



Digitalisation For A Good Life

How Digitalisation Can Help Mainstream Sustainability

Digitalisation — one of the key mega trends of our time — enables innovations and helps upscale existing ones, it accelerates processes and saves us time, it connects us and interconnects our work. On the downside, big data puts the security of personal information in jeopardy, automation makes the need for specific jobs shrink, huge amounts of energy are needed for data management and the benefits of digitalisation are not made available to everyone equally. The opportunities as well as the challenges call for an interlinkage of digitalisation to other mega trends, such as sustainability (mitigating climate change, protecting biodiversity, decreasing resource waste) and equity (make digitalisation equally available to everyone and reduce existing inequalities). This is why the CSCP implements projects collaboratively across all actors, including civil society organisations, cities and regions, companies, national governments, and intergovernmental bodies.

Our Approach for Sustainable Digitalisation

We don't have to settle for digitalisation that makes life easier only for some. At the CSCP, we see digitalisation as the transformation that economies should undergo so that they can serve our societies' higher goals – in short, digitalisation must be led by purpose. The core challenge is: How can we make sure that digitalisation drives positive social and environmental transformation, and in the process ensures that digitalisation itself becomes more sustainable?

Relevant policy frameworks currently in place also focus on digitalisation as an enabler for major social, economic, and environmental goals. The EU Green Deal aims to harness the power of digitalisation to supply clean, secure and affordable energy, accelerate the shift to smart mobility, boost circular economy, and address climate change. Following the recent pandemic, there is renewed focus on digitalisation's power to boost a green recovery and help strengthen resilience. Digitalisation can support to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in areas like good health and wellbeing, zero hunger, clean water, quality education, responsible production and consumption, and more inclusiveness of all stakeholders among others. None of these will be carried out in one leap and there is no definitive finish line. This is a transition, and therefore, as we aim for the goals, we should make sure that we leave no one and no place behind.

The CSCP has been working toward leveraging digitalisation as a means for a sustainable transformation. One of the platforms through which we are collaborating with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies and organisations around the globe is the Global Enabling Sustainability Initiative (GeSI). As a board member, a hallmark of CSCP's engagement at GeSI is the Digital with Purpose Delivering SMARTer2030 movement. Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda requires immediate change of course and joined forces with multiple actors. The Digital with Purpose movement foresees a performance framework to ensure not only commitment but also action and progress toward achieving the SDGs and is oriented toward more informed and purposeful digital technologies and their implementation. After months collaboration, we are excited to see the Digital with Purpose initiative launched on 1 June 2021 at the European Union Digital Assembly in Lisbon! We and our partners believe that technology, innovation, and collaboration can accelerate action to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement for a sustainable future for everyone!

Below, we highlight some of the areas where we have had positive impact in and want to collaborate to amplify it significantly.

Digitalisation in Support of Sustainable Lifestyles

Enabling sustainable lifestyles through collaborative and cross-sectoral work is at the heart of the CSCP. Drawing on this core expertise, we want to take full advantage of digitalisation in advancing sustainable behaviours. While digital tools are widely used to prompt new sustainable habits, there is a lack of focus on ensuring that these habits sustain and amplify over time. In our 'Mission Green' project with Vodafone we used an APP to nudge employees to behave more sustainably, consume more responsibly, and embrace work and life practices that preserve and protect the environment. We aim to pave new ways for using digital tools beyond nudging and toward long-lasting sustainable habit formation. For example, drawing on our successful project Urban Up, we are keen on utilising digital technologies to foster shared consumption. From co-created commons to rental schemes, digital tools can help make the case for sharing as an easy and both economically as well as environmentally-benefiting practice. Another relevant strand of our work focuses on building capacities and strengthening stakeholders in society that have an important role in changing behaviours toward more sustainable lifestyles. In our Academy of Change (AoC) capacity building programme, we work closely with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on integrating behaviour change tools in their daily work. Building on this successful format, we are looking forward to supporting CSOs engaged in the field of sustainability to take full advantage of digital means and maximise their impact.

Digital Responsibility in Organisations

As digital responsibility is still a relatively new concept, many aspects related to it are ill-defined. Today, organisations have to think about solutions for concrete challenges, be it to remain an attractive employer, adhere to new regulatory requirements or growing expectations from society (for example on fighting climate change). These are important aspects to remain competitive in a global economy. This is especially challenging for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), where even digitalisation itself is not always a clear-cut track. For SMEs, a first step towards responsible digitalisation is analysing the needs of all parties involved - the company, employees and customers. Our CSR.digital project, as part of the Digital Transformation Strategy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), serves as a hub for SMEs to address their digitalisation challenges and develop efficient solutions together and across sectors. In another project, Charta for Sustainable Digitalisation, we are creating a framework for orientation and action to support companies, primarily SMEs, to ensure that digital resources are used in responsible ways. In our project Competence Centre for eStandards, we focus on standards, norms and sustainability as key prerequisites for successful digitalisation processes. Networked production, circular economy, sustainable AI, data security, information exchange or improved user experience require

standards that stretch across industries. The Competence Centre brings these aspects closer to German SMEs through pilot projects, hands-on tools, and training formats. In the wake of the ongoing pandemic, we want to employ digitalisation in designing recovery packages that help SMEs modernise, become greener, and increase their resilience levels.

Digitalisation for Circular Economy and Circular Cities

To make value chains more circular, we look at processes in detail by considering at which stages of the value chain could and should companies use digital services, how extensively, and to what end? Together with organisations, we engage in finding the right approach for a whole range of goals: achieving better traceability, increasing transparency, mainstreaming circularity, improving the product portfolio, optimising the use of resources, or applying new work concepts for more productivity and work-life-balance. In our project REIF (Resource-Efficient, Economic and Intelligent Food Chain) we focus on smart food chains that reduce waste and preserve ecosystems by using Artificial Intelligence (AI). The kind of digital transformation that we are aiming means not only that digitalisation enables more sustainability, but that in the process, digital tools, services, and devices become more sustainable, too. For example, as part of our project European Topic Centre on Waste and Materials in a Green Economy – ETC/WMGE, we examine business models and policy measures that increase the lifetime of electronics and cut back on their obsolescence. On the other hand, we are working with retailers, city administrations, and civil society organisations to answer the key question: how can consumers be supported to make use of ‘the right to repair’ and ‘take-back schemes’? Both are central elements of the EU Circular Electronics Initiative as part of the Green Deal’s Circular Economy Action Plan. On behalf of the Leadership Group ‘Retailers, Consumers & Skills’ of the European Circular Stakeholder Economy Platform (ECESP), we are leading the effort to empower citizens and strengthen the skills that are needed for circular behaviors. Skills comprises a focus of our work way beyond the electronics sector. For example, at our BOOM career orientation camps, we offer a platform for teenagers and young adults to explore and acquire the type of skills that are needed for the sustainable future that we aspire. On another level, and mindful of the role of urban areas as catalysators for change, we want to bring our multi-stakeholder expertise in turning digital technologies into enablers for circular cities and regions.

The degree of transformation that digitalisation unleashes is comparable to the changes brought up by industrialisation centuries ago: the jobs landscape will change, the levels of interconnectedness will increase, and we will work and live differently. Aware that these topics are too complex to handle by single players alone we apply a holistic approach that encourages the active engagement of all relevant actors and facilitates constructive exchanges that lead to creative and impactful solutions.

If you are interested in how the CSCP can support your organisation or your project in a digital transformation process that should be participatory, driven by purpose and considering key indicators of sustainability, contact our teams directly:



Sustainable lifestyles in the digital era
ROSA STRUBE

rosa.strube@scp-centre.org



Circular Economy and Circular Cities in the digital era
CRISTINA FEDATO

cristina.fedato@scp-centre.org



Sustainable Businesses in the Digital Era
PATRICK BOTTERMANN

patrick.bottermann@scp-centre.org