

Innovation and investment can help accelerate Europe's digital transformation

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Innovation and investment can help accelerate Europe's digital transformation, writes Ken Hu.



Ken Hu | *Photo credit: Huawei*

The digital and physical worlds are converging. Ultimately, the internet will connect all things, enabling them to sense and making them intelligent. Europe is well positioned to lead this transformation and maintain its competitive edge in global industry and innovation.

Three areas will play a key role in this context. As highlighted by the latest edition of Huawei's Global Connectivity Index, Europe has its leaders - six of the top 10 digital economies are European countries. However, performance is not homogenous across the continent.

Europe as a market lags behind the US, South Korea, and Japan in developing ICT infrastructure, especially with respect to 4G, 5G and FTTH. Leading in infrastructure is a basic precondition for digital transformation, and large-scale investments in technological innovation from both the public and the private side are vital to driving progress.

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Future broadband networks should meet the requirements of both emerging consumer applications and industrial applications, and must feature the most advanced technology available, including 5G networks, all-optical networks, and the Internet of Things.

Policy innovation can also encourage investment in broadband networks. Regulatory policies encouraging innovation and allowing telecom operators more room to experiment will help meet strategic connectivity objectives for 2025.

European companies' tech investments are outpacing those elsewhere in the world. By further stepping up their investments in digital technologies and treating ICT as an enabling technology rather than a supporting system, companies can actively drive Europe's digitisation.

Governments can support this by developing clear policy frameworks to ensure that public services use ICT to improve service quality and operating efficiency.

Investing in skills is a prerequisite for long-term digital growth. The shortage of skilled staff is starting to harm European business. About 40 per cent of the EU workforce lacks adequate digital skills. Europe could face a shortage of up to 900,000 skilled ICT workers by 2020, impeding progress towards full digitisation and stressing the economy. Curricula need to be adapted to equip younger generations with ICT skills.

Again, cooperation between public and private is essential: companies can give a leg-up to young people by providing them with hands-on experience in ICT-driven working environments.

Huawei is putting this into practice, through its Seeds for the Future training scheme. This is our contribution to the European Pact for Youth.

Some European governments are already taking action. Germany has adopted the 'Digital World of Education 2030' framework, while last December, the European Commission partnered with EU member countries and private organisations to establish the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, a timely and visionary initiative.

About the author

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