



Strategic realignment of the BMZ's digital policy

Why digital policy is important from a development policy stance

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has stated that the **Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved by 2030 only if significant breakthroughs are made in digital development**. Digitalisation is thus pivotal to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Yet **almost half of the world's population** (primarily in the Global South) still have **no access to the internet**, putting them at a massive disadvantage in terms of their development. This is precisely why Svenja Schulze, Germany's Federal Development Minister, declared the **digital transformation** a key focus for the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). **Prioritisation of the digital transformation** has led to a realignment of the BMZ's digital policy.

In the context of Germany's national Digital Strategy

In September 2022, the German government adopted a **national Digital Strategy**, which provides for the development of a strategy for international digital policy. In line with this strategy, the BMZ is striving for a **digital transformation** that integrates our partner countries into a globally open internet and fair data markets, in addition to offering them a **people-centred digital policy with European standards as an alternative** to the geopolitical race that is under way between the state-centred Chinese model and the market-centred US model.

The two pillars of the BMZ's new digital policy

1. Clear positioning for social, environmental and feminist digital policy

The BMZ does not support digitalisation as an end in itself. It promotes a sustainable digital transformation that conserves resources, fights hunger and poverty, prevents pandemics and explicitly supports women. In a nutshell, the BMZ is committed to **social, environmental and feminist digital policy**. The BMZ's digital policy is based on the following cornerstones:

- 1. Promoting digital public goods and infrastructure ('structures'):** Our goal is to support the **digital sovereignty** of citizens, companies and public institutions, enabling them to take independent action and decisions in the digital sphere. Digital sovereignty presupposes **effective, secure infrastructure** that should be based on open and reusable ICT building blocks with a view to digitalising public and private services. The BMZ is already working with international partners such as Estonia, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL)

in the **GovStack Initiative** and is planning to use a platform to step up support for the **funding of digital public goods and infrastructure**.

2. **Promoting fair regulation of the digital economy ('standards')**: The BMZ's digital policy projects disseminate the knowledge of regulation needed to promote a fair digital transformation in partner countries. We believe that **European standards** are the **gold standard** that should guide our activities. The **Smart Africa Digital Academy** (SADA), which the BMZ is funding together with the World Bank, offers training courses that provide decision-makers from the worlds of politics, business and civil society in Africa with the skills they need to actively shape the digital transformation. **Regulating internet tariffs**, for instance, can improve a population's access to the internet.
3. **Promoting digital skills ('skills')**: The ongoing digital transformation is increasing **demand for workers with digital skills in all sectors of the economy**. Equipping young people with professional digital skills is key to transforming and strengthening labour markets in the partner countries of German development cooperation. The BMZ uses several initiatives to help foster and develop professional digital skills. One of these is **atingi, a digital learning platform** that young people can use to develop their digital skills and thus improve their prospects on the labour market.

2. A wide range of cooperation services: '[digital.global]' – the network for the digital transformation

In **December 2022**, Federal Development Minister Svenja Schulze joined forces with the GIZ and the KfW, implementing organisations of German development cooperation, to launch '[digital.global]', [a digital transformation network](#). The network offers partners from the worlds of politics, business, civil society and academia a **one-stop shop** for cooperation and networking opportunities with partners in the Global South. It pools all of **BMZ's cooperation formats**, including the Make IT Alliance business network and the digilab innovation lab. The network harnesses the innovative power of the digital industry **in the Global South**. After all, 'analogue' economies, companies and governments are a thing of the past. Cooperation in our partner countries also always means **developing digitally transformed economies**. There is **huge potential for cooperation** between private sector players on the digital stage and our partner countries. Potential areas of activity include **digitalised social systems, e-agriculture, e-health, Industry 4.0, smart energy, FinTech, e-commerce, e-government and social media**. We aim to harness the potential offered by digital solutions to help improve the lives of people in our partner countries.