

# Communication on Progress 2020

United Nations Global Compact

## Statement of Continued Support by our CEO

We hereby declare that ifok – located in Germany and since October 2nd, 2017 member of the Cadmus Group – in the 17th year continues to embrace the United Nations Global Compact and its ten principles and that we actively integrate the principles into our daily business activities. We strongly believe in the value of this global network and its emphasis on the enlightened self-interest of all relevant social actors, including companies.

### Our Business

ifok GmbH is a strategy and change management consultancy offering expert analysis, strategy development, project implementation, and communication services. At present, in total 180 staff members work from our ifok offices in Berlin, Bensheim, Düsseldorf, and Munich. We stay true to our mission: To strengthen sustainable development, we develop, facilitate and moderate dialogues between the public, private and third sector. We build on a stakeholder approach, recognizing the essential role of stakeholders in strengthening the quality of advice we can provide to our clients and in shaping change processes. The approach adopted towards our clients is also the approach that ifok GmbH adopts towards its own stakeholders:

- We help clients from all three sectors of society to implement measures and improve social and environmental processes, with the very clear aim of turning responsibility into opportunity.
- We provide internal resources to educate employees on direct actions as well as on long-term goals of sustainability.
- We support suppliers and partners with defined guidelines on sourcing and delivery.
- We build relationships with the media to further sustainability goals.

### Our Commitment

We perceive environmental and social challenges as opportunities for private enterprises to provide innovative and entrepreneurial solutions towards sustainable development. Thus, in our consulting activities, we help our clients and other stakeholders to work towards a more sustainable development in a network society. Following our 2019 CoP, we are happy to report on our continued and new activities in all four areas Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption including information on measurement of outcomes.



March 2021, Henning Banthien, CEO



## PART I: HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES

**Principle 1:** Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

**Principle 2:** make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

### Assessment, Policies and Goals

At ifok GmbH, we adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to national laws. Again in 2020, ifok GmbH has not identified any internal human rights issues. For 2021 we will continue to monitor this field of actions and develop advanced measures of implementation as seen appropriate. Our goal is to maintain our zero-abuse record and to continue to be an attractive and responsible employer.

### Implementation

ifok GmbH enforced a set of policies regarding Human Rights policies. ifok GmbH has published all relevant details on employees' rights, duties and resources within the organization on its own ifok-Wiki that is available within our knowledge management and IT system. This includes policies regarding stress and overtime regulations, pregnancy, illness, health, offers of vocational training as well as guidelines related to professional ethics, best management practices and standard processes and procedures.

### Measurement of Outcomes

ifok GmbH is a strong believer in participatory governance and management. On a regular and structured basis, our employees are asked to give feedback, raise complaints and issues, and share ideas for improvement. We have established a weekly all-company call to address general updates, responsible planning and resource allocation and to give space for questions and concerns. ifok GmbH represents an open-door policy that encourages employees to directly express ideas and questions. We actively support a culture of trust and organisational learning.

We have received no complaints from employees, business partners or clients in relation to (potential) human rights violations, nor was the organization involved in any human rights incidences before or during the reporting period.

Because of the scope of our activities and the limited number of employees, an external audit on human rights performance is not considered necessary.

## PART II: LABOUR PRINCIPLES

**Principle 3:** Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

**Principle 4:** the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;

**Principle 5:** the effective abolition of child labour; and

**Principle 6:** the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

### Assessment, Policies and Goals

ifok GmbH adheres strictly to all required labour rights, including non-discrimination and equal opportunities, the freedom of association and right to collective bargaining, workplace health and safety, as well as conditions of employment and work (wages, working hours, leave, benefits etc.). ifok GmbH is an equal opportunities employer that evaluates its employees by merits only and not on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, race or religion. In addition, our company has developed further policies and measures to underline our strong belief that our employees are the most valuable asset of the company and should be able to unfold their full potential as individuals and members of the team.

### Implementation

#### Promoting workplace health and safety

ifok GmbH continues adhering to all national laws and regulation concerning workplace health and safety, including: regular check of all electric devices, regular meeting with experts on health and safety, regular on-site review with experts, regular first-aid training and offer to employees for eyesight check-ups. Furthermore, we established an internal working group on resilience and health.

In addition, ifok GmbH provides the best possible office equipment to its employees to cater to special health and illness prevention needs, e.g. desk lamps that offer more natural light to decrease eyesight stress or ergonomically designed keyboards on demand. Furthermore, we offer fresh fruits and beverages free of charge in our offices to promote healthy nutrition.

We are committed to supporting our employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, we comply with all relevant COVID-19 workplace safety regulations at our ifok offices. Our employees are generally asked to primarily work from home during the pandemic. To enable our employees working from home, they are for instance allowed to take home office equipment such as computer screens, office chairs and keyboards. The management and the HR department regularly enter into dialogue with our employees in order to be able to support them as best as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Creating a modern working environment**

ifok GmbH promotes family-friendly working conditions and career opportunities for women well beyond the average numbers or quotas in management consultancy. At present, approximately 62% of our employees in the consultant business are female and 67% of our employees who work in administration are female. Our company has developed family-friendly work schemes to facilitate a healthy work-life balance, including working from home (already long before the COVID-19 pandemic), part-time work opportunities (beyond the legal framework) and extended return programmes for stay-at-home parents. At present, approximately 43% of our employees work part-time. ifok GmbH also fully supports its employees to take advantage of parental-leave schemes.

### **Professional Development Activities**

ifok GmbH believes in high-quality training for the future generation: In 2020, ifok started training 15 young professionals in a one-year traineeship. Additionally, ifok GmbH has offered 5 internships in 2020, giving insights and skills development in various fields. Moreover, our employees engage in various external training and mentorship programs.

Continuing the high standards and extensive variety of professional development opportunities offered to our employees has been a core goal of our company. Thus, we have taken several essential measures to further enhance this important process of professional improvement and development. We continually improve the offerings of the so-called *ifok.academy*, our internal training and development programme. In 2020, our company conducted in-house trainings on a variety of topics such as moderation, conflict moderation, self-management, business skills, e-participation, project management, workshop design etc. In addition, brown bags lectures took place several times a month around lunchtime.

### **Improving the quality of work through an open culture and promotion of diversity**

We lay emphasis on an open corporate culture, which allows for mistakes to be made and that promotes the strengths of each member of the ifok team. Participation is a core principle that guides us both in our work with clients and internally, as are open communication, regular and structured feedback and appraisal mechanisms, all of which are actively practiced at ifok GmbH. Starting in early 2021, we will regularly carry out 360-degree feedbacks for our top management team.

We are signatory of the initiative *“Diversity as an Opportunity”* which was launched by former Minister of State in the Federal Chancellery and Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration Maria Böhmer. The aim of implementing the *“Charter for Diversity”* within our company is to create a working environment that is free of prejudice. All our employees should experience appreciation – regardless of gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion or philosophy of life, disability, age, sexual orientation or identity. Recognizing and promoting this diverse potential creates economic advantages for our company. We actively work to create a climate of acceptance and mutual trust. This has positive

consequences for the recognition we receive from our partners and customers, both here in Germany and in other countries throughout the world.

### **Promoting a network structure within the company**

Since 2011 ifok GmbH has been advancing significantly in furthering and strengthening its network structure and processes. Our company is putting in place processes to work more flexibly and closely with external partners and to offer spaces for joint learning and innovation. This includes the ifok Campus – the annual company-wide retreat and training event. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 ifok Campus took place digitally over the period of two days with approximately 150 participants. One of the core topics was feedback culture – as we want to promote the topic of feedback culture even more strongly within our company.

### **Measurement of Outcomes**

ifok GmbH has received no grievances or complaints from employees, the external advisory board or others in relation to (potential) labour rights violations, nor was the organization involved in any labour rights incidences before or during the reporting period.

Our participatory approach, already described in the paragraphs in Part I, helps us constantly keeping in touch with our employees and their concerns and needs. Based on the objective to eliminate discrimination and promoting organisational learning and feedback, ifok GmbH is constantly reviewing its project feedback schemes and other feedback mechanisms within its network-based structure. Every year, each employee engages in structured interviews and discussion with their direct reports to set and discuss professional goals and assess personal strengths and opportunities for improvement. Furthermore, on project level, a project feedback scheme consists of an institutionalised exchange between project management and employees.

## PART III: ENVIRONMENT

**Principle 7:** Business should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

**Principle 8:** undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

**Principle 9:** encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

### Assessment, Policies and Goals

Our contribution to environmental solutions is guided by strict internal policies and continued innovation and improvement. We adhere to national and international standards to advance responsibility in environmental matters. We also promote energy efficiency, waste avoidance and recycling as core elements of our daily business practice among our employees.

We are pleased to announce that we are currently working on a holistic sustainability strategy for ifok, with the active involvement of our employees, HR and the top management team. Furthermore, we follow the sustainability and resilience policy of our parent company Cadmus.

### Implementation

#### Activities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and waste

With carbon dioxide being the primary cause of human-induced global warming, we work to analyse, identify and substitute our impact as much as possible. In 2020, we have commissioned a service provider to annually calculate our carbon footprint, to be able to measure the impact of our sustainability measures even more precisely in the future.

We have a travel and car policy that aims to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Our employees are required to use the most environmentally friendly means of transportation whenever possible - primarily public transport. Many employees use bicycles to reach the offices. In 2020, ifok GmbH continued to support the use of green energy powered public transport by financing reduced pricing schemes (*BahnCard 50* and *BahnCard 100*) to replace or reduce air travel. Those schemes can also be privately used by the employees.

- ifok GmbH demands that all company cars are to be used in accordance with the European Union standards for fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions. Company cars are leased and we make sure that they are equipped with the best available filter technology to reduce emissions of fine particulate dust.
- We offer our employees the opportunity to lease a bicycle.

- ifok GmbH continues to improve its system for telephone and video conferences for internal meetings across offices as well as with clients. For instance, we introduced Microsoft Teams as our go-to communication tool. This initiative has allowed us to reduce the number of travelled kilometres, including domestic and transatlantic flights and thus has contributed significantly to the reduction of ifok GmbH's greenhouse gas emissions.
- The office heating system is centrally steered and adapts, together with the lighting and blinds system, to the outside conditions, helping to reduce energy consumption.
- At ifok GmbH, we build awareness to reduce our waste creation and printing activities by promoting double-sided printing, which is the default setting in all our offices. For office printing, we exclusively use 100% degradable and recyclable paper that is certified by ISO 9001 and 14001 and as totally chlorine free, as well as licensed by the Nordic Swan and FSC. Moreover, we use paper towels and toilet paper made from recycled paper.
- We also only procure high-efficiency and sustainable printers to further reduce our environmental footprint.
- In 2020, ifok GmbH continued the sustainable procurement measures by strictly preferring certified supply providers. Office materials are chosen according to environmentally friendly purchasing guidelines.
- In 2020, all ifok GmbH offices in Germany received their energy supply from a 100% renewable energy provider.
- ifok GmbH lays great importance on the use of organic, wholefoods and regional products in our offices. We believe in the merit of unprocessed and local foods and offer these, especially as fruit, for customers and employees free of charge in our offices. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding safety measures, we are temporarily not offering food etc. in our offices.)
- Most of our food and beverages are from organic sources (coffee, milk, soy milk, oat milk, fruits). Moreover, we stay away from buying plastic water bottles and use *Waterlogic* water dispensers.

Even after the COVID-19 pandemic, we will stick to a mixture of home office and on-site work. At our largest location in Bensheim, we have introduced a new, flexible workplace solution: There are no more desks assigned to employees. Instead, desks can be freely chosen as required. We are also converting our location in Berlin so that more employees can work well there. This means that even with a growing number of employees, we do not have to rent new office space, which avoids additional emissions despite the company's growth.

#### **Actions to disseminate greater environmental responsibility**

For the planning and facilitation of our events and those of our clients and partners, we adhere to guidelines for environmentally friendly events by the German Ministry of the Environment „*Leitfaden für die umweltgerechte Organisation von Veranstaltungen*“. We work to reduce the use of resources, order regional and seasonal products for catering, and prioritize venues that are easily accessible by public transport. Furthermore, we consult our clients on how to compensate for CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions caused by events.

## Measurement of Outcomes

We are very pleased to be able to call ourselves a climate neutral company: Starting in early 2021, we fully offset the emissions from our business activities through the climate protection project “Clean Cooking Stoves” in Rwanda.

Moreover, in the 2020 calendar year, our business trips in local and long-distance transport of *Deutsche Bahn* took place completely CO<sub>2</sub>-free.

ifok GmbH is using an IT system that facilitates exchange between employees and with external partners. This system includes a general chatroom and various internal theme-based chatrooms, where employees can exchange suggestions and best practices, ask questions, and start collective activities. Our continuous improvement system is well received and an actively used forum for improvements and innovative suggestions to help reduce our environmental impact and to reward environmental responsibility. The results are communicated and, when necessary, awareness programmes for employees initiated.

ifok GmbH also constantly continues to investigate trends and develop strategies to engage in cooperative processes to further public and private sector efforts towards sustainable development.

## PART IV: ANTI-CORRUPTION

**Principle 10:** Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

### Assessment, Policies and Goals

ifok GmbH and our employees do not accept any form of corruption and work against bribery and extortion. Therefore, neither employees nor members of the management team accept remuneration outside of the agreed quotation unless it is formally agreed upon.

To this day, ifok GmbH has not had any issues with corruption. We will continue our internal review of potential fields of action and develop measures of implementation as seen appropriate.

### Implementation

ifok GmbH only accepts assignments which are within the range of our expertise and experience and are compatible with our vision and mission. Should an assignment move in a direction that is inconsistent with our vision and mission, we discuss this with the client and, if necessary, withdraw from the assignment.

ifok GmbH strongly supports transparency in all its engagements with all clients and enforces open communication to prevent conflicts of interests. In cases where conflicts of interest might occur, our company will – if necessary – withdraw from the assignment.

### Measurement of Outcomes

There have been no cases of corruption in the line of our work over the course of the organisation's existence. When such a situation will arise, ifok GmbH will take appropriate action and ultimately withdraw from the assignment. The situation will then be evaluated afterwards.