



## **Responsible business conduct & digitalisation**

Workshop - 4 November 2019  
[OECD Conference Centre](#), Room CC4

### **Background**

The digital economy has had a profound impact on the global business landscape. New phenomena such as online platforms, social media, digital ledger technology, big data and online service providers affect business models and our understanding of what a “business” is. It has changed the notion of “multinational enterprise” with the emergence of new forms of firms and industries operating internationally, such as the platform economy, many of which were “born global” and are not linked to a specific country. Digitalisation has a significant impact on the workplace and can affect production and distribution, both positively and negatively. It has driven innovation in all sectors, but also contributed to the transformation and disruption of traditional industries, making it imperative for incumbents to acquire new digital competencies rapidly.

The implications of digitalisation for responsible business conduct (RBC) are manifold but three aspects seem particularly relevant: the notion of multinational enterprises, the conduct of due diligence and the specific roles and responsibilities of business and governments in a digital context. For example, new digital tools can accelerate development, and enable businesses to strengthen their efforts to act responsibly, in particular as it relates to responsible supply chain management (e.g. blockchain technology to manage supply chains, machine learning and analytics to track risk). At the same time, the digital transformation can also lead to business causing or contributing to human rights and other social and environmental harms in new ways (e.g. risk of bias and discrimination in the use of artificial intelligence, and human rights risks associated with surveillance technology and the misuse of online content platforms).

Within this context, governments are confronted with new opportunities and challenges while promoting the implementation of RBC standards, including the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. National Contact Points have already seen an increase in specific instances dealing with the RBC implications of new technologies. The OECD’s Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct, which is applicable to all sectors of the economy, provides a general framework that can help companies structure their processes to identify and address these emerging risks and opportunities. How this works in practice for companies involved in the digital transformation is an area that may be further explored. At the OECD, governments have discussed the broader challenges of digitalisation in the framework of the [Going Digital](#) project, which involves numerous policy communities and stakeholders.

### **Objectives of the workshop**

The workshop is aimed at educating and building capacity of Adherents to the Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises (“Adherents”), on emerging digital technologies and the implications for RBC. Specifically, the workshop will introduce Adherents to emerging technologies and help understand their potential for doing good, as well as their actual and potential adverse impacts on people, the environment and society. Adherents will also learn about key international, industry or multi-stakeholder efforts underway or planned to address those risks. Delegates from the OECD Committee on Digital Economy Policy will be invited. Experts from business, workers, civil society and academics will participate as necessary to present and inform the debate. The workshop will aim to support the Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct in identifying strategic areas for any future work in this field.

## **Draft agenda**

Sessions will be interactive and seek to foster discussion with participants. Each session will start with a brief presentation by expert(s) to explain the basics of the technology and the key RBC issues and efforts underway, followed by a discussion among experts and participants.

9:30 – 9:45	<b>Welcome from the Chair of the Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct</b>
9:45 – 10:45	<b>Scene setting – the digital transformation &amp; responsible business conduct</b>
10:45 – 11:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.15 – 13.00	<b>Artificial intelligence &amp; responsible business conduct</b>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 15:45	<b>Online platforms, social media &amp; responsible business conduct</b>
15:45 – 16:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
16:15 – 17:15	<b>Blockchain &amp; responsible business conduct</b>
17:15 – 18:00	<b>Wrap up - key and takeaways</b>