# IDC

# For equal opportunities in digitisation

»The aim of our initiative is for Austria to make greater use of the opportunities offered by digitisation and to focus on equal opportunities.«

Digital technologies now cover almost all areas of life and are part of our everyday affairs. Digitisation has already facilitated matters in many areas, such as business, communications, access to education, goods and services, health and social services.

At the same time, we see it as our responsibility to ensure that the conditions of all people are taken into account in the same way for this development. In 2019, the UNESCO report "I would blush if I could"[1] was published. Until 2019, this was the programmed phrase that the language assistance system, Siri, gave as the answer when addressed by a user as a "bitch". Using digital assistance systems such as Siri or Alexa, which have female connotations thanks to the names and tone of voice, the UNESCO report systematically shows how design decisions still reflect stereotypical notions of gender roles.

Numerous empirical studies show that women still have a great deal of catching up to do with digital skills or are still not sufficiently aware of their skills. For example, UNESCO mentions that men have advanced digital skills about four times more frequently than for women, and that only one percent of applicants for jobs in the AI (artificial intelligence) and data science sectors are currently women. There is a need to catch up. The lack of digital skills places women at a significant disadvantage for opportunities to take part and position themselves in the labour market, as well as in the social, cultural and political sphere. What are women's unexploited opportunities? The often gender-specific support given to children and young people and the associated differences in the self-evaluation of girls and boys in terms of their own competencies for the future play a major role – especially in the MINT subjects (Mathematics, IT, Natural sciences and Technology). What needs to be taken into account in particular in education?

[1] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367416.page=1

One of the main conclusions of the UNESCO report is that developments in stereotyped technologies can only be effectively prevented if women and girls get involved in the development of these technologies right from an early stage – not only as potential users – but also focusing on them as future experts. The self-confidence of women and girls in digital technology stems from this and it is strengthened by the use of their existing skills. This will enable boys and girls, just like men and women, to become active designers of digital change, thereby jointly developing their digital self-confidence.

## The recommendations for concrete actions:

Based on this analysis, the UNESCO report came up with a total of 15 recommendations to close the gender gap in digital education. Our common concern – but also the urgent appeal to society – is that the UNESCO recommendations report should be publicised, discussed, developed and put into practice in the following four clusters that we have developed from them.

# Cluster A

## Tablets for girls – and that's it?

**1** Institutionalising **diverse and sustainable initiatives** to attract girls and women to digital technologies and MINT subjects.

**2** Ensuring that digital and ICT skills are learned right from **primary and secondary education**.

**3** Training teachers with **gender competence, at technical colleges, universities as well as at other training and further education institutions**.

**4** Gaining **parents as allies** in acquiring digital skills for their daughters.

**5** Using **gender-sensitive and inclusive language** in the educational, research and work context.

# Cluster B

## Programming as culture technology! Heading into a digital future securely and with determination!

**6** Promoting **positive experiences** of girls and women with digital media (programming camps, digital games, etc.).

**7** Promoting **collaborative learning settings** to help girls acquire digital skills.

**8** Creating **secure, fear-free learning settings** for digital skills for women (e.g. courses for women and girls only).

## Cluster C

### Surf the digital wave! Motivation through role models and quotas.

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**9** Demonstrating and **showing the benefits** of digital skills for your own life.

**10** Promoting **role models and mentors** for girls and women, boys and men – gaining confidence in different cooperation models.

**11** Creating **financial incentives and quotas** for women in MINT programmes.

**12** Empowering women through **digital rights**.

## Cluster D

### What's still missing? Framework conditions for equal-opportunity digital change.

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**13** Ensuring sufficient **financial resources** by the State to support projects that close the digital gender gap.

**14** **Networking** between state and private / non-governmental initiatives (NGOs, etc.).

**15** **Collecting and evaluating data** (monitoring) to monitor the effectiveness of measures and projects.

## Fact box

### Skills versus self-image

Young girls underestimate their computer and IT skills significantly more than boys of the same age (UNESCO).

### Patents in the hands of men

Only about every 14th patent in the field of new information and communication technologies is acquired by a woman (OECD).

### Artificial intelligence

In the research trend area of machine learning, only around 12 percent of researchers are female (Element AI).

**... and these are by no means all the facts about digital inequality!**

<idc> Initiative Digitalisierung Chancengerecht

## Our request

As the Initiative for EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN DIGITISATION ("IDC"), we strongly believe that it is urgent that this report and its concrete demands be discussed, and then implemented in all fields, especially by representatives from business, politics, education, health, culture and media, as well as by experts in a wide range of forms in a wide public.

## Our aim

The aim of our initiative is for Austria to make greater use of the opportunities offered by digitisation and to focus on equal opportunities. Only in a society in which equal opportunities are truly realised can we become economically successful together, while strengthening social cohesion sustainably and on an equal footing. We would like to invite you to use our paper to lead and intensify the discussion on digitisation and equal opportunities for a common sustainable future in your field.

## Initiative for EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN DIGITISATION (IDC)

Please send us your suggestions so that we can combine knowledge and experience to turn them into a joint action.

# Who we are

We are women from a very wide range of fields in business, health, science, education, human rights and culture and have joined forces at the initiative of Doris Schmidauer. With the IDC, we are committed to ensuring that digital change is human, democratic, social and ecological, that it continues to develop and that the recommendations of UNESCO on this are put into practice in Austria and in the EU everyday life in the future thanks to our joint responsibility. It is our deepest conviction that digitisation must be structured to ensure equal opportunities. We would like to invite people from different fields to support us in making equal opportunities a reality in digitisation.

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