental reusable and interoperable digital components within a common cross-government agency architectural view, called "**Building Blocks**". The initiative's central objective is to foster the creation of open-source domain-driven micro services to build more human-centered digital solutions. Low-income countries and low-experienced people can easily access these services. The project can change the way the public sector dialogues with the government and is aimed at building a more human-centered digital world.

3. CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe

Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of Regional Office for Europe, ITU, and Moderator of the event, thanked contributing speakers from Poland, Albania, Hungary, Serbia and Estonia, participants and organizers of 2021 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum. He reaffirmed how, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, 5G and broadband coverage need to be scaled up to ensure universal access to ICT-based tools and digital platforms, making the internet connection faster, while reaching countries' remote and underserved areas. Furthermore, fostering investments in new start-ups and promoting initiatives aimed at ensuring acquisition of digital skills and literacy will allow to match the post-COVID-19 job market's demands, aligning workers' skills with required job-related practical expertise. He then reaffirmed the key role of COP guidelines, policies and regulations in helping children, parents and educators understand the importance of protecting internet users below the age of 18 from the risks of cyberbullying and online violence. Finally, towards achievement of WSIS Action Lines and ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe, governments are called to integrate digital accessibility priorities into national policies and programs, framing a set of best practices and recommendations to ensure universal access to digital tools and platforms. As presented over the course of the thematic workshop, Mr. Ponder reiterated how online government services should be extensively provided by introducing trainings for PA employees, websites guidelines for citizens, human-centered digital solutions for users.

Mr. Ponder concluded emphasizing the work of ITU towards achievement of the five Regional Initiatives for Europe in accordance with the WSIS Action Lines and the 17 SDGs. Specifically, he exemplified existing interlinkages between ITU Regional Initiatives and WSIS Action Lines and reaffirmed the need to adopt a cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to achieve the SDGs through ICTs by 2030. He highlighted how **EUR1** is directly linked to **WSIS Action Lines C2** and **C11**, responding to the urgent requirement of developing and strengthening national, regional and international broadband network infrastructure to provide adequate capacity to foster universal access to last generation ICT-based services. He highlighted how

coordination of efforts in the domain of **EUR2** fosters achievement of **WSIS Action Line C1**, requiring all governments and stakeholders to increasingly promote ICTs access and use and **Action Lines C7**, facilitating the introduction of ICT applications to digitalize government services, enhancing e-learning opportunities, creating reliable, timely, high quality and affordable healthcare and health information systems, and ensuring the systematic dissemination of information related to ICTs for agriculture. Finally, ITU work undertaken under **EUR3** contributes to **WSIS Action Lines C3, C4 and C11**, aimed at fostering the creation of an inclusive information society, enhancing capacity building and guaranteeing universal development of digital skills and literacy. On the same grounds, the underlying objectives of **EUR4** match **WSIS Action Lines C5, C6, C11** by building confidence and security in the use of ICTs, creating an enabling environment, and fostering international cooperation as a successful way forward to enhance digitalization and digitization processes in the region. Improvements towards **EUR5** allow to achieve **WSIS Action Lines C1, C6, C11**, enabling the implementation of national e- strategies through multi-stakeholder partnerships and creating environments conducive to infrastructural development projects and definition of international agreements for global cooperation.