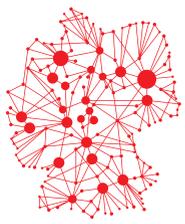
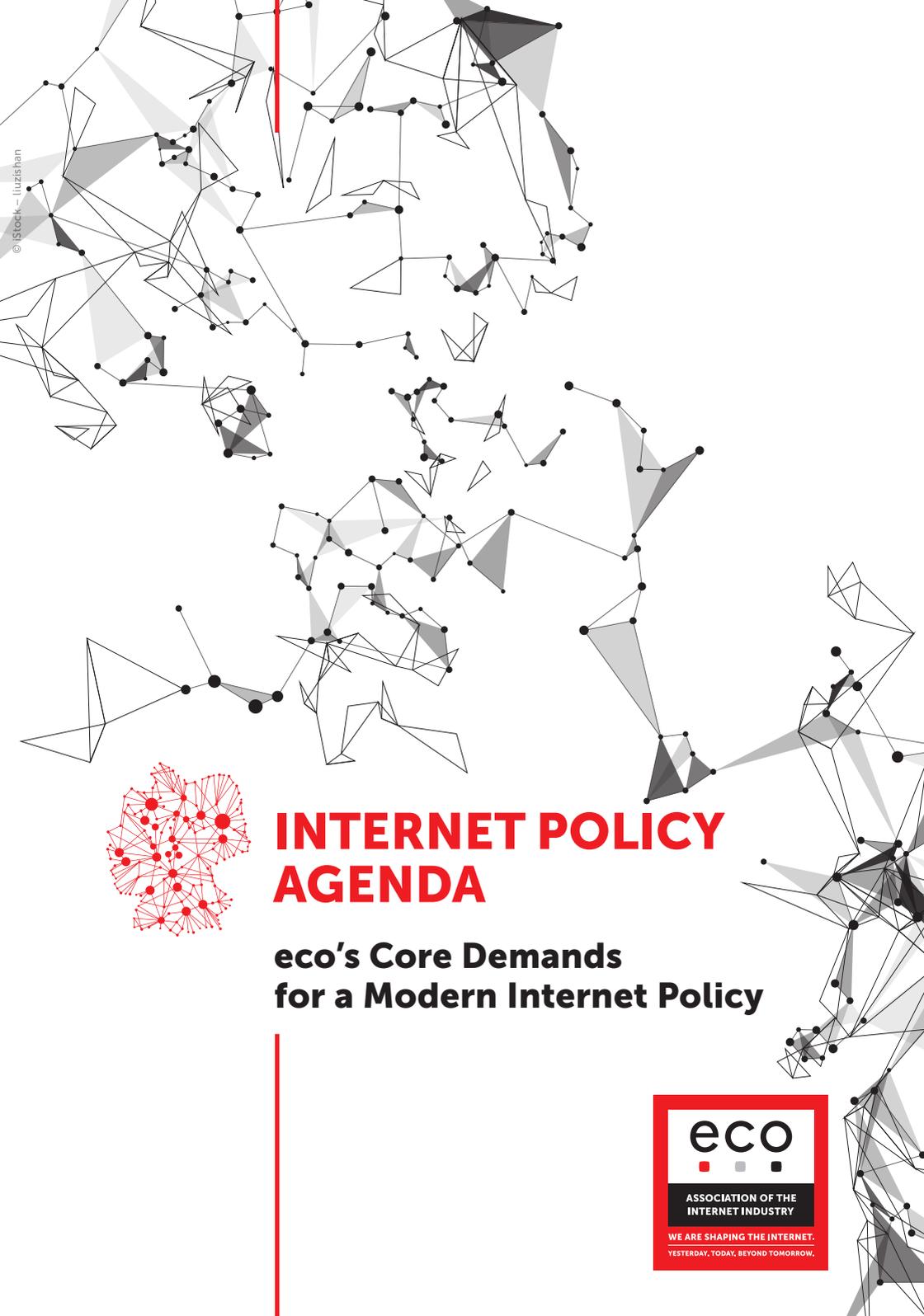


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INTERNET POLICY AGENDA

**eco's Core Demands
for a Modern Internet Policy**





INTERNET POLICY AGENDA





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■ **Summary of eco's Core Demands for a Modern Internet Policy**

The Internet is transforming our communication habits, our way of working; indeed, our entire everyday lives. It is also fundamentally altering the economy – and with it, every single company. We are experiencing a phase of structural change and upheaval, during which traditional industrial and economic sectors are changing, new business models are emerging on a daily basis, and existing ones are being optimized by digital applications. In all of this, the Internet industry serves as the key branch and growth engine of our time. Its share of the overall economy has been expanding for years. Of all economic sectors, it is the one experiencing the strongest revenue growth. It is essential to make optimum use of the opportunities and potential of this change in order to make Germany fit for the future.

eco has formulated an agenda that identifies topics and fields of action that are of particular importance from the Internet industry's point of view. This agenda is intended to provide solutions to the challenges and questions generated by the connected world. In devising the agenda, eco not only wants to contribute to the debate on a number of hotly-discussed topics – it also wants to stimulate a discourse on areas that may not be right at the top of the political agenda.



■ **Political Status of Digital Transformation**

Responsibility for Internet policy issues should be consolidated into one ministry.

Over the next few years, digital transformation will be the most important economic policy project. This requires a unified policy, one which dispenses with piecemeal structures and a clash of competences. Responsibility for network policy issues must be consolidated by the federal government and dealt with under the leadership of one ministry.

A new Bundestag steering committee should be in charge of all Internet policy issues.

A specialized committee in the Bundestag should provide parliamentary support for Internet policy in Germany. Deliberating upon Internet issues within at least four different committees does not do justice to the status of digital change and leads to friction losses that hinder efficient and consistent implementation.

The federal government's Digital Agenda should be updated for the 2017-2021 legislative term.

The federal government's Digital Agenda must also be updated in the next legislative term. This requires concrete and objectively measurable target agreements. There is a particular need for reform in adapting laws and regulations to reflect digital reality. In this context, an overall adaptation of written form requirements and a "digitalization-suitability proofing" of new regulations suggest themselves as appropriate measures.



■ Infrastructure and Networks

The gigabit society must become a reality in Germany by the year 2025.

Broadband expansion is the most important infrastructure project of the coming years and must be resolutely pursued, with the goal being one of a “gigabit society”. In order not to lag behind other countries, by 2025 every household in Germany must be able to access the Internet at a speed of 1 Gbit/s. For many companies and universities, there simply is no other alternative; they have to be able to connect to multi gigabit-capable networks and have to have a direct connection to the fibre optic infrastructure.

The complete digitalization of public authorities and state institutions must be implemented as quickly as possible.

The transition of state institutions to the digital world of the 21st century is still in its infancy. In order to ensure a functioning exchange with citizens and the business community, the backlog of reforms must be addressed without delay. To do this, what is needed is a centrally coordinated national strategy which would also secure the interoperability of official systems.



■ Platform Regulation

A level playing field for competition on digital markets must be guaranteed.

Steadily advancing digitalization means that new services and offers are constantly being created on the Internet. In the past, these have frequently been regulated on a case-by-case basis, with the result that the rules for these services often differ considerably from those for “traditional” telecommunications services. For this reason, an adaptation to the digital economy is urgently required at both German and European level.

Network neutrality must be guaranteed throughout Europe.

The adoption of the EU Digital Single Market Strategy resulted in so-called “net neutrality” being enshrined for the first time as a basic principle in European policy. The federal government needs to take care that the leeway given by the Regulation is interpreted uniformly throughout Europe. Only in this way can the creation of a digital single market be promoted and the competitiveness of European companies be strengthened. Here, competition and transparency are crucial factors in securing and guaranteeing the open Internet.

A single regulatory model for convergent media must be established.

As part of technological development, media convergence is also moving ahead rapidly, with the result that individual services are becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate from one another. Nevertheless, attempts are still being made to distinguish and regulate the different offers by means of traditional criteria of differentiation. This tension between “traditional” and “new” media needs to be resolved. One possible solution would be to harmonize existing regulatory models and to create a consistent, reliable basis for broadcasting and Internet services.



■ Copyright

Copyright law must be newly conceptualized and comprehensively reformed.

German and European copyright law is not tailored to the use of works in digital form. There needs to be a comprehensive reform aligned to the needs of the digital world. New, Internet-based forms of use need to be enabled or simplified, and copyright guidelines need to be comprehensible and manageable for consumers and users alike. Overall, a balanced structure needs to be created that, rather than gearing itself to preserving traditional business models, focuses instead on the consistent adaptation of copyright to the needs of digitalization.

■ IT Security

IT security must be designated and promoted as a core competence of the German industry.

IT security must be developed and promoted as one of the core competencies of the German economy as a whole. In this respect, a pragmatic approach involving a public-private partnership is appropriate. There is a need to dispense with regulatory measures that are overly stringent but nonetheless inefficient. This also applies to the implementation of the EU NIS Directive at the German level. A further requirement is the development and widespread deployment of user-friendly encryption solutions.



■ Data Protection

Balanced regulations must be formulated for data protection.

By international standards, Germany has very restrictive legislation in the area of data protection. Unfortunately, excessive demands in this area prevent companies from developing new business models. Rather than leading to an increase in data protection for the citizen, the repercussions are that services simply move to other continents. The freedoms offered by the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) should thus be safeguarded – not least for purposes of innovation – and it should be ensured that the GDPR is uniformly implemented.

■ State Surveillance

The powers of the secret services must be restricted.

Revelations of recent years, particularly those made by Edward Snowden, have permanently shaken trust in digital services. Nonetheless, allowing access on a massive scale to companies' data stores and technical transmission and forwarding systems must not be permitted. The federal government should neither support nor tolerate access by foreign secret services. The G-10 Commission must once again be given far-reaching supervisory rights.

The revised blanket data retention rules must be repealed once more.

The law to introduce a storage obligation and maximum storage period for traffic data infringes on national and European fundamental rights. Moreover, the regulations are ineffective and technically almost impossible to implement. The law must therefore be abolished once more.



■ Illegal Activities Online

The principle of “take-down instead of blocking” is the correct political approach to dealing with illegal content on the Internet, both at federal and European level.

Take-down is the central and most effective means of combating illegal content. The method is fast, effective, and sustainable. The policy of “take-down instead of blocking” must therefore apply without restrictions, not only in Germany but throughout the whole of the European Union.

To combat illegal content, the federal government should advocate for permanent funding for complaints offices throughout the EU.

Complaints offices and hotlines play a central role in combating illegal content on the Internet. Germany must work to ensure that these are financially supported and developed on a long-term basis throughout Europe. This strategy in the fight against illegal content will only have a sustainable impact if each Member State continues in the future to have at least one complaints office.

The liability regime of the e-Commerce Directive must not be undermined.

There is a growing tendency to delegate sovereign tasks to providers. However, this threatens to undermine the e-Commerce Directive, which under no circumstances should be allowed to happen. Equally, the Directive itself should not be altered. This would have incalculable consequences for the Internet industry and in turn for the digital single market throughout the whole of Europe. Even voluntary commitments and “voluntary agreements” with providers must be viewed very critically, if the aim of these is to debilitate the legal liability regime.



Sovereign tasks should not be transferred to providers, with this also applying to the case of hate speech.

Operators of large platforms are obliged to comply with certain standards for the removal of hate comments. However, anybody prepared to shift responsibility for decision-making concerning the illegality of content away from statutory bodies and towards industries in the private sector, must also be prepared to accept surveillance and non-transparent filtering of content. Providers cannot and should not be able to carry out a complete monitoring of their platforms – and they should certainly not have to do so to comply with the rule of law.

■ **Industry Promotion**

Reduced bureaucracy and improved access to capital would enable young companies to enter the digital economy.

In Germany, bureaucracy and the difficult acquisition of capital make life difficult for young companies. But in order for the digital economy to be successful and internationally accessible, innovation and investment-friendly framework conditions are exactly what is needed. The regulations in this area should thus be scaled down and the establishment and registration of companies simplified.

The use of the cloud must be a central component of the government's IT strategy.

Cloud computing in companies must be further promoted. This requires a dialog-oriented approach which builds on existing information supplies. The state itself should play a pioneering role in the use of cloud services. These services, as well as the agreed digital procurement system, should form a central component of the government's IT strategy.



The Internet of Things: Germany must be prepared for the connected world of tomorrow.

The Internet of Things (IoT) is a driver of digital transformation. The growing significance of this area must be translated into new research and funding initiatives for the German industry. Apart from continuing funding programs for digitalization, this also requires stronger interconnection between stakeholders from science, industry, and public administration. In addition, internationalization must be promoted through concrete information and educational services for entrepreneurs.

Subsidy programs for digitalization for small and medium-sized enterprises must be extended.

Digitalization changes each and every company. Without advice and support, it is particularly difficult for many small and medium-sized companies to optimally press ahead with all necessary processes. What is required is the development of nationwide initiatives to create incentives and offer support for the challenging transition to digitalization.

Education and Work

Information technology should be introduced in every type of school and across all federal states as a compulsory subject for all age groups.

Learning to practically apply IT core competences is essential for a smooth transition to professional life. Information technology must therefore be introduced on a nationwide basis as a compulsory subject from primary school onwards. At the same time, this must be accompanied by adequate technical equipping of schools. In addition to providing basic IT knowledge, the aim of courses must be to impart media competence and information-evaluation skills.



Study programs and vocational training must be tailor-made to meet the requirements of the digitalized labour market.

The transmission of IT skills must continue to be provided within vocational training and academic study programs. These educational programs must integrate practical applications of the new information technologies and media, customized to the respective subject. Above all, there is a need to create more specialized courses of study, with the Internet industry already demonstrating a strong demand for graduates of such courses.

Labour law provisions must be adapted to the changing requirements.

The digitalization of the working world and work processes will generate many changes. This overall transition should be regarded above all as an opportunity. While fears of a widespread loss of jobs are understandable, they are unfounded. Politics should invest in new approaches. Above all, however, labour law provisions must be adapted to facilitate flexible and mobile forms of work.

■ **International Internet Policy**

The commitment to international Internet policy should be strengthened.

The free, open, technology-neutral, and decentralized structure of the Internet must be maintained. This can only work if the Internet is managed neutrally and is not dominated by individual players or governments. The federal government and the Bundestag should therefore also focus on international network policy and play an active role in shaping it. In the instance of international treaties that do not explicitly refer to the self-governance of the Internet, it is imperative to ensure that these basic principles are not undermined.



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