

# ONet Initiative on Digital Transformation

Section to be completed by the initiative lead.

<b>Title of Initiative</b>	Digital Transformation
<b>Lead<sup>1</sup></b>	Franziska Fischer
<b>Start of Initiative<sup>2</sup></b>	On 01.04.2025
<b>Submission of 1<sup>st</sup> Progress report<sup>3</sup></b>	By 31.05.2025

## Summary of Initiative

### Rationale

The challenge, opportunity, or gap that this initiative addresses, relevant to ONet's role in engaging stakeholders in IPBES processes. Please be as specific as possible.

ONet was founded as "an inclusive, open-ended network of stakeholders [...] working primarily on a virtual basis" (IPBES Decision 3/4). To work towards its goals and support a worldwide community, ONet needs suitable, reliable and widely accessible virtual infrastructure. ONet's early facilitation teams laid the foundations accordingly.

More recently, experiences of people managing ONet and investigations of the network's infrastructure have shown that routine maintenance no longer suffices: due to ONet's most welcome growth in membership and activities, as well as external technological, legal and social changes, it needs a coherent digital transformation strategy and digital development. For example, the website requires fundamental changes to ensure its future security, performance and usability; the social media landscape has changed substantially, especially for science communication; a number of the network's online tools have gone dormant, while ONet does not yet have several new tools that could benefit member activities, as well as the network's capacity, effectiveness and reach.

In summary, ONet shares many community and non-profit organisations' need for digital transformation to "remain viable, credible and impactful" (Nikita et al. 2024). Digital transformation is "a process that aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes to its properties through combinations of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies," according to the widely cited Vial (2019). This initiative seeks to improve how ONet functions, but also to pave the way for innovative stakeholder activities.

<sup>1</sup> If an initiative has co-leads, their tasks must be clearly assigned in the concept note.

<sup>2</sup> Initiatives start on the first of a month to support subsequent reporting. They may be backdated.

<sup>3</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> progress report needs to be submitted by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of the initiative.

#### References:

Nikita et al. (2024) Digital Transformation in Non-Profit Organizations: Strategies, Challenges, and Successes, Advanced International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 2 (5), <https://doi.org/10.62127/aijmr.2024.v02i05.1097>  
Vial (2019) Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda, Journal of Strategic Information Systems, 28, 118-144, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2019.01.003>

### Vision

What success looks like: the intended impact or outcome for stakeholders and/or IPBES.

The ONet website is the network's online calling card and a gateway to IPBES. It is embedded in a virtual infrastructure of electronic communications and tools: supporting lively exchange with IPBES stakeholders, meaningful conversation among them, and innovative activities in their engagement. Both the website and the wider infrastructure run quietly, ensuring that our members and our guests can focus on the content and the topics that matter the most.

Alongside its website, ONet's core infrastructure includes systems for archiving and knowledge management, as well as systems for accepting financial and in-kind contributions. ONet initiatives have access to a selection of tools that meet their specific needs: for example for mapping stakeholders or co-creating learning resources. Social media engagement is shared among the experts within ONet: social media resources help active ONet members showcase their activities and achievements, while viewers receive personal and tangible content that invites them to join. The facilitation team has access to a shared virtual workspace that helps us securely organise our work and communicate seamlessly.

### Expected Outputs

Tangible deliverables (e.g., reports, events, tools, outreach materials).

The overall goal and ultimate output is a new infrastructure as outlined in the vision. On the way there this initiative will deliver for example:

- A website design and architecture that is easy to navigate and pleasant to use.
- A new social media strategy.
- A detailed map of the revised virtual infrastructure, covering background research, user input, and the selected tools: for knowledge management, communication, and collaboration.

### Alignment with ONet Values and IPBES

How this initiative reflects ONet's mission of inclusive stakeholder engagement and supports IPBES's objectives. Please refer to the [IPBES Objectives](#) and [ONet Terms of Reference](#) as appropriate.

This initiative addresses detailed specifications in ONet's founding document: the IPBES Plenary anticipated the network's "use of social media and electronic mailing lists" and "use of information and communications technology tools."

Reviewing, updating and improving ONet's virtual infrastructure will help us ensure that the network is indeed inclusive and can further expand its reach in future. For example, stakeholders are located in different time zones, which requires options for asynchronous work. Some stakeholders have fewer electronic resources, thus our infrastructure needs to be accessible from various devices and with poor internet access. Stakeholders vary in digital skills, which relevant infrastructure needs to account for. Stakeholders may also have accessibility needs that we should strive to meet wherever possible for ONet as a self-organised group.

ONet as a recognised stakeholder network comes under the current IPBES objective 5: communicating and engaging; some of ONet's current and future activities also touch on IPBES objective 1: assessing knowledge and IPBES objective 2: building capacity. ONet's virtual infrastructure underpins all of ONet's work and this initiative ensures that the network can undertake its activities efficiently and effectively on a global scale.

## Activities

### Roadmap

Milestones and timeline (initiatives start on the first of a month).

#### **Work on digital transformation commenced before this initiative was formalised:**

- A sketch of ONet's existing digital infrastructure has already been completed: covering its website, virtual links with IPBES, and further virtual tools and accounts.
- A new newsletter system, template and checklist have been implemented that are cost-effective, user-friendly for authors and readers, and that accommodate increasing subscription numbers.
- A new homepage design has been drafted, with notes for the overall website: incorporating key aspects of webdesign, observed user behaviour, advice from IPBES IT experts, and iterative input from members of the ONet facilitation team: including challenges identified in training sessions, user requests, and comments on drafts.

The initiative will continue to co-evolve in a collaborative spirit alongside ONet's ongoing development. Milestones over the next three months will primarily improve the virtual infrastructure's functionality and ensure that it meets ONet's current needs:

#### **By 04/2025**

- Notes for the new website design are finalised and shared with IPBES IT experts.
- Active ONet member organizations have met (part 1): what benefits does ONet offer for member organizations and what information do they need on that relationship?
- Draft overviews lay out options for the legal structure and acquiring external resources that the network's digital transformation requires (see the mid and long-term goals below).

#### **By 05/2025**

- A card-sorting exercise invites the ONet's facilitation team to provide input on the future website's content architecture. (The exercise may be repeated with further user groups.)
- ONet member organizations have met (part 2): how will they be shown on ONet's website and how will the virtual infrastructure support their future interaction with ONet?

- A new social media strategy has been proposed to the ONet facilitation team: the new strategy will draw on the facilitation team's experiences with social media management, needs of new ONet initiatives, and advice from an IPBES social media expert.

**By 06/2025**

- A revised virtual infrastructure has been proposed to the ONet facilitation team: this will cover the website itself, as well as further virtual tools and accounts. It incorporates the earlier sketch of ONet's digital infrastructure, needs identified by the new ONet initiatives, needs and wishes communicated by stakeholders, and input from meetings with ONet's member organizations. It makes room for future development.

**Mid to long-term goals for digital transformation include:**

- Further expanding digital transformation to ONet's full membership.
- Implementing virtual infrastructure beyond functionality, aligning it with best practices for community groups and non-profits.
- Working with the ONet governance initiative to explore structural options for long-term support, especially concerning the network's virtual infrastructure: in particular, certain infrastructure is only available with types of legal status that exceed ONet's current setup.

**Resources and Collaboration**

Specific resources from ONet or external partners in support of this initiative. This includes collaborations with other ONet initiatives. Examples include technical advice, tools, promotions or networking.

This ONet initiative will draw on a variety of sources and input from users, as outlined in the roadmap above: communication, participation and collaboration are essential for successful digital transformation. This initiative will primarily work closely with all other ONet initiatives to ensure that they have appropriate means and tools to function. It will further collaborate with the governance initiative on future-proofing support for ONet and its infrastructure. The initiative will consult with the membership initiative to improve inclusive virtual access and participation for ONet members. It is already working with IT and communications experts based at the IPBES secretariat, and in future may also seek coordination with the IPBES technical support units on data management and on capacity-building. The initiative may further engage with external partners on in-kind contributions to ONet's virtual infrastructure.

☒ I confirm that I lead this initiative and am responsible for its implementation.

☒ I confirm that this initiative has been reviewed by two members of the facilitation team and that I have updated it accordingly.

My two reviewers were Maja Leonie Metzger and Michael Ruggeri.

☒ I confirm that I am submitting a progress report by the end of every second month beginning from the start of the initiative to [onet.ipbes@gmail.com](mailto:onet.ipbes@gmail.com). If progress reports are not sent on time, steps for escalation and potential archiving apply, per ONet guidelines.

30.04.2025, Franziska Fischer  
Date and name of the initiative lead<sup>4</sup>

**Section to be completed by the ONet facilitator.**

This initiative was presented and approved by the ONet facilitation team in the ONet monthly meeting on 21.05.2025.

  
22.05.2025, Maja Leonie Metzger  
Date and name of the assigned ONet facilitator

<sup>4</sup> Typing the name accounts as signing this document. Initiative leads can additionally express the interest to add their signature on the PDF via e-mail to [onet.ipbes@gmail.com](mailto:onet.ipbes@gmail.com).