



## Responses to Futurium by Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Germany)

### RE: DEI WG2: Oct 21 workshop report

Open question: Piloting platform for the horizontal topics should be done taking a cross-sector approach or should be included in the above vertical topics?

In the respective host countries (mainly vertical) platforms have already been established for specific subject areas (e. g. Industrie 4.0). These structures should be used, linked and expanded. Establishing an overall "platform of platforms" seems not an advisable approach as this is a) a very time-consuming process, b) is not reasonable in view of the outcome, c) hampers the activities of national platforms and d) means a duplication of existing structures with most topics.

Attention should instead be given to defining joint objectives and ways of communication and using already well-established structures. A cross-sector approach seems suitable for horizontal topics and could include the thematic areas of standardization, communication strategies, and common mission and vision.

What is the current landscape of activities in Europe?

A very successful platform in the area of "Connected Smart Factory" is [Plattform Industrie 4.0](#), for which the German Research and Economics Ministries (BMBF and BMWi) bear joint responsibility. An international component has recently been added to this website.

The Fraunhofer [Industrial Data Space e.V.](#) should be mentioned in the "Industrial Data Platforms" area. This association aims to internationalize its work and improve its visibility within Europe. The experience gained in pursuing this goal can provide a basis for creating large-scale effects and using them for a horizontal pilot project.

Other national platforms in the discussed subject areas are neither available nor planned.

Where do we want to go?

As we are not planning to establish further new national platforms, our aim is to develop the existing platforms further and strengthen their international focus while avoiding the creation of unnecessary meta-structures. Transnational integration, mutual



adaptation of tried and tested elements and direct exchange of experience would be suitable instruments. Strategic coordination, direct contact/communication and exchange of good-practice are a must in this context. Large-scale effects can thus be generated from existing structures through Europe-wide adaptation and participation. This development would be greatly welcome.

How do we bridge the gap between what we have and what we want to achieve?

In order to be able to bridge possible gaps, we first need to agree on an appropriate joint course. Specific objectives, the distribution of responsibilities in accordance with the level of national experience and a clear and transparent (direct) communication structure are indispensable in this process. Only when internationalization strategies have been agreed and the first steps made can we address a possible need for improvement and identify the gaps to be bridged. It is also important that we decide on the priorities before starting implementation. Considering the dimension of the topic of digitalization, we can only be successful if we focus on the essential aspects.

Who are the main stakeholders to be involved?

It has proven as a useful approach to involve research institutions and universities while establishing industry-driven platforms. Strong participation by commercial, industrial and service companies is very important because this means that stakeholders willing and able to act on their own accord are involved and that societal needs – which any action must target – are integrated.

In this context too, meta-structures and top-down approaches do not seem to be the right choice. It should be possible for stakeholders to communicate directly without too much red tape. Public authorities mainly act as facilitators, enabling integration and removing existing obstacles.