Youth Internet Governance Forum Germany

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Demands for a Digital, Sustainable New Beginning in 2020

Besides many crises, 2020 has also brought pleasant surprises for us: Germany experienced an unexpected surge in technological development. At the same time, worldwide greenhouse gases are falling by almost 20 % due to industrial shutdowns. This year, thus, reflects two developments that can no longer be separated: Digitization and Sustainability.

As a result, we wondered whether existing positive synergies between these can be further enhanced. For this reason, the Youth IGF Germany hosted a session on September 10, 2020, as part of this year's IGF Germany on the topic of "Digital New Start 2020 - Sustainable New Beginning for Economy and Society?". The goal of the interactive format was to develop solution-oriented questions and calls-to-action together with the participants on where the forced acceleration of digitization in 2020 can benefit sustainable development in Germany. The definition of the UN Sustainable Development Goals was used as a basis for discussion and enriched by lightning talks by our experts from science, civil society and youth. Panelists included Eric Hohennadel, pupil at the Klicksafe e.V. Youth Panel, Kerstin Fritzsche, Head of Research on Digitization at the Research Institute for Futures Studies and Technology Assessment (IZT), and Sophia Bachmann and Felix Kaminski, German Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development to the UN.

As a result of the session, this document consolidates the demands of the panelists, participants and the Youth IGF Germany:

Education and Society

1. COVID-19 has highlighted and reinforced inequalities in our society. Measures must therefore be taken to **overcome the digital divide**.
    a. Women in particular participate less in the digital space, even in 2020. For a sustainable transformation, the **digital gender gap** must be addressed.
    b. **Schools and universities** are particularly affected by these developments: The lack of **technical equipment** and preparation of **digital pedagogical concepts** has led to increased educational injustice. Students without adequate equipment need special support from the state. **Digital literacy** among teachers and students must be promoted early on. Progress in **e-learning** should be maintained even after COVID-19.
    c. At the same time, low-threshold opportunities must be created for seniors to participate digitally. **Campaigns and educational** offers are necessary.

2. Digital sustainability is only one component of transformative resilience. It must be conceived together with social cohesion, crisis resilience, and global social justice. In **collaboration with various disciplines and stakeholders**, this can be achieved - and requires a new way of thinking from each individual.

3. Digital self-determination requires the choice of the individual: Therefore, the use of **digital products must be voluntary** and the **protection of privacy** must be guaranteed at all times.

Economy and Infrastructure

4. **Remote work** has proven itself for employees and employers. Wherever possible, this flexibility in working should be permanently available.

5. The transformation towards durable, recyclable equipment and transparent supply chains, while complying with international agreements based on the model of a **circular economy**, is necessary to counter the effects of electronic waste.

6. Only those who have access can participate. The expansion of affordable, nationwide **broadband network access** is imperative. State-of-the-art standards such as IPv6 should be used.

7. The development and promotion **of open data and open source software** is necessary to guarantee in particular small and medium-sized enterprises independence from a small group of dominant software corporations.

Environment

8. Despite some positive aspects, digitization as such does not improve the ecological footprint. For this reason, the information and communication industry needs to make a **permanent commitment to resource protection** beyond 2020.

9. In particular, measures are needed to **contain the impact of the operation** of resource-intensive data centers and global supply chains for the Internet as well as for the manufacture of electronic equipment.

10. In this context, **modern technologies such as fiber optics**, which are less harmful to the environment than mobile broadband communication in terms of streaming and video conferences, for example, must be promoted by the state.

11. The state must ensure that the **sustainability development goals** are permanently adhered to and evaluated.

These demands clearly show that digitization and sustainability are interdependent. It is essential to translate the lessons learned from the crisis year 2020 into action. Therefore, we invite you and call on the relevant stakeholders to support us in fulfilling this transformation.