



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Digital Agenda for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS)

Digital opportunities for global prospects



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Management summary

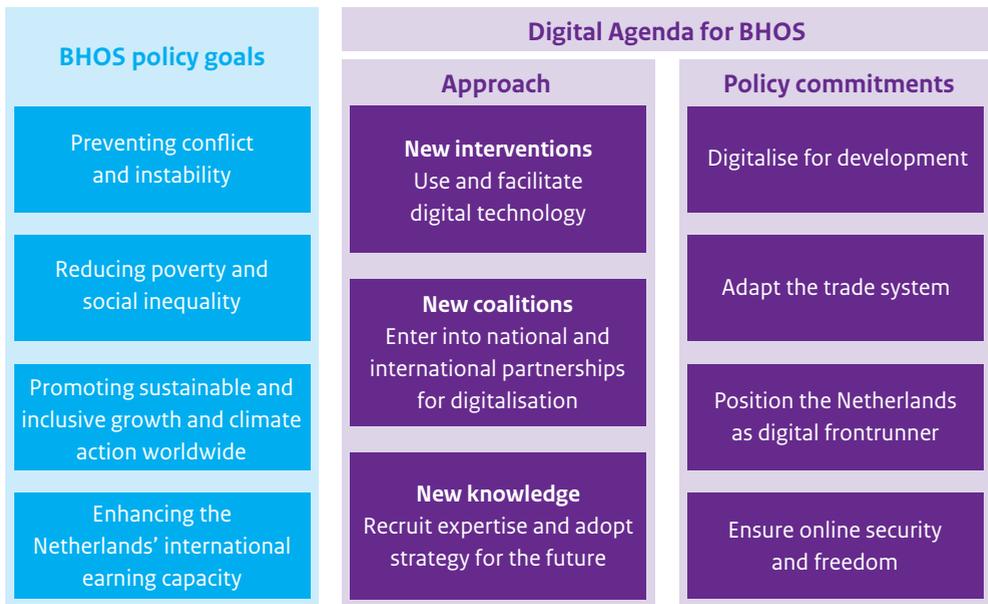
The rapid development of digital technology impacts on all long-term goals of our foreign trade and development cooperation (BHOS) policy. The BHOS Digital Agenda aims to achieve BHOS policy goals faster and more effectively by responding to the opportunities and threats presented by digitalisation. It follows on from the 2018 Dutch Digitalisation Strategy¹, and is in line with the policy and financial frameworks of the BHOS policy document ‘Investing in Global Prospects’.

Approach

The Agenda takes the following approach:

1. New interventions to use and facilitate digitalisation
2. New coalitions to promote digitalisation
3. New knowledge to translate the impact of ongoing digitalisation into actions

The chart below sets out the structure of the Agenda.



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Policy commitments

Access to digital technology creates boundless new opportunities and can boost sustainable, inclusive growth and promote peace and stability. The Netherlands is therefore investing in people’s digital prospects, in particular in the focus regions identified in the BHOS policy document. The Agenda’s main aims are to exploit opportunities through education and work, to promote

¹ [Dutch Digitalisation Strategy, Parliamentary Paper 26 643 no. 541.](#)

digitalisation for robust, sustainable food production, to strengthen civil society and to use digital technologies for people in need.

In order to achieve a future-proof trade and investment system, it needs to be adapted to the rapid development of the digital economy. Digitalisation is leading to an explosive growth in cross-border data flows, trade in digital services and trade in goods through digital platforms. Current tensions in the trade system and the race for worldwide technological dominance are making it very difficult to make progress in multilateral negotiations. The divergent attitudes of the world's largest economic blocs – China, the EU and the US – to fundamental interests and values like the protection of personal data and privacy contribute to this deadlock. It is essential that the EU uses its economic and political clout to set standards for digital trade. The Netherlands plays an active role in this and is committed to facilitate developing countries' participation in multilateral negotiations. The Netherlands also supports developing countries in their efforts to build a digital economy and to reap the benefits of digital trade.

In order to maintain its strong competitive position, the Netherlands needs to remain at the forefront of digital innovations and the development of new technological applications. In line with the Dutch Digitalisation Strategy and the Artificial Intelligence Strategic Action Plan (SAPAI)² the government is committed within the Trade Agenda³ to promoting the Netherlands at international level as a high-tech, innovative country, and as Europe's digital frontrunner. The focus is on startups in particular. The government is also working with the public-private network on the use of digital means to optimise services for international entrepreneurs.

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Digital security and freedom online are important conditions for a smoothly functioning digital economy and society. Cybersecurity, economic security, human rights safeguards and data privacy are major themes. With its BHOS policy, the Netherlands aims to support governments in developing countries in the field of legislation, and to help civil society organisations safeguard their digital security and enhance their online freedom. The Netherlands also supports the debate on responsible use of data by governments, businesses and organisations.

A dynamic agenda

Digital technology is developing fast, bringing both opportunities and risks. At the same time, people cannot all benefit equally from digitalisation. For this reason, BHOS policy needs to invest in the right enabling conditions to exploit opportunities for digitalisation, for global prospects.

A dynamic agenda is needed, geared to early awareness and identification of trends, with revision of policy where needed, and an ongoing focus on updating interventions to increase their effectiveness. The BHOS Digital Agenda will therefore continue to develop, in ongoing cooperation with our national and international partners.

² The Artificial Intelligence Strategic Action Plan will be sent to the House of Representatives before the summer of 2019.

³ [Trade Agenda, Parliamentary Paper 34 952 no. 30.](#)



Trends and developments

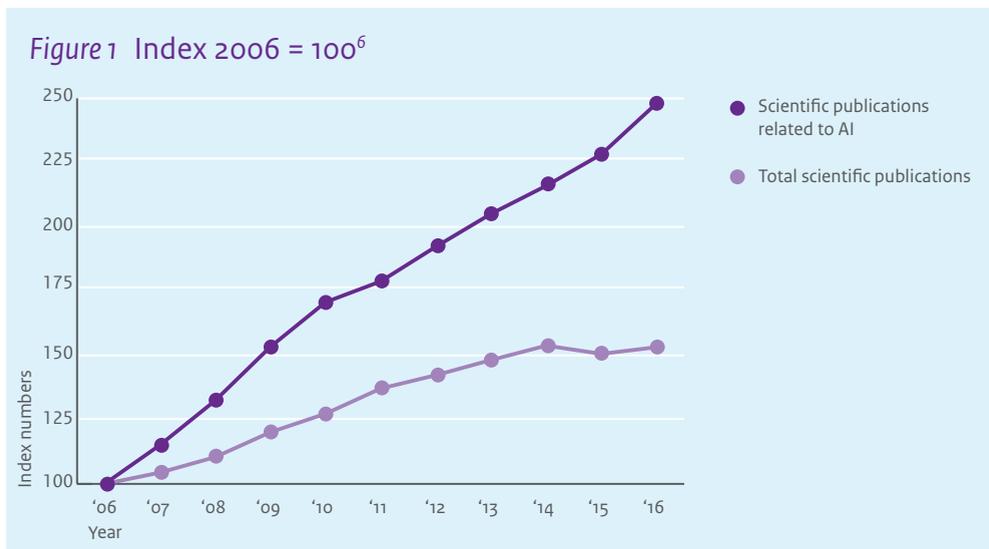
Digitalisation affects everyone

Practically everyone uses digital technology in one form or another in their daily lives. That applies to consumers ordering products online, motorists using satellite navigation systems and farmers basing their decisions on a reliable weather forecast. Digitalisation sets itself apart from other technologies through its enormous impact on society and the speed with which the process is unfolding. After the invention of telephony, it took 75 years before 100 million people had telephone connections, but Instagram had the same number of users within two years of starting up.

More and more people are connected online. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) around 96% of the world's population live in an area where mobile networks are available, in 90% of cases 3G or faster.⁴ The reach and speed of the internet will increase in the years to come. By the end of 2018, more than 51% of the world's population were using the internet, compared to 15.8% in 2005. Growth was fastest in developing countries, where 45.3% of the population now use the internet. In 2005, that figure was just 7.7%.⁵

Digitalisation is set to take another leap forward in the near future. The influence of digitalisation on the economy is so radical that we now talk about a Fourth Industrial Revolution. In the next ten years, various crucial developments are expected to converge, i.e. rapid internet connections, widespread mobile technology, a glut of cheap data, development of the Internet of Things, an exponential increase in computer processing power and, above all, the further development of artificial intelligence. This will lead to numerous new innovations, whose impact we cannot yet foresee.

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4 On the basis of ITU Statistics, 11-12-2018

5 [International Telecommunication Union \(2018\), leaving no one offline.](#)

6 OECD calculations based on Scopus Custom Data, Elsevier, Version 1.2018 and 2018 Scimago Journal Rank.

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a concept in which systems and equipment respond to data or stimuli from their environment and take autonomous decisions on their basis. There are two types of AI – systems that can reason on the basis of data and algorithms (i.e. recognising patterns in text, speech and images) and systems that can learn and adapt their own algorithms. These systems are rapidly gaining ground, and could lead to serious disruption in the years to come. Applications are increasingly leading to controversy, for example on issues such as lack of transparency, unpredictability of decisions, consequences for repetitive work and ownership of data, as well as privacy, security and cybersecurity. They also create a selective and thus often distorted view of reality. Artificial intelligence affects the foundations of our society.

Source: ECP – *Het verhaal van digitaal*, 2018 (in Dutch)

And brings achievement of the SDGs within reach

Digital innovations bring new solutions for the SDGs within reach and increase productivity.

An increasing number of businesses and knowledge institutions are working on digital applications specifically targeting the SDGs, to meet sustainability challenges or improve food production in regions affected by climate change, for example. Businesses can also use digital technologies to improve coordination of production, workers become more productive and government authorities can provide services at lower rates. Potentially, applications of new digital technologies lead to higher productivity in every sector, enabling information to be shared faster and at less expense while cutting costs for small businesses.

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Sustainable finance for healthcare

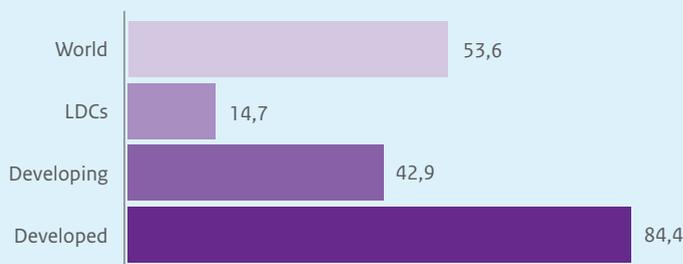
By linking financial innovation and digital technologies, new opportunities arise for the development of high-quality healthcare services in developing countries. Through close cooperation with PharmAccess and CarePay, the Netherlands is contributing to the development of the M-Tiba online platform which brings together clients, insurers and care institutions for the funding and delivery of high-quality care, for the most vulnerable people in particular. In Nigeria and Kenya, the online platform can count on widespread support from local government authorities which play a catalytic role in mobilising private investment in healthcare.

Digitalisation leads to equal opportunities and greater personal freedom, and enables a more inclusive approach to the SDGs. Access to the internet gives inexpensive access to social media and online forums, to information and knowledge, thus increasing opportunities for freedom of opinion and knowledge acquisition. Digitalisation also ensures cheaper, more rapid collection and analysis of data, enabling aid interventions to target the people most in need. An example is the use of a digital identification system for people using shelter facilities in the region.

Digitalisation presents new opportunities for work and income, but not for everyone to the same degree

Digitalisation presents numerous opportunities for inclusive development and equal opportunities, but does not automatically lead to inclusive outcomes. We need to be vigilant, since there is a great risk of digitalisation leading to even more inequality worldwide. The digital divide by income, age, level of education, geographical location and gender is persistent. Women and rural populations in developing countries have far fewer opportunities to benefit from digitalisation. As yet, digitalisation is making only a limited contribution to improving the quality of life of vulnerable groups in developing countries. The reason for this is not only poor IT infrastructure and digital skills, but also a lack of appropriate national legislation and international agreements to facilitate digitalisation.

Figure 2 Proportion of households with internet access (2017)⁷



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In the future, digitalisation will lead to entirely new types of jobs. There is considerable international debate on the future of work. Jobs that can be done by computers and robots are expected to disappear.⁸ They will be replaced by new jobs, which largely depend on digital skills combined with human skills like problem-solving skills. Without investment in ICT infrastructure and digital skills and without adequate national and international institutions, the digital divide and with it income inequality will increase both within and between countries. That does not only apply to developing countries. In industrialised countries too, some people are finding it difficult to adjust to the digital age.

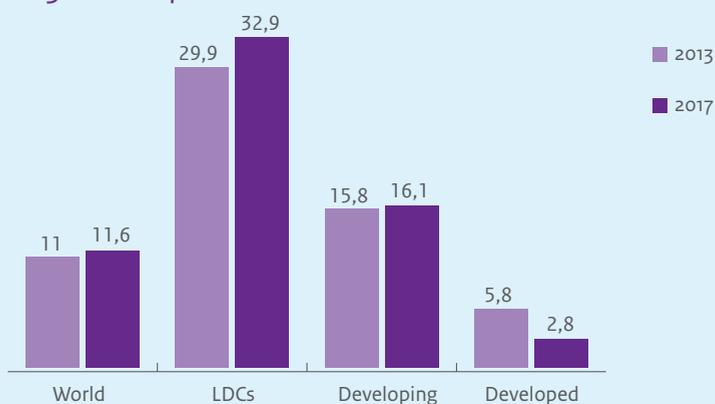
⁷ ITU (2017), ICT facts and figures.

⁸ [World Economic Forum \(2018\), the Future of Jobs](#); [World Bank \(2019\), World Development Report](#).

Women & the digital economy

Digitalisation presents opportunities for inclusive development, in particular for women. Digitalisation gives women access to goods and services, or enables women to produce and offer them. In practice however, women are often unable to exploit these opportunities, due to low income, lack of education and social and cultural factors. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women are 41% less likely to use mobile internet services than men.⁹ In Europe that percentage is 4%.

Figure 3 Difference in internet usage between men and women (%), 2013 and 2017¹⁰



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Digitalisation is changing the world economy and world trade

Digitalisation is having a huge impact on trade and businesses' revenue models. The economist Richard Baldwin even describes current developments as a new phase of globalisation¹¹. Digitalisation is leading to the emergence of new markets, while other markets are disappearing fast. Cross-border data flows grew by a factor 45 in the 2005-2014 period.¹² Data flows and the trade in services are replacing goods flows. To give an example: instead of having a product produced in Asia and then shipped to Europe, digital product data is now being sent to the location where the product is needed, and where it is then produced. The extent to which countries are able to enter new markets with new applications of digital technologies will have a great impact on their competitiveness.

9 GSMA (2019), the Mobile Gender Gap Report.

10 ITU (2017), facts and figures

11 Richard Baldwin, Globalisation 4.0. (2019)

12 McKinsey, Digital Globalization (2016).

Digitalisation gives rise to questions and problems in relation to issues such as security, privacy and the protection of personal data. While cross-border data flows are crucial for competitiveness, we are now seeing that a growing number of national laws and regulations on protection of personal data, privacy and security are fencing them in. There are fundamental differences of opinion on this matter in various countries and these are difficult to reconcile. What is more, the international debate on the impact of digitalisation on world trade and how the multilateral trade system should be adapted to it is only just getting off the ground.

European competitiveness

The Netherlands benefits from a smoothly functioning, competitive European digital economy – as a market and to counterbalance growing international competition. The European Union should ensure a level playing field and a buoyant internal market and reap the benefits of digitalisation to that end. Apart from strengthening the internal market, and enforcing strict competition rules, European research and innovation policy and a modern industry policy are essential to enable Europe to maintain and enhance its competitiveness. In its paper on European competitiveness¹³ the government indicates how the European Commission can work with member states to take the necessary steps forward.

The Netherlands as digital frontrunner

Global Innovation Index: 2nd place (2018)¹⁴

Global Competitiveness Index: 6th place (2018)¹⁵

Worldwide ICT exports: 10th place (2016)¹⁶

EU Digital Economy and Society Index: 1st place for connectivity, 4th place on the overall index (2018)¹⁷

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Digital security and information reliability are essential

Individuals, businesses and civil society organisations are making increasing use of digital technologies and should be aware of their vulnerability. Civil society organisations that defend the rights of vulnerable groups have recently been targeted by hackers. It is also a well-known fact that social media platforms can contribute either intentionally or unintentionally to the dissemination of misinformation. Like governments, any party that collects and manages data or has digitised crucial processes needs to invest in good security and responsible data handling. Many developing countries lack the capacity for this, and should be made more aware of the need to take measures. This is even more important in light of the current trend towards shrinking space for civil society in developing countries.

¹³ [Government stance on European Competitiveness, Parliamentary Paper 30 821, no. 73 \(in Dutch\).](#)

¹⁴ [Global Innovation Index \(2018\).](#)

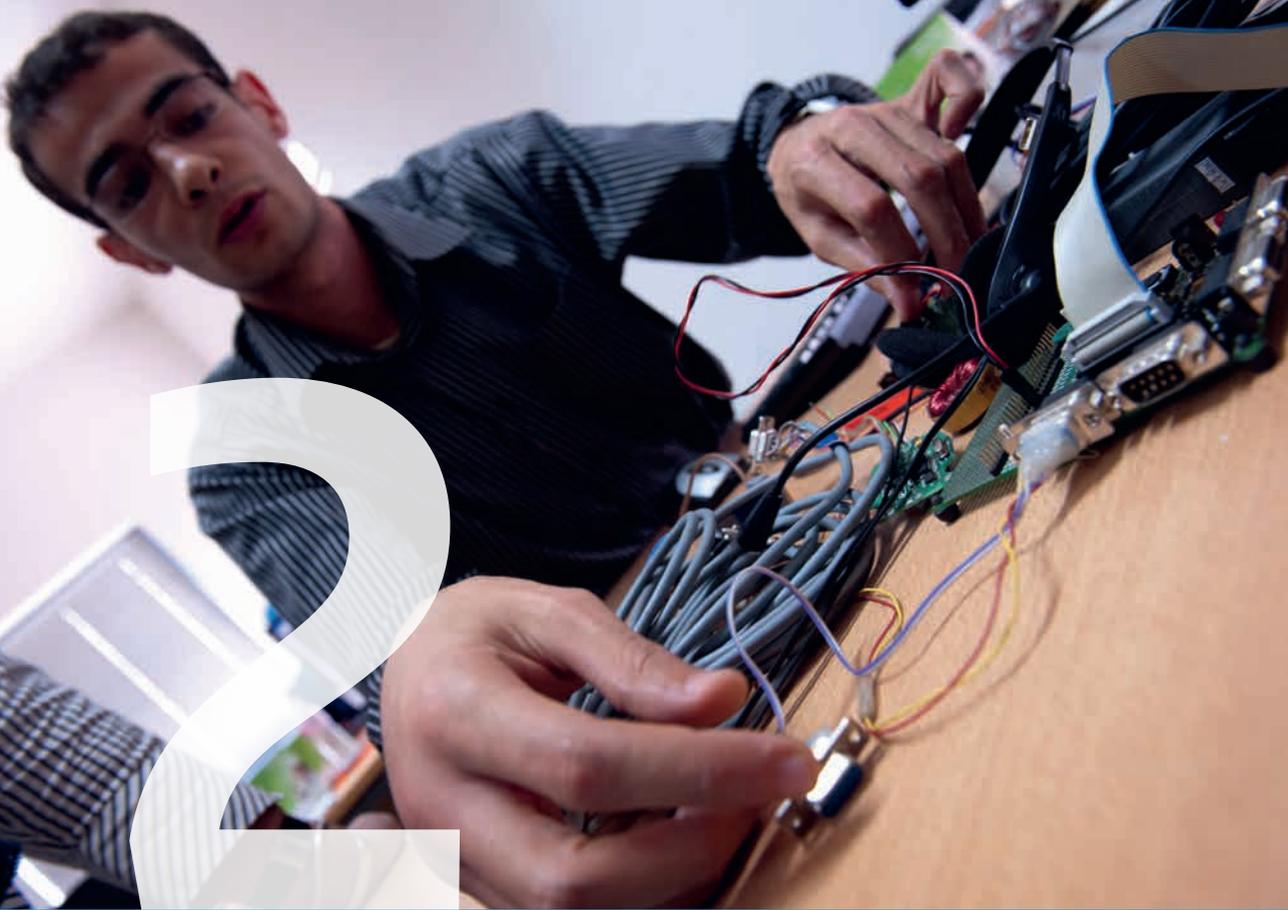
¹⁵ [World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Report \(2018\).](#)

¹⁶ [OECD, Digital Economy Outlook \(2017\).](#)

¹⁷ [European Commission, the Digital Economy and Society Index \(2018\).](#)

Policy implications

Digitalisation greatly influences the prospects of people in developing countries and the Netherlands' international economic position. Access to ICT and digital technologies is increasing, including in developing countries. Digitalisation enables a more inclusive and more effective approach to achieving the SDGs. Dutch businesses can strengthen their competitive position by working on innovative applications of digital technology, for example to meet global challenges. Digitalisation creates scope for new revenue models, and leads to the next stage of globalisation, characterised by fast-growing digital trade. But international trade regulations need to move forward or be adapted to keep pace. At the same time, the digital divide by income, gender and geographical location needs to be addressed, and measures need to be taken to prevent existing inequalities from increasing. A safe, responsible digital environment is a prerequisite for both the Netherlands and developing countries if the opportunities presented by digitalisation are to be exploited.

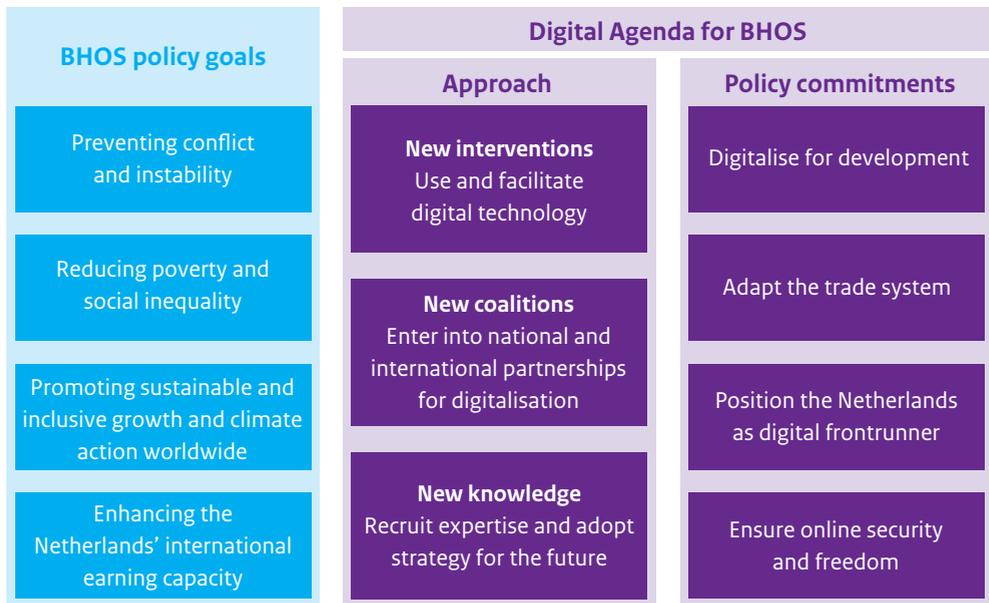


Approach to digitalisation in BHOS policy

Digitalisation creates opportunities and poses risks for the achievement of the BHOS policy goals as set out in the policy document ‘Investing in Global Prospects’. In responding to digitalisation now and in the future, the BHOS Digital Agenda adopts the following three-track strategy:

1. **New interventions to use and facilitate digitalisation**
2. **New coalitions to promote digitalisation on the right scale**
3. **New knowledge to transform the impact of digitalisation into trade and development prospects**

Chapters three to six examine policy commitments in more detail. The BHOS Digital Agenda is dynamic and can be extended or adapted to keep pace with new developments in digital technology.



New interventions

The Netherlands wants to promote digitalisation to benefit its international economic position and the position of people in developing countries. It also wants to use digital technology to strengthen its interventions. This calls for a stronger focus on the impact of digitalisation and on possible applications of digital technology in all parts of BHOS policy – to determine whether and how digitalisation can be of influence, whether a specific approach is needed to get it on track and whether digital technology can be used to achieve our goals more effectively.

Commitments:

- Focus on the opportunities and risks of digitalisation in all components of BHOS policy.
- In designing new programmes or activities within development cooperation policy, we are increasingly taking account of the opportunities and risks presented by digital technology. The Netherlands will apply the Principles for Digital Development¹⁸ which enjoy widespread international support.
- Learn from the experiences of others. The Netherlands is scaling up digitalisation for development cooperation through the two-year Information Technology for Development (IT4D.nl) programme. This programme presents inspiring digital for development applications and shares knowledge on the subject, including at international level. The result is a portfolio of activities that genuinely exploit opportunities of digitalisation.

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New coalitions

The Netherlands is forming or joining new coalitions with like-minded partners and international or multilateral partnerships aimed at promoting digitalisation. At European level, the Netherlands is active in coalitions relating to the digital single market (DSM) strategy, which are responsible for setting important frameworks for digitalisation. International coalitions are needed to create support, for example for new regulations on cross-border data flows, and to organise an effective, integrated approach to promoting digitalisation in developing countries. Of importance to developing countries are programmes that contribute to the digital ecosystem and a smoothly functioning ICT infrastructure, with relevant services, in tandem with interventions relating to international legislation and knowledge and skills.¹⁹

Commitments:

- Joining the World Bank's Digital Development Partnership, the Netherlands is also contributing to the Digital Moonshot launched by the African Union and the World Bank.
- Within the European framework, the Netherlands has joined the Digital for Development Coalition.
- The Netherlands is exploring opportunities to join the International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA), including the working group on Artificial Intelligence.
- The Netherlands will enter into bilateral partnerships with countries like Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Germany and the United Kingdom. These countries each have innovative programmes in specific areas in which the Netherlands has additional expertise.

¹⁸ See the [Principles for Digital Development](#).

¹⁹ See also the World Development Report 2016, 'Digital Dividends'.

- On the basis of the Trade Agenda, the Netherlands is working with and through the European Union not only to ensure that trade regulations respond more adequately to digitalisation but also to exploit its position in the G20, the WTO, the OECD, UNCTAD, the ILO and other organisations with a view to enhancing its knowledge of the relationship between digitalisation, trade policy and development, and formulating a perspective for action.

New knowledge

Digitalisation is a rapid process that is likely to pick up even more speed in the future. The precise impact is difficult to foresee. What is more, specific expertise is needed to apply new developments in digital technology to the BHOS policy field. For this reason, knowledge acquisition is essential for a dynamic BHOS Digital Agenda.

Commitments:

- Engage in targeted building of national and international knowledge networks, and incorporation of digitalisation in BHOS strategic knowledge and research policy.
- Enhance and recruit knowledge and expertise in the field of digitalisation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This relates to both an investment in staff to drive the necessary change processes, and a more general commitment to selecting and recruiting staff with the requisite knowledge and skills.
- Make better use of the knowledge of digitalisation already available within the Ministry for policy development and implementation. The Ministry's Datalab, in which data scientists answer policy questions, is a good example.
- As the Dutch Digitalisation Strategy points out, digitalisation is an essential and indispensable factor in the policy challenges confronting the entire government. In delivering and developing the BHOS Digital Agenda, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs therefore works with other ministries to share knowledge and exploit synergies between policy areas.



Digitalisation for development

Access to digital technology creates boundless new opportunities and can boost more sustainable and inclusive growth. It is important for the Netherlands to invest in people's digital prospects, in the focus regions in particular. This chapter takes a closer look at exploiting opportunities through education and work, promoting digitalisation for robust, sustainable food production, strengthening civil society and using digital technologies to help people in need.

Education, entrepreneurship and work

Digitalisation will have radical consequences for education and work. Employees will need different skills – not only specific, digital skills, but also the more sophisticated cognitive skills needed to take an active part in a digital society, like problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills and the ability to work in a team. Education and training are essential to respond to the changing job market, to exploit the opportunities presented by digitalisation and to promote inclusiveness. The BHOS policy document devotes attention not only to primary education but also, and specifically, to prospects for young people, girls and women through the creation of sustainable employment and the development of entrepreneurship in the digital economy.

Primary education

Every child has the right to a decent primary education.²⁰ Innovative education technology, also known as EdTech, can give excluded children access to high-quality education.²¹ In this framework, the Netherlands supports a pilot project in Uganda which gives refugee children in areas with poor online connections access to education through offline platforms. However, the more access girls and boys have to the internet and social media, the greater the risk of their being exposed to misinformation, exploitation and abuse. So they need to be able to operate on the internet not only with the requisite skills, but also in safety. The Netherlands works with the [Global Partnership for Education](#) and the [Education Cannot Wait fund](#) to improve access to quality primary education for all children.

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Commitment:

- Work with these organisations to encourage effective application of digital education technology and recognition of the importance of digital literacy.

²⁰ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

²¹ [UNICEF, the State of the World's Children: Children in a Digital World \(2017\)](#).

From education to work and income

Relevant education, decent work and a decent income for young men and women are priorities of Dutch BHOS policy. The Netherlands encourages local enterprise, and takes targeted action to ensure more work and income for women and young people, and to ensure coherence between work and education through existing programmes. With the commitments set out below, the Netherlands aims to strengthen digitalisation as a component of this policy.

Commitments:

- Support activities in the focus regions that promote young people's transition from school to the labour market, with particular attention for innovation and digital technology.
- By means of the Orange Corners initiative, support young entrepreneurs in the focus regions by providing training programmes and finance for the launch of their businesses. The initiative encourages innovation, like the use of digital technology.
- Create jobs for young people in the digital economy through the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE), which is expected to come into operation in 2019. The main goal of this fund is to create future prospects through decent work and a decent income for young people in the focus regions.
- With fifty young people from the focus regions, explore whether and how our policy can connect with the future of work and jobs. These young people will be attending the One Young World summit in London in October 2019. One Young World encourages youth participation and provides a forum for young people to act as role models in their own countries. Participants work together to seek innovative, digital solutions for major local challenges.

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The World Bank report on the future of work (World Development Report 2019: the Changing Nature of Work) expresses concern at the widening gender gap on the international labour market. A greater commitment to improving women's digital skills is therefore crucial. Investment in young women is both in the interests of society and a driver of economic growth. A relatively large proportion of women work in sectors where computerisation has led to job cuts – in office and administrative jobs, in particular – while only a limited number work in the fast-growing ICT sectors.

Commitment:

- Work with the World Bank and the Solutions for Youth Employment Coalition (S4YE) to explore opportunities to improve women's and girls' digital skills, in close coordination with the creation of more work and income for women employees and entrepreneurs.

Food, water, energy and climate change

Access to reliable, up-to-date information is key to making people and businesses in developing countries more resilient to the far-reaching consequences of climate change. It is precisely in this area that recent and expected developments in information technology will present opportunities to provide people with location-specific information services and products on a much greater scale than before. The Netherlands leads the international field with programmes in which consortiums of companies with innovative business models play a central role. A good example is the Geodata for

Agriculture and Water (G4AW) programme which uses satellite information to inform smallholders in developing countries about weather forecasts, market prices and agronomic advice.

The programme also provides access to harvest insurance, improved seeds and microcredits. More than 80 companies, of which 30 are Dutch, work together in the programme. Another example is the Land Administration for National Development (LAND) partnership which can make land registration up to twenty times cheaper and faster than traditional forms of registration.

Commitment:

- Support food production through an integrated approach to problems relating to food, water and climate, making use of opportunities presented by digitalisation. Application of satellite data is a major element. This initiative will also build on the various instruments developed with Dutch support by the World Resources Institute. They include [Global Forest Watch](#), [Aqueduct](#) and [Climate Watch](#).

Satellites and open data

Satellites generate a permanent flow of data on the status of the earth's surface. This is not in itself new, but the recent launch of constellations with worldwide coverage, in combination with greatly increased computer processing power, mobile internet networks and the development of pattern recognition with the aid of artificial intelligence brings use of this data to help achieve the SDGs within reach. The Sentinel satellites launched and managed by the EU in cooperation with ESA provide a wealth of open data, forming the basis for a whole range of applications. Dutch businesses and knowledge institutions are experts in interpreting this data, for example for food production, water management and climate resilience.

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With Dutch support, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has developed the Water Productivity Open-access Portal (WaPOR) for the agriculture sector in Africa and the Middle East. Using this portal, water authorities can obtain up-to-date information enabling them to decide on water distribution, issuing of permits and charges for the use of water. The agriculture sector can reach decisions on matters such as choice of crop, irrigation method and use of fertilisers and pesticides.

Commitments:

- Encourage the use of open data such as the WaPOR database by the water authorities, and agriculture sector organisations like the Asian Development Bank, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, Wageningen University, Meta-Meta and the Netherlands Space Office.
- Develop scenarios using digital instruments for an integrated approach to water, food, nature and climate problems through organisations such as the Solidaridad Network and IUCN. Use of artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Strengthening civil society

Digitalisation provides civil society organisations with opportunities to increase interaction between people and groups worldwide and enables them to connect. Digital technologies have a major, positive impact on freedom of association and assembly. They enable organisations to disseminate their message to a wider public, recruit funding and document and publish incidents on a wider scale. But digitalisation also poses challenges, including digital security and restrictions to online freedom. Human rights defenders, journalists, politicians and civil society organisations are increasingly confronted by hacks, hate speech and other cyberattacks. The Netherlands continues to be committed to defending the digital space and to seeking solutions to online attacks. It supports online human rights forums and a helpline for civil society organisations confronted by problems with digital technology. The Netherlands also helps civil society organisations build capacity and become more aware of the need for digital security, with alternative software to enable secure communications by human rights defenders. It is currently supporting a study of blockchain technology and the role it can play in the work of civil society organisations.

Commitment:

- Within the new policy framework on strengthening civil society, attention will be given to the role of digital innovation in the work of civil society organisations in their role as advocate and influencer.

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Humanitarian aid and stability

Digital technologies present new opportunities to help people in need. Biometric registration enables more targeted aid through direct transfer of funds. Digital identity systems help victims to prove their identity if documents are lost or not issued. Better data sharing enables predictive analyses and prognoses. In the years to come, the Netherlands will make a commitment to improved prediction of disaster and conflicts to enable preventive action and where necessary more rapid provision of humanitarian aid.

Commitments:

- Pay more attention for predictive analyses and the development of the necessary algorithms and AI, through support to the UN OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data in The Hague.
- Step up the Water, Peace and Security Partnership, which was initiated by the Netherlands. This partnership targets the link between water and conflict and is developing an instrument for the early identification of water-related security risks. Data on the water-energy-food nexus will be added to the tools in the next few years, with more information on fragile countries.

One of the challenges confronting the international community is to prevent and control irregular migration. Migration flows are complex and in a state of constant flux. Adequate, prompt data on which people are on the move and why and on the route they are taking contributes to effective policy and sufficient protection. Digital technology can make information accessible at any time. This makes it easier to prevent sexual exploitation and forced labour along migration routes.

Digital technology also enables migrants to access reliable information, so that they can take better decisions and protect themselves. One of the main mechanisms for collecting, analysing and disseminating data on migration is the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

Commitment:

- Provide support for DTM in making information accessible through digital portals and developing predictive analyses.



4

Digitalisation in the trade system

In order to achieve a future-proof trade and investment system, it needs to be adapted to the rapid development of the digital economy. Digitalisation is leading to an explosive growth in cross-border data flows, trade in digital services and trade in goods through digital platforms. Current tensions in the trade system and the race for worldwide technological dominance are making it very difficult to make progress in multilateral negotiations. The divergent attitudes of the world's largest economic blocs – China, the EU and the US – to fundamental interests and values like the protection of personal data and privacy contribute to this deadlock. It is essential that the EU uses its economic and political clout to set standards for digital trade. The Netherlands plays an active role in this and is committed to facilitate developing countries' participation in multilateral negotiations. The Netherlands also supports developing countries in their efforts to build a digital economy and to reap the benefits of digital trade.

Accommodating digitalisation in the multilateral trade system

The multilateral trade system has a number of agreements facilitating and regulating digital trade, but they are in need of updating. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS, 1995), for example, regulates liberalisation of the trade in services at world level. GATS also contains an Annex on Telecommunications. The WTO Information Technology Agreement (ITA, 1996) regulates the trade in IT equipment, such as telephones and computers. The ITA was expanded in 2015 to include new product groups. However, a coherent framework for rapidly growing e-commerce and cross-border data flows, so badly needed in this digital age, has yet to be agreed. Regional agreements have addressed this issue to some extent, and it is a positive development that the impact of digitalisation on trade and trade regulations is high on the agendas of international organisations such as the WTO, OECD and UNCTAD, forums like the G20 and individual industrialised and developing countries.

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The most promising step forward is the WTO Joint Statement on Electronic Commerce which was adopted at the 11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in 2017. With this statement, the signatories, including the EU, decided that negotiations on e-commerce should be held within the WTO framework. The Netherlands and the EU want as many subjects as possible to be taken on board in the negotiations, including data flows, consumer protection, restricted access to source codes, open access to the internet and accession by the signatories to agreements such as the ITA. A dilemma arises from the trade-off between aiming for an ambitious outcome on the one hand, and broad participation of countries on the other hand. The Netherlands sees a risk in the limited participation of developing countries in the initiative to date, while their interests need to be taken on board if the ultimate agreement is to lead to inclusive outcomes.

Commitments

- The Netherlands calls for ambitious, wide-ranging trade negotiations on e-commerce. To this end, it will submit proposals through the EU and use its bilateral contacts and international forums to generate support for them.

- The Netherlands will support research through UNCTAD, the OECD and the WEF into the diverging impacts of digital trade on sustainable and inclusive growth in countries with a well-developed digital economy and countries where digitalisation is still in its infancy.
- The Netherlands will explore opportunities to support developing countries' participation in the e-commerce negotiations and will encourage the European Commission to seek cooperation with developing countries.

Dutch priorities in the main international debates

In addition to the upcoming multilateral negotiations on e-commerce, debates are currently underway in various forums (plurilateral, bilateral and European, and informally through the G20 and the OECD) on the agreements needed to facilitate and regulate digital trade. The main issues within the various negotiations and debates are listed below, with brief explanations and the European and Dutch viewpoints.

Commitments:

- The Netherlands will seek cooperation with like-minded countries, experts and the private sector in order to chart the impact of digitalisation on the trade system.
- The Netherlands will use its position within the EU, the G20 and other forums to move the debates forward and to agree on a roadmap for multilateral trade negotiations.

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1. **Obstacles to trade in digital services**
2. **Cross-border data flows and protection of personal data and privacy**
3. **Data localisation requirements**
4. **Consumer protection in e-commerce**
5. **Safeguards for ethical norms and values**

1. Obstacles to trade in digital services

The OECD's Digital Services Trade Restrictiveness Index shows that trade in digital services is being hampered by an increasing number of laws and regulations. This affects the EU, since it is the world's main exporter of digital services.²² GATS does not provide an adequate framework, while negotiations on a new Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) have run aground. However, extensive provisions on trade in services have been incorporated into the EU's trade agreements with third countries such as Canada, Japan and South Korea. A complicating factor in reaching agreement on the trade in services is the fading distinction between goods and services, so that it is sometimes unclear which trade regulations apply.

Commitments

- Achieve results on the trade in digital services within the upcoming WTO negotiations.
- The Netherlands will continue to support resumption of TiSA negotiations.

²² [European Commission, EU Position in World Trade \(2019\)](#).

2. Cross-border data flows and protection of personal data and privacy

Access to data and data sharing promotes innovation and growth. The government is therefore in favour of voluntary data sharing between businesses.²³ Businesses with a customer, supplier or branch abroad need to be able to share data internationally. This is obstructed by a hodgepodge of national laws and regulations that restrict cross-border data flows, often for reasons of privacy and protection of personal data, and the lack of multilateral agreements on the subject. The three major power blocs – the United States, the European Union and China – have strongly divergent attitudes to standards of personal data and privacy protection. The EU has set the highest standards with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which has an impact beyond the EU, since multinationals are incorporating its provisions into their systems and enforcing them in countries outside the EU. To facilitate cross-border data flows beyond its borders, the EU has adopted adequacy decisions on thirteen non-EU countries. This is a unilateral declaration that standards of personal data and privacy protection in these countries are comparable to those in the EU.²⁴

Commitments

- Enter into international cooperation to reach agreement on cross-border data flows, with personal data and privacy protection meeting EU standards.
- Increase support for and involvement of developing countries.

3. Data localisation requirements

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Governments can make data localisation compulsory for businesses. There may be legitimate reasons for this, but there is also the risk that governments will take such measures for protectionist reasons, or that they will make unlawful use of the data that businesses are required to store. Within Europe, measures will be introduced this year banning governments from setting data localisation requirements.²⁵ China, for instance, sets data localisation requirements for foreign companies for reasons of cybersecurity. But this also gives Chinese companies an advantage over European companies, since European companies face more costs. For example, apart from a server in their own country, they also need to have a server in China.

Commitment

- The Netherlands, like the EU, is opposed to data localisation, unless it is needed to safeguard national security interests within the framework of the WTO security exceptions. This commitment is part of the commitment relating to cross-border data flows.

²³ [Dutch vision on data sharing between businesses, Parliamentary Paper 26 643 no. 594.](#)

²⁴ Andorra, Argentina, Canada (restricted form), Faroe islands, Guernsey, Israel, the Isle of Man, Japan, Jersey, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United States and Uruguay. Given the lower standards of protection in the US, the adequacy decision relates only to certified companies in the US that process data on EU nationals for commercial purposes.

²⁵ When the Regulation on the free flow of non-personal data comes into force.

4. Consumer protection in e-commerce

Consumers can order and purchase products quickly and inexpensively through online stores, including from other countries. However, levels of consumer protection differ widely from country to country, for example in relation to returning goods or misleading customers. As far as the Netherlands and the EU are concerned, the rights of users of online stores need to be transparent. At the same time, parties offering products through online platforms need to be aware of the rights of their customers in order to make a reliable assessment of their own financial risks.

Commitment

- Consumers need to be protected from the risks of e-commerce and must be able to exercise their rights. Parties selling products online need to provide correct and reliable information. The Netherlands wants to reach international agreement on these issues and, with the EU, urges protection of consumer rights to be taken on board in the e-commerce negotiations.

5. Safeguarding ethical norms and values

The international debate on ethical norms and values in the digital economy has still to get off the ground. Questions have arisen in relation to artificial intelligence in particular, as to whether the ethical norms and values intentionally or unintentionally processed into an application conflict with European norms and values – the principle of equality, freedom of opinion or the ban on discrimination, for example. More and more AI applications from countries with different systems of ethical norms and values will be coming onto the market. The European Union will need to adopt a leading role in setting norms and technical standards in this field.

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Commitment:

- Gain more knowledge on the extent to which the current international trade regulations safeguard European norms and values in the use of artificial intelligence. Where these safeguards are inadequate, examine which trade regulations can be adapted to provide sufficient guarantees. Amsterdam University's Institute for Information Law will be publishing a study on this subject in the summer.

Support developing countries in digital economy and trade

Digital trade lowers the threshold to the global market and enables developing countries to grow. However, it is a challenge for developing countries to guarantee the requisite enabling conditions – for example, a digital infrastructure and smart trade logistics, online payment services, and legislation geared to the digital infrastructure and generation of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. A coordinated international approach is needed to make progress on all these issues. UNCTAD plays a positive role here, while essential issues in relation to digitalisation and ICT and their relationship to sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals are also included in the action programme and knowledge network of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum²⁶ in which the Netherlands participates.

²⁶ UN Resolution 70/125 of December 2015 explicitly links the 11 WSIS action lines to the UN's SDG agenda. See also World Summit on the Information Society, <https://www.itu.int/net/wsis/>

One of the ways in which the Netherlands contributes to the digital economy in developing countries is through its private sector development policy, which targets both entrepreneurs and government authorities. For example, it supports programmes and businesses that use new technologies to provide access to financial services and products for smallholders, women and young people. Through the Dutch Good Growth Fund, the Netherlands has invested in Liwwa, the first supplier of digital credit in Jordan to target small businesses. With Dutch support, TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI) provide small and medium-sized businesses with access to digital platforms and opportunities for new revenue models. The Netherlands is also working on stronger trade logistics and supply chains. Paperless trading is an ideal, with cheaper, faster, and more secure digital processing of the paperwork associated with the trade in goods, with the added advantage that data can then be used for other purposes. As a trading nation and world leader in transport and logistics, the Netherlands wants to provide developing countries with support in this field.²⁷

Digital technology also presents opportunities to boost supply chain sustainability by making transactions more efficient and increasing transparency within the chain, including for consumers. Solidaridad's Farming Solution app provides farmers with training and advice through their mobile phones. The ultimate aim is for this app to provide a self-verification system for farmers that work using sustainable methods, so that they no longer face the costs of an expensive certification procedure. Another promising development is the use of blockchain technology to ensure more reliable supply chain information. The UTZ SAT4Farming programme uses digital technologies and satellite images for sustainable production of cocoa beans in Ghana.

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Commitment:

- Support UNCTAD's wide-ranging eTrade for all (eT4A) initiative and its Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy programme.
- Promote knowledge sharing on specific obstacles and success factors for women in digital trade in developing countries through UNCTAD's new eTrade for Women Network (eT4Women).
- Contribute to the development of the wider digital economy in developing countries through active participation in the World Bank's Digital Development Partnership.
- Exploit opportunities for digital technologies in programmes for sustainable supply chains and fair trade in, for example, minerals from conflict- and high-risk regions.

²⁷ [Digital goods transport strategy, Parliamentary Paper 26 643 no. 581.](#)



Digitalisation and the Netherlands' international position

To maintain its strong competitive position, the Netherlands needs to remain at the forefront of digital innovations and the development of new technological applications. In line with the Dutch Digitalisation Strategy²⁸ the government is committed within the Trade Agenda²⁹ to promoting the Netherlands at international level as a high-tech, innovative country and Europe's digital frontrunner. The focus is on startups in particular. The government is also working with the public-private network on the use of digital means to optimise services for international entrepreneurs.

Position the Netherlands as international digital frontrunner

In becoming the international frontrunner in digital technology, the Netherlands can capitalise on its strength in developing digital applications for the European and international market. Key technologies, including artificial intelligence, blockchain technology and robotics, strengthen the competitiveness of the sectors and social themes in which the Netherlands already enjoys an international reputation, from *agro-food*, *smart mobility* and *high-tech systems & materials to life sciences & health, water and energy*. The Netherlands also has a strong ICT sector, and is the world's tenth largest exporter of ICT products.³⁰ What is more, Dutch businesses and knowledge institutions are ahead in their thinking on socially responsible, ethical applications of artificial intelligence. This is where the Netherlands can make its mark internationally. With the organisation of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES 2019) in The Hague from 3 to 5 June 2019, the Netherlands put itself firmly on the international map. Under the banner 'The Future Now', the GES brought 2,000 international entrepreneurs, investors, scientists and government representatives to the Netherlands. During the summit, the Netherlands showed what it has to offer in the field of agriculture and food, connectivity, energy, healthcare and the water sector, giving pride of place to industries of the future. Expo 2020 in Dubai will also provide a podium for Dutch digital innovations.

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The Netherlands' success in the digital economy is fostered by its exceptional institutional infrastructure which enables the private sector, knowledge institutions and government authorities to promote cross-sector cooperation. The government supports this triple helix cooperation with its mission-driven top sector and innovation policy.³¹ Initiatives like the Smart Industry Programme ensure the necessary cooperation within the industry and raise the sector's profile. But more is needed to seize opportunities in the international digital economy. The government is responding to SMEs' and startups' need for support. The innovation attaché network plays an important role here.

²⁸ Dutch Digitalisation Strategy, Parliamentary Paper 26 643 no. 541.

²⁹ Trade Agenda, Parliamentary Paper 34 952 no. 30.

³⁰ OECD Digital Economic Outlook (2017).

³¹ Mission-driven top sector and innovation policy, Parliamentary Paper 33 009 no. 70; Towards mission-driven innovation policy with impact, Parliamentary Paper 33 000 no. 63.

Commitments:

- Based on the Trade Agenda,³² commit to stronger positioning of the Netherlands as a high-tech country and of Dutch companies and knowledge institutions in markets for digital solutions. Target mainly the nine leading markets³³ and to a lesser extent the 25 leading markets.³⁴
- Pay attention to promising Dutch platform companies in trade promotion activities.
- In consultation with the private sector, we will identify the events both at home and abroad where we can showcase Dutch expertise and knowledge in the field of digital technology.
- With the internationalisation agenda for ICT³⁵ announced in the Dutch Digitalisation Strategy, the government plans to strengthen trade and investment opportunities for Dutch ICT businesses. This agenda will run parallel to the internationalisation agenda for the high-tech systems & materials (HTSM) top sector.³⁶ The two agendas will focus on partnerships for innovation, exports and acquisition.

Digital technology in bilateral economic cooperation

Germany

The Netherlands works in high tech markets together with Germany, its main trade partner, on the energy transition, electromobility, cybersecurity and the key technologies. The Netherlands wants to position itself in Germany as a partner in digitalisation. Germany is therefore the target market in 2019 for smart industry and the pilot country for the internationalisation agenda for ICT. The mission to Germany in October 2018 focused on digitalisation and life sciences & health in Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland. A startup mission will be going to Berlin at the end of 2019. Berlin is one of the priority startup hubs.

United States

Many new technologies come from the United States, for example from Silicon Valley, a major destination for Dutch startups and scale-ups. Dutch companies position themselves here as partners for applications. This was the purpose of the recent mission to Silicon Valley, led by foreign trade and development cooperation minister Sigrid Kaag, in which 22 businesses and knowledge institutions operating in the field of artificial intelligence, robotics and blockchain technology took part. Cooperation with the US is also geared to smart & green mobility and innovation in the care sector, while the Netherlands works with the US in various fields as cybersecurity partner. A startup liaison officer will be appointed in San Francisco to set out bilateral startup and scale-up policy for the next two years.

32 [Trade Agenda, Parliamentary Paper 34 952 no. 30.](#)

33 The nine leading markets are currently: the five ASEAN countries, Brazil, China, France, Germany, the Gulf region, India, the United Kingdom and the United States.

34 The 25 leading markets are currently the leading nine plus Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Iran, Italy, Japan, Nigeria, North Africa (Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), Mexico, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan and Turkey.

35 This will be presented by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy in the second half of 2019.

36 [Holland High Tech, Internationalisation.](#)

India

India has a strong IT-sector as well as a strong and growing startup ecosystem that offer opportunities for Dutch entrepreneurs and possibilities for addressing societal challenges in India. In that respect, the Netherlands focuses on digitalisation of Indian healthcare. In the Karnataka province an e-health living lab was set up where Dutch SME's work together with knowledge institutions and Indian partners to develop innovative technologies for Affordable Medical Devices and for Digital Health & Diagnostics. In June 2019 an innovation mission will further explore opportunities in Digital Health & Diagnostics and eHealth.

Singapore

Singapore is a hotspot for entrepreneurs with knowledge-intensive products and services, including in the area of digitalisation. The country invests significantly in R&D in this field. During the State Visit of Singapore to the Netherlands in November 2018 it was decided to step up bilateral cooperation on digitalisation and to start a G2G working group 'digitalisation' to this end. The working group will exchange knowledge of and experience with new digital technologies, regulation thereof, digitalisation of government services, and supporting digital innovation for example in trade logistics and smart mobility. With this, Singapore and the Netherlands aim to learn from one another and support more intensive exchanges between Dutch and Singaporean knowledge institutions and/or businesses.

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Support for tech start-ups and scale-ups

The government is working with StartupDelta on a stronger position for Dutch startups and scale-ups abroad, with a focus on entrepreneurs in the technology sector.³⁷ Startups in the HTSM and ICT top sectors receive support through six priority startup hubs,³⁸ i.e. Berlin, Paris, London, Singapore, Boston/New York and San Francisco/Los Angeles. Subsectors are artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, robotics, financial technology and cybersecurity.

Startups and scale-ups can also take part in specialised missions to strategic technology trade fairs, where they come into contact with breakthrough technologies, have the opportunity to showcase their own products or services and can build their own international network of customers, investors and partners.

³⁷ Letter to the House of Representatives on Technology and Entrepreneurship, published on 3 June 2019.

³⁸ These hubs were identified by the International Startups Steering Committee (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, StartupDelta and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO.nl)) after extensive consultations with stakeholders and the mission network, and on the basis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' International Enterprise Department's economic policy framework and the Startup Ecosystem Ranking Report. This report is produced by the Startup Genome project and is based on local market conditions, funding, experience of the startup ecosystem and availability of talent.

Commitments:

- The government supports start-ups and scale-ups in gaining a toehold in promising markets. In 2019 startup and scale-up missions will be organised to Berlin, New York/Boston and Singapore.
- In 2019 and 2020 Dutch startups and scale-ups can take part in specialist missions to the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, COMPUTEX/InnoVEX in Taipei and Slush in Helsinki.

Digitalisation for excellent economic service provision

The government works with the public-private trade promotion network on digital solutions for better economic services to Dutch international entrepreneurs. There is room for improvement in the way information is presented online on market opportunities and upcoming events. The aim is for entrepreneurs to be able to find links to comprehensive, up-to-date information from the various parties in the public-private network from whichever website they begin their search. The central Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO.nl) database with information on market opportunities and upcoming trade missions is now being used by the Chamber of Commerce and NLinBusiness to inform entrepreneurs. The International Enterprise Network (NIO)³⁹ has launched its updated website *InternationaalOndernemen.nl* and a new version of *NL exporteert*, an app for international entrepreneurs, is expected to appear in 2019. At the same time NLinBusiness is exploring opportunities within the network to use digital resources to prepare follow-up to incoming and outgoing missions, for instance bringing entrepreneurs into contact with potential business partners prior to a mission.

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Commitment:

- Work with the public-private trade promotion network to develop digital solutions for better economic services.

³⁹ Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO.nl), Rabobank, ING Bank, Koninklijke Metaalunie, Chamber of Commerce, Royal Association MKB-Nederland, ABN AMRO Bank, Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers, entrepreneurs' association evofenedex, FME Association.



Digital security and freedom online

Digital security and freedom online are major conditions for a smoothly functioning digital economy and society. Cybersecurity, economic security, human rights safeguards and data privacy are important themes. The Netherlands has fleshed out its approach to these issues in the International Cyber Strategy, the Integrated International Security Strategy, the National Cybersecurity Agenda and the policy paper on China. With its BHOS policy, the Netherlands aims to support governments in developing countries in the field of legislation, and to help civil society organisations safeguard their digital security and enhance their online freedom. The Netherlands also supports the debate on responsible use of data by governments, businesses and organisations.

Cybersecurity and capacity building in third countries

As a pioneer in the international cyber domain, the Netherlands focuses on the importance of closing the digital gap between technologically developed and less developed countries, so that people in developing countries can benefit from the opportunities presented by worldwide digitalisation. Building capacity within the cyber domain is one way of achieving this. For this reason, the Netherlands launched the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) in The Hague in 2015. Launch of the GFCE gave a major boost to international capacity building in the fields of cybercrime prevention, cybersecurity, data protection and e-governance.

Commitment:

- Given its great importance, step up cybersecurity capacity building, with a possible contribution to the World Bank Digital Development Partnership. Explore scope within this programme for the launch of a trust fund – under the GFCE banner – specifically geared to cybersecurity capacity building, together with international partners.

In the short term, capacity building will help improve partner countries' digital resilience, since it helps enable them to benefit from the economic advantages of the digital economy and contributes to their and our cybersecurity. In the longer term, Dutch investment in capacity building will help forge strategic alliances geared to supporting a free, open and secure internet and other relevant Dutch policy goals.

Commitment:

- Use the Dutch cyber diplomacy network.⁴⁰ Though these cyber diplomats will not focus primarily on digitalisation and BHOS, they will play a major role in the Dutch network and in collecting information.

⁴⁰ See also [National Cybersecurity Agenda, Parliamentary Paper 26 643 no. 536](#).

Human rights and digital fundamental rights

Respect for human rights forms the basis of a safe, open, free society. The Netherlands regards safety and freedom not as conflicting but as complementary interests: a safe society is one in which an individual's fundamental rights and freedoms are protected. By promoting a secure digital environment, we can protect the rights of potentially vulnerable or at-risk individuals. In this framework, the Netherlands supports RNW Media online platforms. RNW Media builds digital communities of young people for social change focusing on themes such as human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, democracy and good governance.

Commitment:

- Step up support to the Digital Defenders Partnership, which provides emergency digital assistance to individuals and local civil society organisations worldwide.
- Work with like-minded countries on coalitions to recognise and protect the right to protection of personal data and respect for personal privacy. To safeguard digital fundamental rights, the Netherlands is committed to building and promoting an international legal and normative framework for the cyber domain.
- Within the Human Rights Fund, increase the security-mindedness of parties submitting project proposals.

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Human rights abuses can also be prevented by monitoring trade flows in certain goods. In issuing licences for the export of dual-use goods, the Netherlands takes account of human rights. A debate is currently under way in the EU on extending export controls to items that can be used for cyber surveillance. However, the Council of the European Union is only expected to reach agreement on a much more limited amendment to the Regulation on dual-use export controls. Further action has been delayed until the new European Commission and newly elected European Parliament take office.

Commitment:

- Extension of the European export control regime to include cyber surveillance items in relation to human rights abuses. The Netherlands works with like-minded countries to generate support for this.

Responsible use of digital technology and data

Parties that collect and manage data or use digital technologies like artificial intelligence need to do so responsibly and with due respect for security and privacy. That applies in equal measure to government authorities, private sector parties and civil society organisations. Parties need to take account of the unintended negative consequences of working with these technologies and data, give priority to people's right to privacy, safety and ownership and uphold values such as transparency and openness. This will foster the trust needed for a successful digital economy (as stated in the National Digitalisation Strategy). The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations has taken the initiative to formulate government-wide principles on responsible use of data (2019 Government Data Agenda).⁴¹

41 [NL Digital: Government Data Agenda, Parliamentary Paper 26 643 no. 597.](#)

Humanitarian aid and responsible use of data

People in need are particularly vulnerable to misuse of data. Responsible use of data is therefore essential in emergencies. Adequate guidelines for the responsible use of data by humanitarian organisations are urgently needed. The Netherlands is therefore working with OCHA in The Hague and Leiden University to develop guidelines for the wider humanitarian community and to make responsible use of data the new normal.

It is also important for businesses to generate trust in the way they use personal data. In addition to complying with the statutory frameworks, businesses also have social responsibility, including in the digital economy. They are expected to exercise due diligence, i.e. they need to identify whether they cause or run the risk of causing abuses, or contribute or are linked to them. They also need to prevent or mitigate these potential or actual risks. Businesses that can and must decide whether to maintain access to specific online content have an extraordinary, complex role to play. They may be confronted with users wanting to publish unacceptable content or with requests or orders from governments to censure content or not to interfere with it.

Though the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights do not explicitly target data privacy or working through online platforms, they also apply to the digital domain. As early as 2013, the European Commission commissioned an ICT Sector Guide on Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.⁴²

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Commitment:

- The Netherlands will urge the OECD, which is the primary forum, to take steps in advance to identify where application of the OECD guidelines to the digital economy needs clarification.

⁴² [Institute for Human Rights and Business, ICT Sector Guide on Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(2014\).](#)



Postscript Digital opportunities, for global prospects

Digitalisation will be one of the main drivers of social change in the years to come, much of which will be unpredictable. This first BHOS Digital Agenda sets out the Netherlands' commitment to making a genuine difference in the years ahead, by exploiting the international opportunities presented by digitalisation and mitigating possible threats. The overarching objective is to achieve the goals set out in the policy document 'Investing in Global Prospects' faster and more effectively.

The rate at which the process of digitalisation is unfolding calls for investment in timely identification and recognition of developments, review, where necessary, of our commitment and an ongoing focus on updating our interventions to enhance their effectiveness. The Agenda will therefore continue to develop, in ongoing cooperation with our national and international partners.

Benefiting from digital opportunities, for global prospects.

Colophon

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