

# Advancing freedom of expression in a digital world

## Digital Vision

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It is a vision with ambitious goals to make the world a better place by 2030. A more peaceful world with less poverty and greater freedoms. A world in which all people have the right to freely seek information and express their ideas. This is the vision of the United Nations' 2030 » Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals with specific targets to realize this global vision.

The digital revolution will play a decisive role in influencing the future of humanity. » By 2030, three out of four people will have access to digital information and communication technologies. But what will this digital world of the future look like? Who will have access to these technologies? Who will determine the rules of the Internet?

The ideal future could look like this: People live in a highly interconnected world where the Internet is governed by democratic norms and information is available to everyone; the rules of the Internet are transparent and Internet users play a role in shaping these rules; people are able to express themselves in the digital realm freely and without fear; and privacy is respected.

Of course, the digital world of the future may instead look bleak: While some people enjoy special privileges, others are excluded, muzzled or manipulated; the Internet is fragmented into separate national networks; authorities monitor information and communication technologies and corporations collect, store and utilize

people's digital activities for commercial purposes; only the members of a privileged elite can take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies.

This scenario would have disastrous consequences for freedom of expression and access to information around the world.

As Germany's leading international media development organization, » DW Akademie is concentrating its efforts on supporting freedom of expression and information around the world. Because digital technologies increasingly form an integral part of people's lives, our work includes strengthening freedom of expression and enhancing active citizen participation in the digital realm. Only when people have access to information and are able to freely express their ideas can they shape their own lives and have a fair chance of development.

Inspired by the idea of an open and inclusive digital realm, we at DW Akademie have developed our own vision for the digital world. This vision will flow into a digital strategy which, when implemented, will integrate digital transformation into every part of our work. Our digital strategy is based on the » German government's Digital Agenda as well as the development principles of » Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), our primary donor. DW Akademie and » our partners are embracing digital transformation and working to fulfill our digital vision.

## What we envisage: Advancing all human rights

DW Akademie puts people and people's fundamental human rights at the center of its activities, with particular emphasis on enabling marginalized groups and communities to claim and exercise their rights. A prerequisite for all individuals to enjoy their human rights is being able to form and express their own opinions.

As such, DW Akademie's work is guided by » Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which protects freedom of expression and access to information. Freedom of the press and the right to privacy are indispensable to freedom of opinion.

Here is our vision of a world where people freely express their views:

» **Freedom of expression** Every individual has the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds in order to form opinions. The Internet and other information and communications technologies strengthen freedom of expression by allowing everyone's voice to be heard. Governments and other stakeholders respect, protect and guarantee the right to freedom of expression on the Internet.

» **Freedom of the media** Media systems are dynamic networks with numerous stakeholders. These networks play a central societal role, providing for the free exchange of information and opinions. This role is especially safeguarded in the digital realm. Citizens use social media to enrich public discourse and they express their opinions publicly via digital platforms. Independent media enable valuable exchanges across social, political, ethnic and religious lines.

» **Free access to information** It is faster and easier to find, consume, produce and disseminate information thanks to digitization. Governmental authorities proactively make official information publicly available. The Internet enables people to freely access information from all available digital sources. Every individual has the right to freedom of information.

» **Right to privacy** The right to privacy is guaranteed in the digital realm, where private and confidential communications are prerequisites for realizing freedom of opinion. Users are protected from monitoring and intervention. Transparent rules regulate the storage and use of personal data and this data is only collected after individuals give explicit consent.

Article 19 aspires to a world where all media – regardless of the technology – are used to enhance social participation, especially of marginalized groups. Individuals and groups can voice their concerns in a responsible and critical manner, thereby realizing other human rights, such as the right to education. Freedom of opinion and access to information enable the participation of all citizens, allowing them to set public debate and shape their societies.

## What we do: Skillfully navigate digital transformation

DW Akademie strengthens human rights, fosters a vibrant public sphere and supports participation for all. According to its public service mandate, DW Akademie, together with its partners, supports the development of free and transparent media systems. As such, our focus is on the following » four strategic areas:



### Political and legal frameworks

#### Safeguarding digital freedom

Freedom of expression and pluralism on the Internet need to be protected by laws and policies. Within the countries where DW Akademie works, we seek to strengthen civil society's ability to effectively shape the digital realm and to claim its human rights from state and political institutions. We advise public authorities on how to guarantee freedom of expression. The right to freedom of expression

also implies the right to privacy and non-discriminatory access to the Internet. Digital security allows media makers and users to freely express themselves.

#### **Making freedom of information a reality**

In order to have an informed and critical public, information needs to be freely available. DW Akademie supports public bodies and civil society in realizing freedom of information. We moderate dialogue between government authorities, non-government organizations and the media. Together with our partners, we create advisory and informational services on how to exercise freedom of information. Public authorities and institutions provide information and make data available in digital formats while citizens make use of their right to access information.

#### **Qualification**

##### **Strengthening educational structures: learning in a digital world**

Keeping up with technological change requires life-long learning. DW Akademie advises educational and vocational institutions in implementing structural reforms to adapt to these changing needs. We advise universities on curriculum reform and the development of sustainable advanced training programs. Interactive and innovative learning opportunities with a focus on practical skills allow members of marginalized groups to gain qualifications. In this way, media professionals learn to work in a digital world in an ethically responsible manner.

##### **Exploring a changing digital landscape**

Academics research the impact of the changing digital environment on freedom of expression and information, as well as on media freedom. DW Akademie partners with universities in both the global south and north with the aim of strengthening networks. These partnerships and networking make expertise and knowledge available to a wide pool of stakeholders, including those from the media, business and civil society sectors. Media organizations and initiatives put research findings into practice.

#### **Professionalism and economic viability of the media sector**

##### **Supporting professionalism in a digital world**

The evolving digital landscape presents media professionals with constantly changing ethical, technical, journalistic and economic challenges. Through its consultancy activities, DW Akademie helps those involved in the production and dissemination of information

to develop the professional skills and structures they need to meet these challenges: media workers acquire or increase skills in new areas of journalism and information technology; media organizations and institutions create sustainable organizational structures; and civil society organizations work more professionally. We create networks of people and initiatives who work cooperatively to advance the right to freedom of expression and information in innovative ways.

##### **Strengthening media viability**

Within the media industry, the digital revolution is turning traditional business models on their heads. In order to seize the opportunities for freedom of expression offered by a digital world, media organizations and initiatives develop viable media structures. DW Akademie supports media organizations and other initiatives in the development of innovative and sustainable business models, thereby enabling independent reporting and increased media diversity.

#### **Participation in society**

##### **Boosting civic participation and public scrutiny**

The Internet and other digital technologies enable citizens to influence public debate. DW Akademie supports its partners in making the public sphere as inclusive as possible. The Internet opens up opportunities to seek information, identify abuses and demand accountability. Independent media projects enable constructive dialogue between the government and society. Alternative, Internet-based media act as a corrective to repressive or polarized media systems. Global cooperation and new forms of digital public spheres flourish. We strengthen such initiatives and create networks linking them.

##### **Strengthening digital media and information literacy**

Social participation is not only dependent on technical access to information and communication technologies. Digital literacy also determines the ability of people to realize their right to freedom of expression and information. DW Akademie is committed to ensuring that marginalized groups and communities acquire the necessary digital media and information literacy in order to independently, critically and responsibly communicate, regardless of social barriers. Our goal is for marginalized individuals to make use of social media in a thoughtful and self-determined manner. At the same time, DW Akademie supports its partners in adapting their services to match the different languages, cultures and technological needs of their users.

## How we work: joining forces with our partners

Just like our partner organizations, DW Akademie operates in a constantly changing environment, a characteristic of the digital age. Successfully navigating these changes is an integral part of our activities. As an organization, we are constantly learning and developing our methods as well as supporting our partners to do so too. We work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams and are increasing our technological expertise. In this, we are guided by the following principles:

### **We promote lifelong learning, together with our partners, for the digital world**

Fostering freedom of expression and information in a digital world requires all stakeholders to engage in constant learning and to innovate. DW Akademie accepts this challenge. We encourage our teams and our partners to adopt new digital approaches, explore innovative technologies and actively reflect on their experiences. The knowledge and expertise of our staff is accessible to all. We provide our staff and partners with participatory learning opportunities and support the acquisition of digital media and information literacy skills both inside and outside of the organization.

### **We make use of DW's expertise**

As an integral part of Germany's international broadcaster, we carry DW's expertise and experience into the world and make it available to our partners.

### **We engage with new kinds of partners**

Internet activists and non-governmental organizations are relevant and active players in the public sphere. DW Akademie partners with stakeholders from civil society, business and government, as well as global and regional initiatives and networks.

### **We adapt our methods to an evolving digital landscape**

DW Akademie trains its staff and partners so that they are able to deal with a constantly evolving digital environment. As such, we are continuously adapting our methods. We have a process-oriented approach to capacity building and use a diversity of methods. We strengthen innovation and evaluate the methods used in society, government and business to navigate digital transformation.

### **We embrace knowledge sharing and transparency**

Openness and transparency are essential pillars of our work. We make knowledge easily accessible to our partners, target groups and our own staff. We actively document our work for external use. We exchange ideas with our partners and learn from each other. We create networks with our partners and the expert community. We make data and information accessible and explain the motives and objectives of our work. We publish our media studies, evaluations and data, when possible, under a Creative Commons license and in open formats.

### **We develop and facilitate dialogue**

We support our partners in advancing dialogue and debate about the future of the Internet. We develop our partners' ability to interact and communicate with technology companies and public bodies. We see ourselves as independent facilitators of dialogue and of decision-making processes. We especially encourage partnerships among initiatives in the global south and the strengthening of a social dialogue on human rights.

DW Akademie's digital strategy is dynamic. Together with our partners, we will continue to develop our strategy in response to a constantly changing digital world.

## DW Akademie

DW Akademie is Germany's leading organization for international media development. Its experts have been supporting and strengthening free and independent media worldwide since 1965.