

Europe's Got Talent

Learning, Creating and Growing in our Digital World

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Digital technology makes a significant contribution to Europe's economic growth, transforming its economic base and rapidly changing the way we live and work. Whilst that presents many opportunities, it also creates significant challenges for individuals, communities and business.

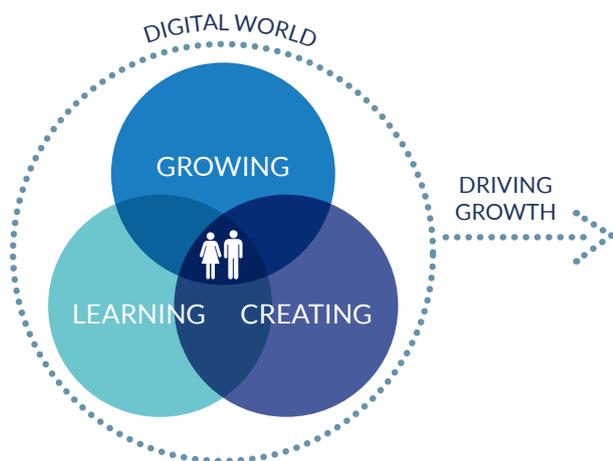
In particular there is a skills gap – new skills are needed but they are in short supply. The European Commission estimates that 900,000 ICT jobs could go unfulfilled by 2020, due to a lack of skilled personnel to fill those roles.¹ Yet at the same time there are currently 5.6 million young people unemployed across Europe.

We must work together across the professional and generational divide, to create an integrated strategy that empowers young people and enhances their employment and development opportunities in our digital world. To do that, we need: a fresh mindset; new skills; new partnerships and forms of integration, supported by a strong policy and technological infrastructure. Only then can Europe compete with its rivals and secure its position as an innovator at the forefront of the global economic development trajectory.

About the report

Europe's Got Talent, is an action-orientated report, which identifies the key gear changes we need across three pillars of the digital economy: Learning – Education and Lifelong Development; Creating – The Workplace of the Future; and Growing – Business and Entrepreneurship. The report provides a snapshot of our digital environment, identifies innovations and puts forward recommendations to help guide us forward.

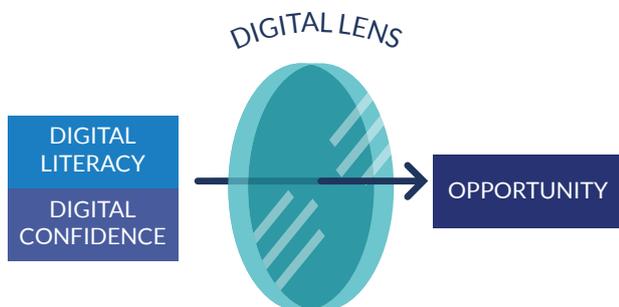
1. See <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/grand-coalition-digital-jobs>



Learning – Education and Lifelong Development

Learning is open and lifelong. Education is the building block of any economy, but this is especially true for the digital economy. New skills are needed but they are in short supply. However, there is a patchwork of ICT education across Europe and only 8 percent of young people in the UK think schools provide ‘very good’ ICT teaching.² Three core challenges exist across the learning landscape.

1 We need a digital lens to provide the perspective we need to see the opportunity in our digital world. Digital literacy and confidence is the prerequisite of that new perspective and we need to understand and be able to assert our rights and obligations as digital citizens.



- Governments, the telecommunications industry and education sector need to develop an ICT Basics package that ensures everyone achieves a level of digital literacy and confidence; has access to equipment and technology they need to assert their skills; and is aware of their rights and obligations as digital citizens.
 - Governments, umbrella teaching bodies, and institutions of the EU should support ICT as the means of education by developing mechanisms for teachers to share know-how on using technology in their lessons.
 - Schools and universities should establish professional structures and expertise for ICT support and management and governments should make ICT training a compulsory part of continuing professional development for teachers.
 - Governments should introduce digital literacy as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for public educational institutions.
 - National, regional and local governments should look to partner with private sector bodies delivering educational technology, to put in place mechanisms whereby input from teachers and learners can be integrated into new product development.
 - Government and education bodies should develop products and services that help young people to understand the possibilities within ICT careers.
- 2 We need to develop new skills to help us participate and prosper in the digital world.** That includes basic and more advanced computer skills. Additionally, young people also need the business, social and life skills to transition into the work place.
- Employers, young people and educational bodies can work together to bridge the various skills gap and improve employability, such as encouraging industry input on course design and content; rewarding academic credits for time spent completing work experience; incorporating skill based learning into the curriculum and promoting innovation hubs within educational institutions, supported by industry.

2. Vodafone Institute for Society and Communications: Talking about a Revolution – Europe's Young Generation on Their Opportunities in a Digitised World (conducted by YouGov)

3 We need to create the mechanisms by which if you have the right partnerships you can translate that new outlook and skills into the workplace.

- Digital technology can significantly improve access to careers information and matching between employers and potential employees. Public and private sector funders need to invest in products to meet these needs.
- Educational institutions, industry and government should also work together to find ways of reducing the financial barriers to further education.

Creating – The Workplace of the Future

What happens in the workplace will determine our ability to unlock the potential of digital technology. In doing this, we face three challenges.

1 We need to reconfigure hierarchies. Traditional career models no longer fit the majority of the new workforce and career paths are more fluid and less linear. That's a big shift away from the traditional career ladder most senior managers have climbed, yet they are tasked with overseeing this transformation.

- Given the pace and scale of change, continuous learning and development needs to be the new norm for all organisations in the digital economy. This must be supported and promoted at the highest levels by leaders. Businesses must continue to develop strategies that promote more women to leadership roles. Studies have shown that women are especially well attuned to the needs of the younger generation, making them effective leaders for organisations that need to rethink traditional hierarchies.

2 We need to apply the digital lens. The challenge is to make the most of the digital opportunity whilst at the same time achieving a balance between technology and humanity.

- Business leaders need to continue to invest in IT infrastructure that will allow them to deliver the flexibility needed in the digital economy, such as remote access technology for flexible working.

3 We need to apply a new logic of interaction and integration within the workplace.

- Business leaders need to rethink approaches to the use of technology in the workplace by employees and put in place guidelines and practices around its acceptable use that is realistic about employees needs. Organisations should also use the recruitment process as an opportunity for learning and development – for both themselves and for their potential recruits.

Growing – Business and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an engine of growth and job creation and startups are a rich source of innovation and new business practice. We need to transform and develop our policy and digital infrastructure to create new linkages between startups, SMEs and big business to drive creativity and growth. To do this, we need to act in four areas.

1 We need to support, unlock and integrate entrepreneurial mentality and business capability across the economy.

- Young people need more support in developing life skills. Governments and public education bodies should incorporate business skills, basic accountancy and entrepreneurship across the education system.
- Experience shows that young people respond especially well to personal contact with people working within industry. Schools, the private sector and educational charities should collaborate to create initiatives that raise awareness of the career possibilities of entrepreneurship and digital technology.

2 Build infrastructure that supports investment and scalability in the startup ecosystem.

- Governments should review fiscal systems to ensure tax policies reduce financial risk and incentivise investment. They should also spearhead an initiative to create a database of experts accessible (for a charge) to investors to provide input into their investment decisions, and act as a pool of information on startup successes and failures.

- Review bankruptcy legislation to support giving second chances to entrepreneurs in appropriate circumstances.

3 Promote partnerships, integration and consolidation in the digital economy.

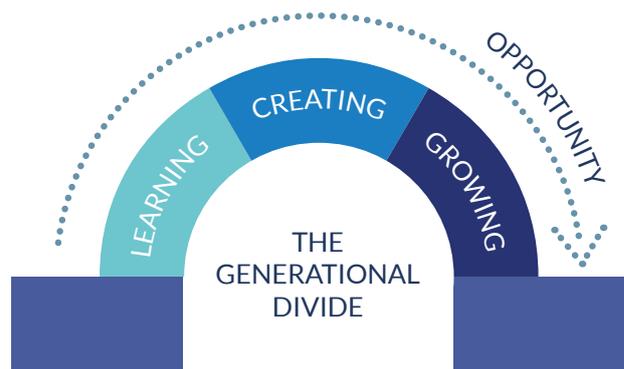
- Governments should develop specific regulation to help early stage startups so their regulatory burden in terms of general company law is not the same as larger businesses. Revision of the tax treatment of stock options will also help startups recruit and reward talent.
- Educational institutions, big business and SMEs need to come together locally and regionally to provide employment solutions and work experience opportunities for young people.

4 Develop our policy, digital and legislative infrastructure to support the digital economy.

- Governments must support open government initiatives to drive best practice in knowledge sharing and promote integrity and trust in data management. Governments should also establish national and regional legislative development on data privacy and business regulation and create bridging mechanisms to support internationalisation, working where necessary with multilateral bodies.
- Governments and multilateral bodies should support the development of Intellectual Property infrastructure geared towards innovation. In light of the disruptive impact that new digital technology companies can have, governments should work with startups and established businesses to help them to understand and prepare for further change.

- National and multilateral bodies should encourage and incentivise sustainable investment in European communications networks.

Each generation has entered the digital world at a different stage of life, resulting in different skill sets, priorities and attitudes. Strong leadership is needed to embed these new practices and culture that bridge the generational divide and drive learning, creativity and growth.



Only then can digital natives and digital immigrants come together to build the integrated voice that we need to underpin a coherent digital future.

This is the challenge of our age. Welcome to its turning point.

About the author

Alice Gartland is a researcher, writer and consultant. She leads ISD's research on the impact of digital technology on the future of economic and social development in Europe.