



Contribution by the Chair

DRAFT OPINION 5: STRENGTHENING ICT-CENTRIC INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Purpose

This document presents interim version of Draft Opinion 5: Strengthening ICT-Centric Innovation Ecosystems and Entrepreneurship for the Seventh World Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology Policy Forum (WTPF-26). The edits reflect changes agreed by members of the Informal Expert Group during the January 2026 IEG meeting.

Action required

The Informal Expert Group on WTPF-26 is invited to **consider** this document.

References

[IEG-WTPF-26 webpage](#)

DRAFT OPINION 5: Strengthening ICT-centric innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship

The seventh World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (Geneva, 2026),

recalling

- a) United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/80/173 on the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20);
- b) [United Nations General Assembly Resolution 79/1 on the Pact for the Future;]
- c) United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1 on transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular, Sustainable Development Goals 8, on Decent Work and Economic Growth, and 9, on Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure;
- d) Resolution 198 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on empowerment of youth through telecommunication/information and communication technology (ICT);
- e) Resolution 205 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the ITU's role in fostering telecommunication/information and communication technology-centric innovation to support the digital economy and society;
- f) Resolution 209 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on Encouraging the participation of small and medium enterprises in the work of the Union,

recognising

- a) that ICT-centric innovation ecosystems can foster socio-economic development and community revitalization, addressing environmental challenges, driving sustainable development while increasing inclusiveness, providing economies of scale, and bridging the digital divide;
- b) that as digital natives, young people have important roles to play in ICT-centric innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship;
- c) that supporting ICT-centric innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship, including through promoting an enabling environment, is key to digital transformation and digital inclusion;
- d) that start-up entrepreneurs and MSMEs, especially those from developing countries, *unserved*, and under-served areas, may face challenges regarding ICT-centric innovation and these challenges should be addressed holistically;
- e) that digital divides impose a core obstacle to telecommunication/ICT entrepreneurship and ICT-centric innovation;
- f) that ITU has been contributing to the sustainable development of the global digital economy through promoting the access to and development of telecommunications/ICT, advancing standardization of telecommunications/ICT, and fostering partnerships,

considering

that stakeholders including governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and academia, and international organizations have important roles to play in an ecosystem which encourages and supports ICT-centric innovation and entrepreneurship,

is of the view

- 1 that telecommunications/ICTs are key enablers of entrepreneurship offering significant opportunities for growth, innovation, and sustainable development;

2 that strengthening ICT-centric innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship involves activating key factors such as access to capital, telecommunication/ICT and diverse digital skill sets, fostering public-private partnerships, including for financing; ensuring open and competitive markets that enable new players to enter, innovate, and grow; and streamlining regulatory frameworks;

3 that evidence based policymaking and transparent, and predictable regulatory frameworks that encourage digital transformation should be updated in line with best practices as these are essential for fostering ICT-centric innovation and entrepreneurship that benefit entrepreneurs and MSMEs, while facilitating collaboration with larger enterprises and their integration into innovation ecosystems;

4 that sustained efforts are essential to unlock the opportunities of the digital economy and telecommunications/ICT ecosystem, and to allow for greater participation and integration in digital transformation, whereby all stakeholders can contribute to creating a robust and flexible policy environment in the telecommunications/ICT sector;

5 that open-source software could be beneficial for entrepreneurs and MSMEs to access and deploy new and emerging telecommunication/ICTs services and technologies;

6 that the availability and quality of digital skilling opportunities, including through school curricula and lifelong learning, play a critical role in shaping a society's potential for innovation and entrepreneurship;

7 that it is important to empower unserved and underserved communities as entrepreneurs by endeavouring to ensure their access to key enablers of innovation, such as financing, with deliberate measures to accelerate women and youth participation;

8 that ITU, within its mandate and existing mechanisms, can further enhance its role in supporting ICT-centric innovation ecosystems, and entrepreneurship, and contribute to the development of the digital economy,

invites Member States

1 to foster an enabling environment for ICT-centric innovation ecosystems by strengthening evidence-based policymaking alongside transparent, and predictable regulatory frameworks, updated in line with best practices and to consider policies and strategies to support ICT-centric innovation, empowering MSMEs to actively participate in the digital economy and enhance competition;

2 to encourage investments by removing barriers in digital ecosystems, and create favourable conditions for investment and innovation;

3 [to consider collaborating with the ITU Regional Offices, where appropriate, to facilitate connections among Member States, Sector Members, and academia with a view to expanding the impact of locally relevant innovations through digital inclusion;]

4 to promote awareness of environmental challenges within initiatives aimed at strengthening ICT-centric innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship;

6 [to promote widespread, equitable and affordable access to telecommunication/ICT services by fostering ICT-centric innovation ecosystems through competition, innovation, private investment and public-private partnerships and to enhance the affordability and availability of telecommunication/ICT equipment to support innovation and entrepreneurship;]

7 to facilitate digital transformation, and by taking appropriate action to support start-up entrepreneurs and enterprises including in unserved and underserved communities in better leveraging telecommunications/ICTs;

8 to consider creating an ICT-centric innovation ecosystem that fosters the participation of enterprises of all sizes—large, medium, small, and micro—while promoting telecommunication/ICT-centric skills development to support sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation;

10 to take steps to address the gender digital divide in order to support ICT-centric innovation and entrepreneurship by women and girls in the telecommunications/ICT sector;

13 to consider implementing demand-oriented ICT-centric innovation policy frameworks to accelerate commercialization and improve the conditions of ICT-centric innovations as an enabler for the digital economy; (Note: candidate for deletion if covered elsewhere)

invites Member States and Sector Members and other stakeholders

1 to foster transparent, stable, predictable and competitive policy frameworks for promoting an ICT-centric innovation ecosystem;

2 to facilitate public-private investment by fostering closer collaboration between education and research centres and the private sector, while considering funding internships and scholarships and promoting telecommunication/ICT-centric skills development within national education systems to support ICT-centric innovation ecosystems that drive entrepreneurship;

3 to promote and develop public-private-partnerships to support telecommunications/ICT infrastructure, incubation, and early-stage funding for ICT start-ups;

4 to foster participation and development of enterprises of all sizes—large, medium, small and micro—while promoting the digital transformation of the entire value chain, and to proactively share best practices that support MSMEs in their digital transformation efforts;

5 to support and establish initiatives through partnership with industry and academia that promote ICT-centric entrepreneurship among young people, while enhancing digital talent supply and targeted digital skills training and digital-literacy programmes to close existing skills gaps;

6 to encourage ICT-centric innovation and entrepreneurship within local populations by supporting community-driven programs and complementary solutions, while taking into account the diverse views and needs of all stakeholders—including the private sector, civil society, the technical community, and academia;

7 to support research on barriers affecting ICT-centric entrepreneurial activities, implement tailored strategies to address these barriers, and share best practices on regional, local, and national initiatives that promote ICT-centric innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship;

8 to foster international and regional cooperation to share good practises and support capacity development to access the benefits of telecommunications/ICTs and bridging the digital divides;

9 to encourage MSMEs to participate in international open-source initiatives for new and emerging telecommunication/ICT services and technologies;[

10 to promote collaboration between industry and academia to foster the sustainability of ICT-centric innovations,

invites the Secretary-General

to enhance ITU's role within its mandate and existing mechanisms as a platform for collaboration and dialogue between Member States, Sector Members and academia, capacity building, and exchange good practices on ICT-centric innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurship.