



**Empfang der G7-Digitalminister anlässlich der G7-Digitalminister-Konferenz/G7 Digital Ministerial Meeting am 10. Mai 2022 um 18.00 Uhr im Rathaus, Jan-Wellem-Saal**

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort!

[Anreden]

I am extremely pleased that the G7 Digital Ministerial Meeting is being held in Düsseldorf.

On this occasion it is a special honour and pleasure for me to welcome you to Düsseldorf. I would also like to welcome you very warmly to the Jan-Wellem-Saal in our City Hall.

I extend my gratitude to the Federal Government for selecting Düsseldorf as the venue for this conference. The first G20 Digital Ministerial Meeting was also held in Düsseldorf in 2017.

I'm pleased that Düsseldorf has an excellent reputation as a strong international centre for business, and I'm also pleased that Düsseldorf is once again the place that sets impulses to drive forward digitalisation in the most important industrial nations.

It's a well-established tradition in Düsseldorf to receive high-ranking guests in the City Hall. And it's also traditional to toast with a glass of Altbier.

The sociable get-together atmosphere in a brewery is emblematic of the zest for life in our city. It stands for conviviality and the Rhenish way of life, for hospitality and therefore also for tolerance and a cosmopolitan outlook.

The vibrant communities of your home countries also contribute to Düsseldorf's 'international flair'. So Düsseldorf virtually brings together the G7 states 'in a nutshell'. And we maintain good connections to your countries, for example to Canada and the United States. Only a few days ago the U.S. Ambassador visited the City Hall.

We're also proud of long-lasting relationships with Italy and Great Britain. We're linked with Reading by the oldest twinning in Germany – this year we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the city friendship. We're happy about our close friendship with our neighbouring country France, and we celebrate this every year with our Frankreichfest, our 'France Festival'. Düsseldorf also has a USP as the "Little Tokyo on the Rhine" with the largest Japanese community on the continent, along with a corresponding infrastructure.

Your compatriots and people from around another 180 nations are attracted by the high quality of life to be found in Düsseldorf, which is confirmed again and again by surveys of expats and corresponding rankings. They appreciate the sophisticated cultural activities, the green areas and closeness to the Rhine as well as the excellent infrastructure and good transport connections, and further aspects such as safety, cleanliness and order.

But above all, they appreciate Düsseldorf's innovative strength and the city's importance as a location for business. They themselves contribute to this and to the prosperity of the region: as specialists and executive managers in around five thousand international companies at the location, and in one of the many European and German headquarters of international corporations that have headquarters here on the Rhine. Düsseldorf is therefore one of Germany's business cities most strongly influenced by internationality.

This is also reflected in the foreign direct investments. Düsseldorf demonstrates a tremendous pulling force in this regard: around forty percent of all FDI going to North Rhine-Westphalia flow into our city.

For several years Düsseldorf has been a leading location for mobile communication. Network operators, IT equipment suppliers as well as suppliers and software companies are located here and form an impressive 'mobile ecosystem'.

Based on this, Düsseldorf has developed in a unique way as a digital location. Important technology and innovation drivers of digitalisation operate in Düsseldorf. The city, in contrast to almost any other German or European city, also has a large pool of companies and professionals who are leaders in digital transformation.

In Düsseldorf the digital transformation also comes together with the green transformation. Digitalisation is a cross-sectional technology to achieve the goals of the EU's Green Deal, to which we in Düsseldorf also feel committed as a municipality.

In total, more than 1,700 ICT companies with over 30,000 employees are based here, such as global network operators, network equipment suppliers and the manufacturers of mobile devices. All steps of the value chain are to be found.

Düsseldorf's USP as a hotspot for digitalisation is an unrivalled combination because drivers in the mobile and digital economy are at home here. A large B2B potential of users exists in Germany's largest metropolitan region and one of the most important and densely populated economic areas in Europe.

The research work of large companies contributes just as much to the innovation culture of the location as the lively and creative start-up scene.

And we should also not forget the range of talents that can be found here locally. Düsseldorf is the centre of one of the densest science regions in Europe.

64 university locations with 10 clusters of excellence and more than 340,000 students make the region the think tank of Europe.

Some of the projects that make Düsseldorf stand out as a digital location are displayed in a small exhibition in the adjacent Baroque Gallery. Please feel free to take a look there.

I hope you get a first impression of the diversity of the digital location, and of the qualities that make Düsseldorf a city well worth living in. 'Düsseldorf and digitalisation' belong together, and 'Altbier and Artificial Intelligence' are no contradiction either.

In terms of digitalisation, Düsseldorf is determined to continue its pioneering role in the future. This is why I'm grateful that you are dedicating yourself to the G7 in Düsseldorf as Specialist Ministers. I would like to once again extend a warm welcome to you.