



# Women in Tech Across the Globe: A Good Practice Guide for Companies

A study by eco – Association of the Internet Industry

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EXCERPT

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INTERNET INDUSTRY

WE ARE SHAPING THE INTERNET.  
YESTERDAY. TODAY. BEYOND TOMORROW.

## Imprint

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This is an excerpt  
from the study  
**"Women in Tech Across the  
Globe: A Good Practice Guide  
for Companies."**

A copy of the complete study is  
available for download and is free of  
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following link:

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Oliver J. Süme,  
Chair of eco – Association of the Internet Industry



Lucia Falkenberg,  
Chief People Officer,  
eco – Association of the Internet Industry

## Foreword

### Dear Readers,

The digital industry is booming, with new digital business models entering the market on a daily basis, creating lucrative and future-oriented jobs. The Internet industry needs specialists – not only in development and programming, but also in fields such as digital marketing, data protection, and controlling. Companies wanting to prevail in the competition for talent should be setting their sights on one target group in particular: female specialists and managers. However, the reality still looks different. In the US, just one of every four tech specialists are women; in the EU, this drops to one in every six. Homing in on Germany: here, companies advertising for programmers and IT specialists are faced with the dilemma that only 10 to 20 percent of all applicants are women. Yet the truth is, no employer can afford to do without female specialists. What's more, talented women themselves shouldn't be missing out on the enormously diverse career opportunities offered by the Internet industry.

In order to better leverage the potential of gender diversity, eco has conducted the present study, "Women in Tech Across the Globe: A Good Practice Guide for Companies". This serves as a complement to a second study commissioned by eco from the Institut für Innovation und Technik (iit), entitled "Framework and Work Conditions for Women in the Internet Industry", which focuses specifically on the German Internet industry. The two studies have been published back-to-back because, in order to fully harness the potential of female talent for the entire industry, we need to adopt not just a national focus, but also to learn from and work alongside other countries.

The tech world may still be largely male-dominated, but the call for more female colleagues is becoming ever louder, a fact which we at eco are witnessing first-hand. At our subsidiary DE-CIX, the leading operator of Internet exchanges, we not only have colleagues from more than twenty different countries, but also an increasing number of female IT specialists. Throughout the industry, there

is a growing recognition that teams are better able to promote innovation and increase quality and performance when men and women are more evenly represented.

The present study provides a comprehensive insight into the status of gender diversity in the Internet industry on the one hand, and on the other hand offers companies concrete recommendations for action on how to get more women involved in this great industry. As this study shows, this doesn't always require radical changes: simply viewing recruitment and working practices beyond a male lens and creating a more inclusive working culture can set the right conditions for the future. Show-casing role models of female careers in the Internet industry is also essential – which is why we not only include a number of testimonial quotes in this study, but also offer a regular Women in Tech interview series.

Where we currently stand in the area of gender diversity, what lies behind it, and the challenges that have to be tackled now: these are the questions we pose and provide concrete answers to in this study. In this way, we are doing our part to make the Internet industry across the globe even more diverse, innovative, and powerful.

We wish you an exciting and insightful read!

Oliver J. Süme,  
Chair of eco – Association of the Internet Industry

Lucia Falkenberg,  
Chief People Officer,  
eco – Association of the Internet Industry



## WOMEN IN TECH ACROSS THE GLOBE: A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR COMPANIES

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### Management Summary

There's no question about it: this is a momentous time to be working in the Internet industry. With the Internet as their backbone, digital technologies are already underpinning countless advances in critical fields: for remote working, in healthcare, in digital education, in services, in manufacturing, in transport, in communications – the list goes on. The whole of society is party to this digital transformation – and none more so than those working within the Internet sector.

However, as we have been taught not just by history, but also by present-day turbulence, the trajectory that any period of major societal transformation takes cannot be left to chance. Instead, it needs to be proactively shaped and – crucially – it must be based on our democratic values. This is spelt out in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which highlights a keystone for a prosperous modern digital society: gender equality. The benefits arising from digitalization must accrue equally to both women and men, girls and boys. At the same time, an equal input of male and female talents is required to jointly shape the new digital age and to properly tackle any challenges that might accompany it.

But here we're faced with a quandary: For every one woman specialist working in the Internet industry, globally there are currently three men – and in Europe, there are five. If we don't move fast, age-old gender stereotypes could get bedded down in what should essentially be the most innovative and progressive of all industries. Which is why eco, as Europe's largest association of the Internet industry, has chosen to produce this study: "Women in Tech Across the Globe: A Good Practice Guide for Companies".

### Gender Equality is in Our Deepest Interest

The ethical rationale for ensuring that women do not lose further ground in the world's fastest-growing and best-paid occupational sector can be taken as read. But gender equality is also in the deepest economic interest of companies. As this study highlights, organizations with high levels of gender diversity are not only proven to have higher-than-average financial returns; they also gain a serious edge over their competitors through accessing the world's greatest untapped pool of talent. Essentially, promoting women in tech is no longer a task which can be put on hold: In 2025, for example, the labor shortage of tech workers in Germany is forecast to be 625,000, and 520,000 in France.<sup>1</sup> Now is the time for every company to act.

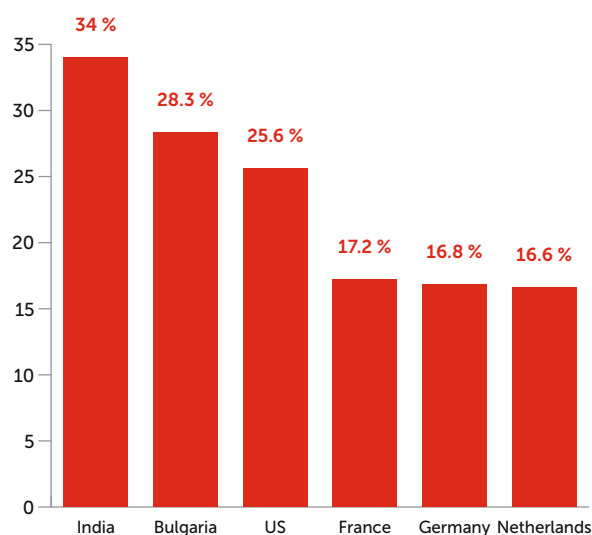
### The Aim of this Study

To support tech companies in their pursuit of gender equality, the core aim of this study is to offer companies of all sizes a concrete set of recommendations for action. The basis for these recommendations are facts and figures from the global industry, with a particular focus applied to 6 countries: Germany, the Netherlands, France, Bulgaria, the United States, and India. To take just one illustrative example of statistics from the study:

<sup>1</sup> Empirica, 2019



## Women as % of Tech Specialists, 2018



Sources: European statistics: Eurostat, 2019;  
US statistics: US Department of Labor, 2019;  
Indian statistics: Open University, 2018

The various facts and figures give rise to a multitude of questions which this study subsequently explores, such as:

- Why is the share of women working as tech specialists twice as high in India as in Germany, the Netherlands, and France?
- Why is it that, in industrialized countries, by the time teenagers have reached 15 years of age, 10 times more boys than girls would like to become tech professionals? <sup>2</sup>

To get to the bottom of such issues, this study draws on extensive international and regional research. The five main contributory factors for the gender gap in the tech industry are found to be:

1. **Stereotypes in education & upbringing**, with an imbalance in tech skills and aspirations starting to take shape in childhood.
2. **A shortage of female role models and of women in leadership**, with this serving to reinforce these stereotypes.
3. **A male work culture** associated with teams comprising of a majority of men, which can have an alienating effect on women.
4. **Digital skepticism**, which is far higher among women than men in Western industrialized countries.
5. **A media & pop culture** which repeatedly presents technology as being a boy's club, triggering a chain reaction when it comes to digital skepticism.

## Recommendations for Action

Bearing in mind the complexities underlying the gender gap in the Internet industry, this study goes on to pose the question: How can a company set about addressing what is essentially not just an individual challenge, but also a broad societal one?

Here it is advocated that a company's Number One step should be to prepare a Gender Equality Strategy, a process which needs to be led by company management. Four policies are recommended as the pillars of such a strategy:

- **Policy One:** Recruitment & On-Ramping of Women
- **Policy Two:** Retention of Women through New Work Culture
- **Policy Three:** Supporting Women to Rise up the Ranks
- **Policy Four:** Collaboration with Education Providers to Build the Pipeline of Female Talent

For each policy, this study recommends a range of good practice actions for companies of all shapes and sizes. Some organizations may already have experienced the value of some of these actions – such as remote and flexible working models, or assignment of sponsors. Other actions may provide new food for thought – e.g. undertaking unconscious bias training, re-thinking job profiles, implementing systems of face-to-face feedback, or encouraging men to also act as role models. In all cases, the rationale underpinning each action is spelt out in the study's appendix, in order to assist companies in setting concrete goals.

## This Guide is for You

The facts and figures presented in this study should act as a red alert system for all companies with regard to the need to act now to address the deficit of women in tech. As the stakeholders at the front-line of the digital world, companies in the Internet industry play a key role in bridging the gender divide and promoting democratic values, and have an unparalleled motivation to do so.

Whether you are a start-up, a small or medium-sized business, or a larger company or corporation – this good practice guide is intended for you.





## WOMEN IN TECH ACROSS THE GLOBE: A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR COMPANIES



*"The tech industry offers a dynamic environment in which there are many opportunities for women to help shape the future. Digitalization and demographic change will lead to even more diverse jobs and an increased demand for highly qualified specialists in the coming years. Well-trained women are needed to fill these jobs."*

Sabrina Waltz  
Community & Partner Manager, Agency Business  
1&1 IONOS SE, Germany



*"It wasn't until we started setting actual goals that we really began to make solid progress. Setting goals allows you to break down these larger ideals into smaller, achievable victories."*

Erica Varlese  
Policy & Compliance Officer  
Automatic, USA



*"We've learnt that even minor changes can have a major impact on how attractive we are for women to apply for jobs within our company."*

Wido Potters  
Manager for Support & Sales  
BIT BV, Netherlands



*"Equal leadership opportunities contribute to boosted morale and improved staff retention. This culture of fairness is one that any company can accomplish."*

Jyoti Madan, Marketing Executive  
Twinkle Kesarani, Peering Operations,  
DE-CIX India



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