

Global Innovation Forum

26 – 30 October 2020

Executive summary

The 2020 edition of the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) **Global Innovation Forum**, held from 26 to 30 October under the theme **mainstreaming competitive digital innovation ecosystems in the age of COVID-19**, highlighted the critical role of entrepreneurship-driven innovation in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The event also honoured the 20 winners of the 2020 ITU Innovation Challenges.

While digital technologies have the potential to change lives and significantly accelerate sustainable development, many communities lack access to an enabling environment, as key stakeholders often fail to understand, develop and renew the competitive practices that fuel digital transformation. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has created additional challenges for countries' transition to a digital economy by negatively affecting socioeconomic conditions worldwide.

During the five-day event, 175 experts in innovation, entrepreneurship and technology discussed how to accelerate digital transformation in their communities; how to mainstream entrepreneurship and find the resources required for digital innovation; and good practices for bringing resource, problem and solution owners together to achieve digital inclusion.

Many of the winners of the ITU Innovation Challenges participated in the event as speakers. These promising entrepreneurs and ecosystem builders had the opportunity to connect with resource owners and connect with a global network. The top seven winners also pitched their ideas live before a jury, with three winners being chosen as the principal challenge winners.

This brochure gives an overview of the dialogues that took place at the 2020 Global Innovation Forum. The **Executive summary** provides a brief description of each day's sessions, followed by a schedule with direct links to videos of the sessions.¹ The **Introduction** provides information about the event's themes, participants, discussions and objectives. The body of the brochure provides the key takeaways from each panel, as well as embedded videos to each of the sessions. Finally, this document provides the biographies of the high-level speakers.

Daily summaries

Day 1 highlighted the challenges faced by stakeholders to meeting digital transformation ambitions and the roles and challenges of an ecosystem. It began with opening remarks given by ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao and Telecommunication Development Bureau Director Doreen Bogdan-Martin. This was followed by the first high-level dialogue, featuring government representatives from Benin, Cameroon, Hungary, Mexico, Oman, the Philippines, and Trinidad and Tobago. They discussed their nations' priorities for entrepreneurship-driven digital transformation, and how these priorities have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The second high-level panel featured experts including ecosystem builders from the public sector, private sector and entrepreneurial support networks who discussed challenges to building stakeholder collaboration in ecosystems, and good practices and principles for accelerating collaboration and building trust. During the ecosystem champions track session, former ITU Innovation Challenge winners discussed how their personal and professional backgrounds brought them to their ecosystems, the importance of non-financial resources —such as training, partnerships and mentorship— in helping start-ups succeed, and how they have seen the ITU innovation community evolve.

¹ Please visit the ITU Regional Offices' websites for the outcome reports of the Regional Innovation Forums.

Day 2 provided new insights about mainstreaming entrepreneurship and demystifying resource requirements for ecosystems. It kicked off with a high-level dialogue on mainstreaming digital ecosystems for impact. Three experts from academia and entrepreneurial support networks discussed their experiences with ecosystems that have enabled successful start-ups, and the importance of defining not only what entrepreneurs need, but also what the wider population needs and how entrepreneurs can help serve them with their innovations. The second high-level session featured five financing experts who shared their insights on how entrepreneurs can leverage different types of financing, both within their ecosystems and outside it; how governments can enable policies to make funding more accessible for experts and the importance of making sure financial resources are used in conjunction with non-financial resources. The ecosystem champions track featured ITU Innovation Challenges mentors discussing the role of frameworks in empowering ecosystem actors.

Day 3 focused on the power of success stories and building communities that fuel innovation and start-up cultures. The day began with the ecosystem champions track. Two experts, one in media engagement and the other in public sector engagement, each gave a presentation on how innovative entrepreneurs can begin creating relationships with these two stakeholder groups to create awareness of and impact through their innovations. The high-level discussion featured a globally renowned viral video content creator. He shared his best practices for telling compelling stories; an essential skill for entrepreneurs.

Day 4 brought a regional dimension with insights about how digital innovation policy monitoring and good practices that can be amplified. Throughout the day, there were five Regional Innovation Forums, each focusing on an ITU region: Africa, the Americas, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. Each forum had three sessions (with the exception of the Regional Innovation Forum for the Americas, which had two). The sessions focused on regional collaboration and partnerships, experiences of former ITU Innovation Challenge winners and regional good practices that accelerate entrepreneurship-driven ICT innovation.

Day 5 brought together the week's themes together. The day opened with a live pitch session during which a jury of experts evaluated the pitches of seven of the 20 ITU Innovation Challenges winners. Subsequent panels explored how to bring resource owners, problem owners and solution owner together for greater digital inclusion. The second session was a high-level dialogue, which focused on women in tech. Panellists from the private sector, international organizations, government and the third sector discussed sociocultural and political barriers to women's participation in ICT-centric entrepreneurship and successes in overcoming them. A second high-level dialogue convened resource and solution owners to discuss how they can come together to enable innovation. The event closed with an award ceremony that honoured the three top ITU Innovation Challenge winners, chosen by the jury based on the strength of their pitches, and closing remarks by Doreen Bogdan-Martin.

Most sessions were translated into ITU's six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Click below to watch a forum session.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
High-level dialogue	High-level dialogue	Ecosystem champions	Regional Innovation Forums	Ecosystem champions
Opening remarks	Mainstreaming digital ecosystems for impact (fire-starter chat)	Creating relationships and pitching stories to media and policy-makers	Regional Innovation Forum for Asia and the Pacific: Session 1 * Session 2 *** Session 3 **	Live Pitch: Shortlisted pitches of 2020 ITU Innovation Challenge Winners
Achieve your national development priorities through digital transformation	Develop your ecosystem funding to accelerate scale up	Using the power of storytelling to be a successful innovator with Nas Daily	Regional Innovation Forum for the Arab States: Session 1 * Session 2 ** Session 3 ***	Women in technology
Building ecosystem trust and collaboration for digital transformation	Ecosystem champions	Building a start-up and innovation culture in your community	Regional Innovation Forum for Africa: Session 1 * Session 2 ** Session 3 ***	Accelerating entrepreneurship-driven innovation to unlock communities' potential
Ecosystem champions	Frameworks to empower your innovation champions		Regional Innovation Forum for Europe: Session 1 * Session 2 ** Session 3 ***	Awards and closing ceremony
Bootstrapping and connecting ecosystems to access needed resources			Regional Innovation Forum for the Americas: Session 1 *,** Session 2 ***	

*High-level dialogue track: Regional collaboration and partnerships

** Ecosystem champions track: Regional good practices accelerating ecosystem development and digital transformation

*** Ecosystem champions track: Innovation journey: Stories from the frontlines

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Introduction

The Global Innovation Forum took place toward the end of a tumultuous 2020, full of unknowns and unprecedented loss, but also a year of co-creating, innovating and navigating a “new normal”.

The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us how critical entrepreneurship-driven innovation is for economic growth and digital inclusion. The crisis has resulted in stress on value chains and countries’ readiness for a digital economy, significantly affecting social conditions worldwide. Communities worldwide can feel the impact of a growing digital innovation divide: rising digital inclusions issues, impact on jobs and loss of competitiveness in key sectors.

In response, policy-makers around the world have recognized that digital transformation will be a crucial part of economic recovery and continued social development. "Supporting entrepreneurship-driven innovation has never been more important," noted ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao during the forum. "Entrepreneurship-driven innovation pushes the boundaries of what is possible. It creates jobs, economic growth, and new ways to tackle the world's most pressing challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic. ICT innovators need access to the resources to take their ideas to market and access to a well-developed broadband infrastructure", he added.

For ITU, the UN specialized agency for ICTs, and its Member States, the importance of mainstreaming digital innovation has been long recognized. "Entrepreneurship-driven innovation has been a rising priority for ITU stakeholders since the 2014 World Telecommunication Development Conference in Dubai," said Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau. In this context, "This forum enabled participants to share insights and discover new practices. By bringing diverse stakeholders to connect with change-makers for more action-oriented outcomes, we hope that symbiotic relationships will develop to ensure sustainable and competitive digital ecosystems that unlock communities' potential."

The forum was joined by the winners of the ITU Innovation Challenges, a global, open competition platform for innovators and ecosystem-builders to present their ideas and projects, empowering them to transform their communities into thriving digital societies. The second edition of the challenges took place in the summer of 2020. Participants worked together to **Rethink the digital economy’s value chains during the COVID-19 pandemic**, co-creating solutions with one another, and with the help of mentors from the ITU community. Twenty winners were chosen to attend a boot camp, and finally, were recognized at the forum.

Event overview

Global Innovation Forum

1st edition – 5 days



175 speakers



Multiple networking sessions



700+ attendees



Mobile app and web versions



28 expert sessions



Live pitches from our winners



5 regional forums



20 ITU Innovation Challenges winners

The event was targeted at digital change-makers, policy-makers, the private sector, academics, entrepreneurial support organizations, entrepreneurs, financiers, community development managers, international organizations and media.

Each day included three tracks, each with a different focus and objective.

- The **high-level dialogue track** featured keynote speeches and dialogues by experts from governments, the private sector, academia, financiers and more.
- The **ecosystem champions track** provided information on skills, tools and good practices for digital transformation.
- The **networking and digital experience** provided a space for speakers, participants and organizers to connect, share experiences and build connections.

The event was hosted on Swapcard, allowing attendees to interact virtually with presenters, ask questions in real time and communicate with one another.

All core sessions were available in the six languages of the United Nations.

Videos of all sessions [are available here](#).

Global Innovation Forum highlights

This section provides an overview of each day's theme, the session topics and key quotes from each session, followed by an embedded video.

Monday, 26 October

Session highlights

Day 1 focused on the **challenges to meeting digital transformation ambitions and the roles and challenges of an ecosystem**. The day began with opening remarks. Next, there was a high-level panel focusing on national priorities, a second high-level panel on collaboration and building trust, and finally an ecosystem champions panel on bootstrapping and connecting ecosystems to access needed resources.

Opening remarks

The event began with opening remarks by ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao and Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) Director Doreen Bogdan-Martin; emceed by ITU Senior Communications Officer Maximillian Jacobson-Gonzalez.

Mr Zhao welcomed participants to the forum, and spoke of the inseparable histories of ICT innovation and ITU, and the organization's role in helping to shape the development of technologies that have helped make people's lives better for the past 150 years.



"SMEs are at the centre of this effort of developing innovative solutions to address local needs. Innovation is not the property of big partners only".

— Mr Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General, ITU

He also pointed out that despite great strides in inclusion and technology, however, 3.6 billion people around the world are still unconnected and that “the four ‘i’s”— infrastructure, investment, innovation and inclusiveness— are where we must focus our efforts going forward; and that business as usual must be a thing of the past.

Ms Bogdan-Martin expressed that “2020 has been a most unusual year with COVID-19 continuing to shake the world”. And, while innovation has been an important programmatic priority for ITU membership since 2014; “we have often seen more excitement than real action”. The forum’s virtual format afforded ITU the opportunity to extend participation to “share insights, discover new practices and enable participants to connect with change-makers for more action-oriented outcomes”.



Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU

Finally, Ms Bogdan-Martin expressed her excitement for participants to learn about new frameworks, hear about new approaches and discover how digital technologies can benefit all.

Watch the opening ceremony below.



High-level dialogue track

Achieve your national development priorities through digital transformation

Many countries have set out ambitious plans to become digital economies with various benchmark goals such as smart society, Society 5.0 and creative economy, to cite a few. However, achieving these goals requires aligned digital strategies and enablers to deliver impact.

The first high-level track, moderated by Ms Bogdan-Martin, featured ministers and other high-ranking officials from governments bodies and initiatives who provided insight to their national digital transformation priorities and projects to achieve impact.



Key takeaways

“COVID-19 has had a negative and positive effect in the digital space. So many countries are competing for limited resources, but we can share ideas and learn together to avoid mistakes that some of us have made in the past. This is an exciting time for us. We’re looking forward to making a quantum leap.”

— [H.E. Senator the Honourable Allyson West](#), Minister of Public Administration and Digital Transformation (Trinidad and Tobago)



“This year’s meeting is an indication of the incredible mutation the world has undergone. Thanks to ability of global industry to find solutions to most problems, we are dispersed across the globe, but united on this common digital platform to address some of the challenges that we must overcome together to build an inclusive digital world where no one is left behind. Indeed, no one should be left behind. This slogan has never been so critical as it is today. COVID has taught us that the world is truly a global village. ICTs became the live wire that kept our economies growing in the dark of the pandemic.”

— [H.E. Minette Libom Li Likeng](#), Minister of Posts and Telecommunications (Cameroon)

“This year is particularly special. The world is facing a global pandemic, which has a major impact on our economies. The coronavirus is a humanitarian crisis, but also a catalyst for major changes at scale. In Hungary, we do our best to highlight the role of innovation and entrepreneurship. Several years ago, we realized the importance of building innovation and entrepreneurship into policies. [INPUT Hungary](#) is building on personal presence, individual guidance and training, reacting to the challenges of the here and now on the local level.”

— [Károly Balázs Solymár](#), Deputy State Secretary, Infocommunication, Ministry for Innovation and Technology (Hungary)



“Connectivity is a good start as the enabler we all need, but one of the most important lessons is that connectivity should also be combined with other measures. This situation has put an emphasis on democratizing the use of technology. We must train people, not only as users of tech, but also as innovators.”

— [César Contreras-Gonzales](#), Director General/Coordinator of Technological Development, Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (Mexico)

“Oman Vision 2040 is our ultimate destination; where we want Oman to become a nation that produces technology rather than predominately consumes technology. [But] technology is not the end game. The end game should be human prosperity.”

— [Ali Amur Ali Al Shidhani](#), Undersecretary of the Ministry for Communication and Information Technology (Oman)



“COVID made an unprecedented and devastating impact. It is the biggest economic shock the world has seen. The new normal is defined by increased dependence on digital technologies. Digital transformation is being used to develop the economy and bounce back.”

— [H.E. Gregorio Honasan II](#), Secretary, Department of ICT (the Philippines)

“Let’s use ICT to enable better collaboration. Just today, we’ve learned so much about what’s happening in other countries. Best practice sharing should be done more often.”

— [Claude Borna](#), Managing Director and Chief Innovation Officer, Sèmè City Development Agency (Benin)



While all panellists agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had serious consequences for their countries, they also underscored the role that ICTs have played in helping them navigate it. Prioritizing the development of an enabling environment, integrating innovation into sectors such as government and education, developing local talent and creating a digital strategy that aligns the different segments of society has begun paving the way for these countries to turn into thriving and diversified digital economies.

Watch the entire session below.



Building ecosystem trust and collaboration for digital transformation

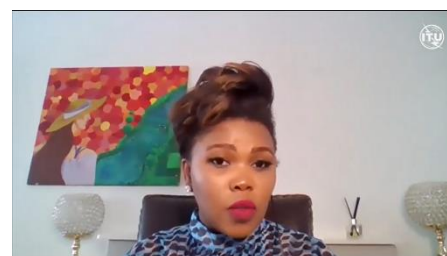
Many initiatives waste resources because they were developed in silos without an overall understanding of how ecosystem stakeholders can collaborate to deliver on national development priorities. Ecosystem stakeholders (the public sector, academia, financiers, entrepreneurial support organizations and the private sector) need to be aligned to support innovators on the journey and in the changing environment.

This session, moderated by Ms Naomi Nash of Tech Nation, provided insights on to build a culture of trust and collaboration.

Key takeaways

“We tend them to leave [communities] behind, or leave them towards the end when the technology is ready for adoption. That’s where we miss the plot.”

— [Phumza Dyani](#), Founder, Pan African Network for Investment and Development (PANfid)

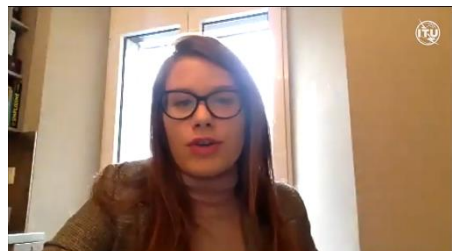


“The starting point [for ethics in tech] should be human values. One of the major problems we’re seeing with technology today is that there’s a divergence between the values that companies have. [They don’t] always necessarily result in ideal outcome for society.”

— [Henry Dobson](#), Founding Director, Institute of Ethical Technology

“Kids who are growing up in the digital age need to learn different things to what generations before have.”

— [Naomi Nash](#), Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation

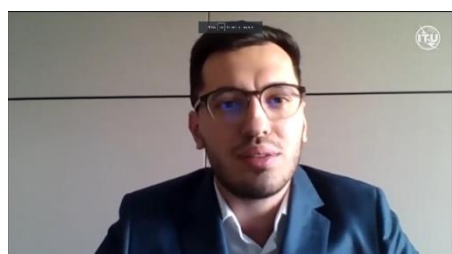


“The cloud is the biggest enabler of innovation. People can afford to have an IT infrastructure. What is crucial here to highlight is that even in Europe, we are behind the US. We can really encourage companies to really make sure that our cloud can provide the same features at the same cost as those that are available in the US.”

— [Giulia Traverso](#), Cyber Security Expert, Principal Cryptographer, Cysec

“Actors from the industry say ‘we are competitors; we can’t speak to each other’. That’s a problem. You have to see yourself as actors interested in technology, and in development. The competition comes after.”

— [Cesar Contreras-Gonzales](#), Director General/Coordinator of Technological Development, Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (Mexico)



“Put people with different ideas in the same room. Let them argue without hurting themselves and you will get good ideas.”

— [Marius Stanciu](#), Associate, Tuca Zbarcea & Asociatii and blockchain enthusiast

Despite coming from different professional backgrounds, ecosystems and areas of expertise, one message clearly came through from the panellist’s interventions: trust and understanding must be built between all actors, including the public, to ensure that innovations are meaningful and provide positive changes to society.

Watch the entire session below.



Ecosystem champions track

*Power Session: Bootstrapping and connecting ecosystems to access needed resources**

A lack of resources poses a significant challenge for entrepreneurs and innovators trying to realize their ideas.

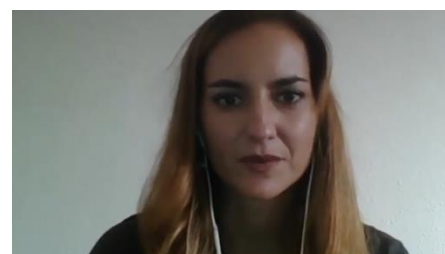
This interactive session, moderated by Ms Mary Alcantara, Accelerator-in-Residence at INPUT Hungary, brought together past and present winners of the ITU Innovation Challenges and a success story from one country's ecosystem that is bootstrapped nationally and globally to share challenges, insights, and ways forward.

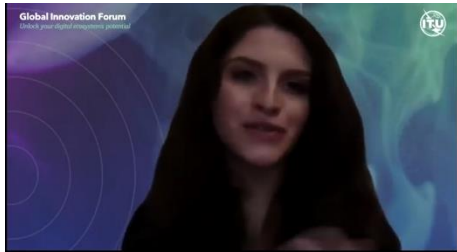
*Organized by INPUT Hungary

Key takeaways

"Hungary is small. We have about 10 million people. You have to be thinking global from day one if you want to make it. You have to expand beyond the local ecosystem."

— [Mary Alcantara](#), Accelerator-in-Residence, INPUT Program





“Mentorship is key for bootstrapping the ecosystem. I really see mentorship as a first level of investment that can [provide] access to different types of resources and knowledge. This is exactly what happened in the ITU [Innovation] Challenge. They received access to resources that they may never have even heard of. Mentorship is for everybody.”

— [Valentina Stadnic](#), Ecosystem builder, Moldova IT Park/Mentor, ITU Innovation Challenges

“Being a part of this global community has allowed us to become smarter. Learning from not only this event, but from these panellists, it helps to validate ideas, seek out different options, what works and what doesn't. From Summerside's perspective, being part of this global network has been very powerful.”

— [Mike Thususka](#), Director of Economic Development, City of Summerside



“VCs and other organizations are... looking for interesting business models that could look promising after COVID. The market, industries and business models are changing.”

— [Hubert Anyzewski](#), Co-founder & Managing Partner, Accelpoint

“Building capacity is the most powerful weapon. If you want to empower any sector, you have to invest in your people.”

— [Laila Al Hadhrami](#), Director of Building Capacity & Awareness, Smart City Platform (Oman)



“Techstars is a cool and vibrant curated community. This can be tremendous help. The awesome thing about working for Techstars is ... I can hit anyone up from around the globe and they are extremely responsive and open. You want to help a portfolio company or a student, or bring in a speaker or panellist? People are open to saying yes.”

— [Tamás Jávör](#), Engagement Manager, Techstars

This discussion between ecosystem champions shed light on the fact that no project or ecosystem will survive without resources. However, resources are not limited to funding, and knowing how to leverage non-financial resources— such as mentorship and collaboration —is just as, if not more, important in bootstrapping a start-up.

Watch the entire session below.



Bootstrapping and connecting ecosystems to access needed resources
Ecosystem champions track
Monday, 26 October | 15:00 - 16:00 GMT+1

Mary Alcantara
Accelerator-in-

Hubert Anyzewski
Co-founder & Managing Partner
Accelpoint

Tamás Jávör
Engagement

Mike Thususka
Director of Economic Development,
City of Summerside

Valentina Stadnic
Ecosystem builder,
Mentor ITU Innovation Challenges

Lalla AL Hadhrami
Director Smart City Building Capacity & Awareness

Tuesday, 27 October

Session highlights

Day 2 focused on **new insights about mainstreaming entrepreneurship and demystifying resource requirements for your ecosystem**. The first session was a high-level panel discussing how to mainstream ecosystems—no matter where in the world. The second panel focused on finding financial resources for start-ups and ecosystem programmes. Finally, the ecosystem champions track focused on frameworks to empower innovation champions.



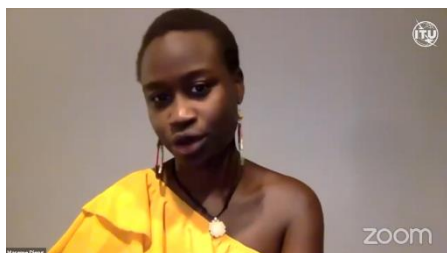
High-level dialogue track

Mainstreaming digital ecosystems for impact

With an estimate of over 300 million start-ups located in various clusters around the world, few unicorns exist, and most are concentrated in a few countries. The search for unicorns—and creating the next Silicon Valley—has been elusive, especially in the Global South.

With a widening digital divide, improving entrepreneurs' odds and mainstreaming entrepreneurship have risen worldwide as priorities for policy-makers, community developers and countries. This session, moderated by Ms Victoria Masso, Director of Behaviour Hackers, provided insight on mainstreaming entrepreneurship and shared practical example of success stories using innovation and entrepreneurship frameworks to create remarkable companies.

Key takeaways



“A lot of Silicon Valley companies— investors and entrepreneurs— think about what kind of companies, industries, and solutions will still be relevant in the next 10 years.”

— [Mareme Dieng](#), Head of International Partnerships and Relations, Draper University

“To some extent, the discussion around unicorns is distracting, because it’s more of a dollar question: ‘Can we get companies that have a valuation of a billion dollars?’ Who cares? We have companies that are growing and scaling in their countries and cross-border. You’re seeing that the [African] continent has an incredible potential to innovate and build solutions that are relevant to millions, if not billions, of people around the world.”



— [Ben White](#), Founder, VC4A and Afro Labs



“The future belongs to collaboration. We should think about it. Don’t just work for [yourself]. Above all, do it for a purpose. Digital innovation is just a means. At the end of the day, it’s about humans, environment [and] sustainability. Do it for our next generation.”

— [Nicolas Bürer](#), Managing Director, digitalswitzerland

These experts, representing resource owners from three different ecosystems, shared many perspectives and experiences. One common thread is that each ecosystem is different: its resources, its needs and its people are different. Being able to make an impact through innovation requires knowing what resources one can offer and are available, whether within or outside one’s own ecosystem; understanding the real needs of society and knowing how to combine strengths with needs to create an impact.

Watch the entire session below.



*Develop your ecosystem funding to accelerate scale-up**

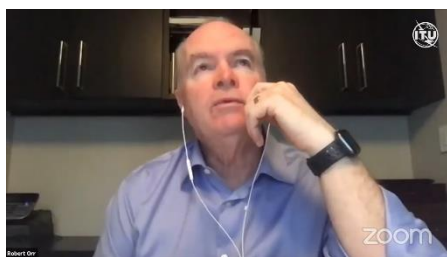
Start-ups need capital to grow and thrive. In the early stages, risk capital, such as from angel investors, is required. As companies mature and expand, funding from larger investors such as venture capitalists (VCs) and private equity funds can help drive growth. In the same manner, ecosystem programmes need to be funded.

This session, moderated by Mr Ron Sege, Operating Partner at Benhamou Global Ventures, explored how to enable a continuum of resources critical for any innovation journey, which very few ecosystems—especially in developing economies— have.

*Organized by INPUT Hungary



Key takeaways



“Sometimes we think about ecosystems quite narrowly in terms of risk capital and entrepreneurs. Risk capital availability, entrepreneurs, universities, government and the community at large— these five pieces, and their integration and collaboration— determine the ecosystem’s success.”
— [Robert Orr](#), Principal, T.T. Inc.

“Public capital should be spent in a way that attracts more private capital”.

— [Júlia Sohajda](#), Managing Partner, Vespucci Partners



“No one can deprive you of your knowledge. If you don’t learn anything, we can give you as much money as you want, but it won’t help. Guidance is key.”

— [Sofien Sidhoum](#), Managing Partner, VERTIS & Afrolynk Volunteer

“Even if it’s not the right ecosystem, be a hustler. Find your way to scale up your business.”

— [Swethal Kumar](#), Formerly of Mubadala; Hub71



“There is opportunity in everything, including a terrible global pandemic. You just have to look for it. Even as maybe nationalism is taking hold in many parts of the world, entrepreneurship is going global. Seek mentorship, people who have done it before, who have connections, reach out to everyone you can and be a sponge.”

— [Ron Sege](#), Operating Partner, Benhamou Global Ventures

These panellists' varied experiences had some common threads: first, making funding available— whether for an ecosystem or an individual start-up— means having traditional forms of funding as well as newer ideas supported by innovative public policies. Secondly, while financing is important, learning from past failures is just as crucial to achieve success.

Watch the entire session below.



Ecosystem champions track

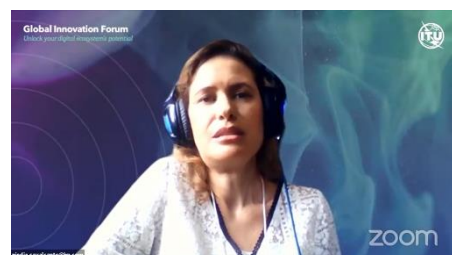
*Frameworks to empower your innovation champions**

Taking an idea to market requires a disciplined approach, a certain mindset and specific steps, as well as a supportive environment. How can entrepreneurship, mentorship, ecosystem and smart landing frameworks can help you develop remarkable companies in your ecosystem?

Using the experience of mentors, ecosystem builders and ecosystem connectors; this co-creation session, moderated by Mr Maté Mester of INPUT Hungary, shared insights about the importance of frameworks to nurture remarkable digital ecosystems.

*Organized by INPUT Hungary

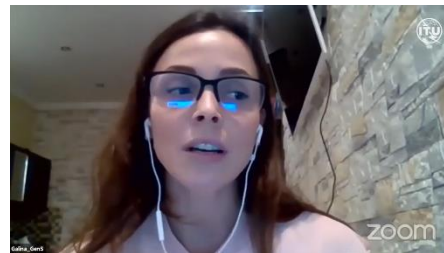
Key takeaways



Entrepreneurs, start-ups and consolidated companies have been using design thinking to create new business, projects and reinvent themselves. The methodology helps mitigate errors and reduce risks. It looks like a miracle, right? But it's design! There are several ways to put it into practice. [It] can help your company gain a large share of the market and further boost profits."
— [Niedja Cavalcante](#), Information Technology Project Manager, Atlântico Institute

“It’s important to go beyond the actual activities that accelerators do for companies. They have to know [that] they have someone in the ecosystem they can always ask for help and advice.”

— [Galina Dremova](#), Communications Manager, GenerationS Corporate Accelerator



“When you start your journey, brace yourself. It’s just a start. Let all the roadblocks come. The reason you started is the reason you will continue.”

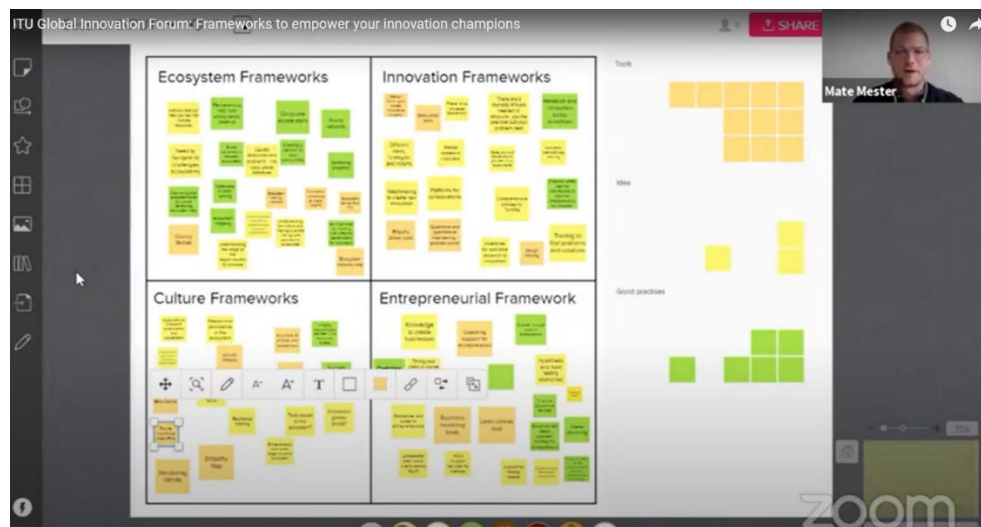
— [Zainab Khan](#), Co-Founder, Teach a Kid Make Individual Life

“Most start-ups fail when they don’t know how to go to new markets. How do you, from Hungary, open a market in [new] regions? We find partners whose interests align with ours.”

— [Dániel Vincz](#), Head of Business Development, INPUT



During the discussion, there was also a community virtually co-creating and taking note of the interventions on a on a Mural board.



MURAL BOARD CO-CREATED DURING THE SESSION

Some key takeaways from the discussion included the importance of building alumni networks, channelling funds from other ecosystems, tailoring initiatives to fit your ecosystem context and learning how to tell stories for pitching.

Watch the entire session below.



Global Innovation Forum
Unlock your digital ecosystem's potential

Frameworks to empower your innovation champions

Ecosystem champions track
Tuesday, 27 October | 15:00 - 16:00 GMT+1

Máté Mester
Managing Partner
MSpire | MLaw

Nedja Cavalcante
Information Technology
Project Manager,
Instituto Atlântico

Daniel Vincz
Head Of Business
Development at INPUT
Program

Zainab Khan
Programme Manager,
TAKMIL

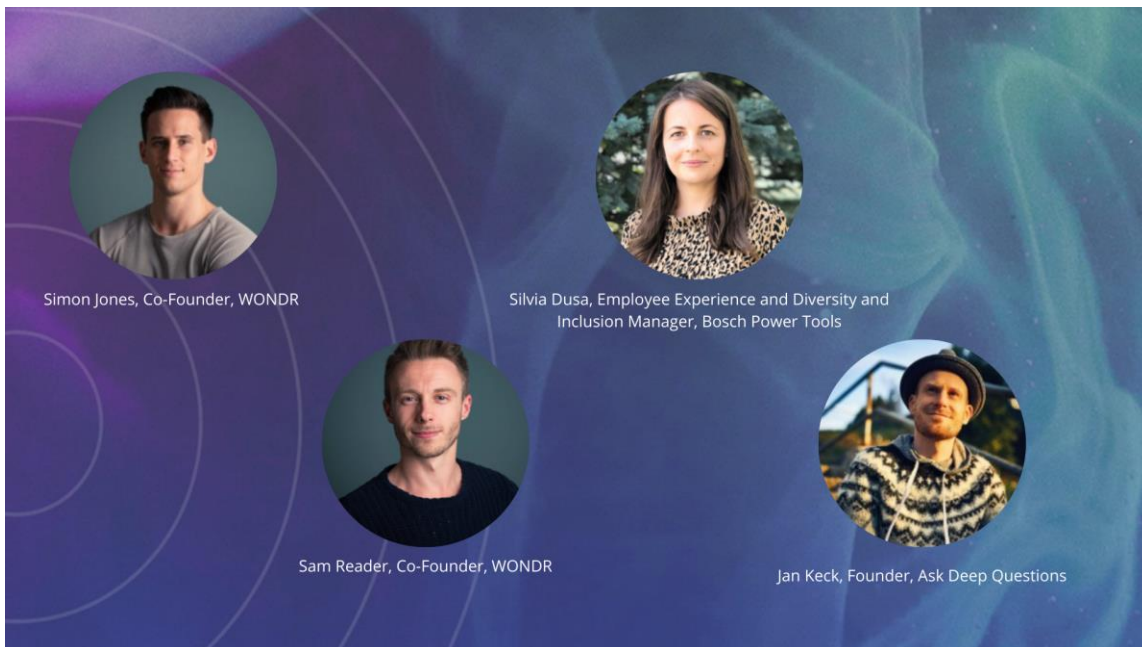
Galina Dremova
Communications Manager,
GenerationS Corporate
Accelerator

Zoom
Contributor EQUALS

Connecting in the COVID-19 era

Throughout the forum, participants were invited to take part in virtual networking events, allowing them to connect with people from all over the globe, an opportunity that may not have been possible without the pandemic causing us all to rethink ways of meeting. The networking facilitators were:

- [Silvia Dusa](#), Employee Experience and Diversity and Inclusion Manager, Bosch Power Tools
- [Sam Reader](#), Co-founder, WONDR
- [Simon Jones](#), Co-founder, WONDR
- [Jan Keck](#), Founder, Ask Deep Questions



GLOBAL INNOVATION FORUM NETWORKING FACILITATORS



Key messages from Nas Daily

“I got a job in New York as a software engineering. I looked at a computer screen 10 hours a day. I asked myself ‘when are you going to die?’”

“I asked Google. The average male life expectancy was 76. I was 24. That’s when I realized that I wanted to go around the world and tell stories. I wanted to make videos because they are the most engaging stories. I wanted to keep my stories to one minute. Why? Because you’re too damn busy to listen to me talk for one hour.”

“I started Nas Academy, a school for creators. Doctors go to medical school; lawyers go to law school. We want creators to go to Nas Academy. Storytelling is very, very, very difficult.”

“If you tell the right story and use the right words, one story can change elections, start a riot, or can change someone’s life. That is incredibly powerful.”



“I came up with a framework to understand the three key pillars to telling a good story: simple, organized, relatable. That’s the biggest issue I see with academia, politicians and the corporate world. You don’t have to elevate your speech to tell a better story. Albert Einstein said make everything as simple as possible but no simpler.”

Watch the exciting keynote address below.



*Building a start-up and innovation culture in your community**

The path to a culture of innovation is sustained community-building activities that lead to a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. Community-building activities, which include all forms of collaboration, create a community consciousness that fuels transformation through collaboration and optimal allocation of resources.

This session, moderated by [Márta Holló](#), Business Development Manager at Active Media and a journalist, explored community building in ICT entrepreneurship and how stakeholders can contribute to a culture of innovation.

*Organized by INPUT Hungary



Key takeaways



“‘Ecosystem’ is an abused word, like innovation. People confuse what it is. When you think about innovation, it’s different forms of change. This change is producing something that somebody wants. If you’re an innovator and you’re trying to drive this product or change to market, you need a group of stakeholders to help you. The stakeholders create this symbiotic sustainable relationship. That’s the ecosystem. Without this, you will not have the innovation you need.”

— [Mohamed Ba](#), Senior Coordinator, Digital Innovation Ecosystems, ITU

“The role of media is shifting in start-up culture. All these start-ups are becoming their own media organizations. The content created by them is an asset in building meaningful connection with their customers. Start-ups successfully share the narrative of their journey, and they’re building these communities, tribes and fans that are following them because they believe in the value.”

— [Marika Beckford](#), Digital Skills Officer and Regional Co-ordinator, West Midlands Digital Skills Partnership



“When you get together with other people on the same journey as you, you find support and the additional strength to go through things. You have to know that it’s not going to be easy. Maybe you will fail; maybe you will have to pivot or redesign your solution. We talk about innovation as this amazing journey. It is, but it also involve a lot stress, hard work and hard times. You need to have this community and culture that is you telling you ‘if believe in your vision, then go for it’.”

— [Valentina Araya](#), Key Account Manager, Start-up Chile

“There is this African proverb: ‘if you want to go fast, then go alone. If you want to go far, then go together’. In building up a culture of innovation, the fundamental blocks start with collaboration with a host of strategic partners. Once you’ve got that right, with a powerful enabling environment from policy and government, you’ve got the right ingredients for the culture of innovation.”

— [Jonathan Naidoo](#), CEO, SmartXChange



Watch the entire session below

Global Innovation Forum
Unlock your digital ecosystem's potential

Building a start-up and innovation culture in your community
High-level dialogue track
Wednesday, 28 October | 15:00 - 16:00 GMT+1

Mária Holló
Business Development, Active Media

Valentina Araya Hernández
Key Account Manager, Start-Up Chile

Jonathan Naidoo
Chief Executive Officer, SmartXchange

Marika Beckford
Digital Skills Officer, West Midlands Combined Authority

Moe Ba
Ecosystem builder - Senior Coordinator Lead WTDC Innovation Program ITU

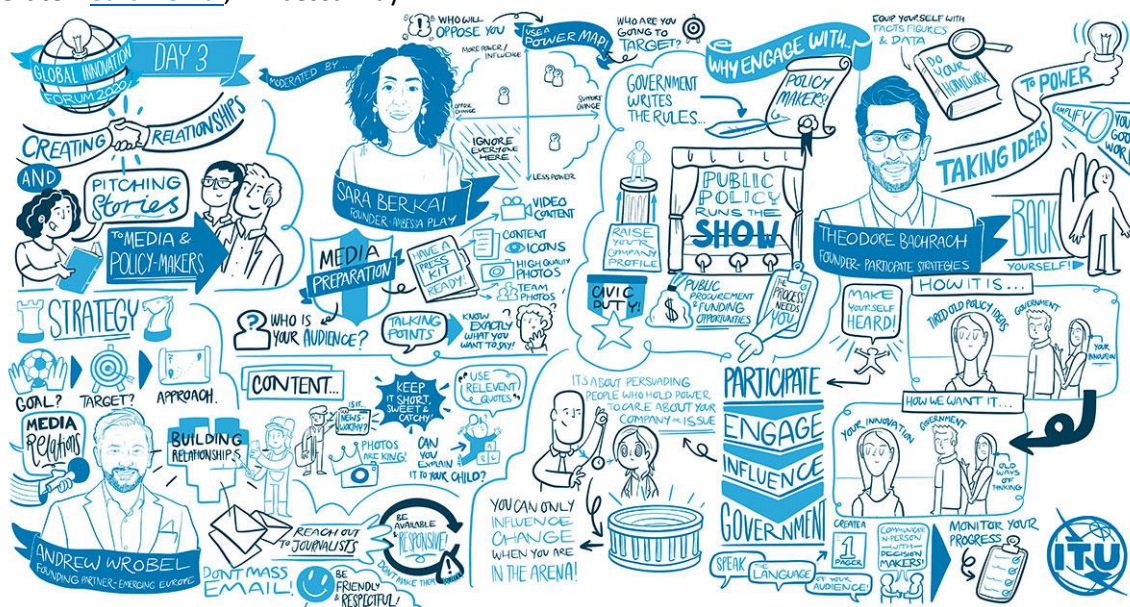
Zoom

Ecosystem champions track

Creating relationships and pitching stories to media and policy-makers

For start-ups and business to scale and be competitive, they need to be able to advocate strongly with policy-makers and media. Policy-makers help adapt policies and makes programmes available for the ecosystem as well as enable companies in an ecosystem to maintain a competitive edge. Start-ups also need media to create awareness and engage their customers with their products, create brand value and more. The development of the ecosystem relies on the right stories and engagement with stakeholders. In this panel, two experts shared their insights on how to engage with two important stakeholder groups: policy-makers and media. Below, we present some key takeaways from their interventions.

Moderator: [Sara Berkai](#), Ambessa Play



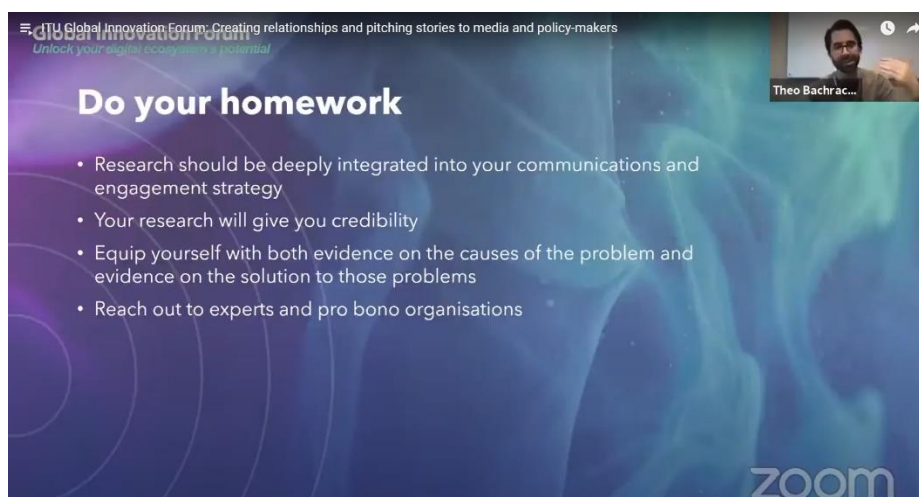
Key takeaways

Engaging with governments as an innovator with Theo Bachrach

How can innovators be noticed by and engage with governments?

The government writes the “rules of the game”. We want to raise your profile and create the right environment for the government to listen to you. The process needs outside voices. If it were working well, there wouldn't be any need for your idea, which *can* make a difference. We need more non-government types to be involved with innovative ideas.

Ninety-five percent of lobbyists in developed countries are big business interests, which can have a real impact on the innovator, further highlighting how important it is for them to know how to engage with governments. Governments also spend significant amounts of funding on R&D, leading the launch of some of the biggest global companies.



How should innovators prepare themselves to engage with policy-makers?

The goal of engaging with the government is for innovators to make themselves heard. Innovators are also lobbyists, whether they want to position themselves as market leaders or gain policy support for their business.

To be successful in lobbying the public sector, innovators must do their homework: equip yourselves with the facts, figures and data. Show how you're uniquely equipped to solve the problem you've identified. Reach out to pro-bono organizations who help people looking to engage with a more social-impact mindset. After you've done your research, create a power map of who holds the power over your company, stakeholders and potential partners.

Identify what tier and level of governance is relevant for you: is it an elected politician, civil servant or political appointee? Look at who will oppose you and who your rivals are.

Create a one-pager with information about you, what you do, the issue, why it matters, a story or quote, your supporters, why it will work and precedents.



“Ideas are a great currency. Government are looking to engage with people who can help them tackle the problems.”

— [Theo Bachrach](#), Founder, Participate Strategies

Finally, monitor your progress and keep engaging. Carve out a role as someone government can use. Track the process as it goes. If anything steers away from best practice, jump back in and re-engage.

Engaging with media as an innovator with Andrew Wrobel

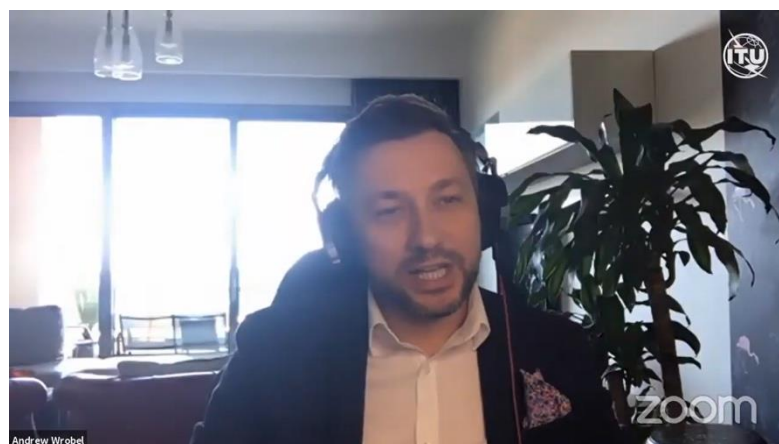
How do you develop your strategy?

Innovators always know which media outlets they want to engage with, such as *Forbes*, *Tech Crunch* or *Entrepreneur*. However, they hardly ever have a strategy.

Start-ups should try to answer certain questions to clarify their goals: why do you want to engage with media? Which media? How do you want to approach them? How do you understand media relations? Start with national or industry-focused media outlets and piggyback to reach international audiences. Once you have been featured in a national newspaper or a blog, there is a high chance of you being spotted and contacted.

You need to understand the media landscape. You have to do some research to understand whether this particular media outlet would work for you. Do they cover the specific topics you are interested in?

You also need to know what kind of content to prepare. There are different approaches you can use to catch media attention depending on what you want from them. For example, you could organize an event and invite them to attend as media partners, offering them the chance to moderate.



“Start-ups should try to answer certain questions to clarify their goals: why do you want to engage with media? How do you want to approach them? How do you understand media relations?”

— [Andrew Wrobel](#), Founding Partner, Emerging Europe

How do you develop relationships with media?

Don't do mass emailing! Target specific journalists. Research the topics they cover to see whether your angle would work for them. If you don't have a story or press release yet, reach out to them to ask if a particular topic would be of interest to them.

Be out there for journalists: they need commentators. Whenever there's something happening (like COVID), offer a comment related to your industry and share it with them. They might not pick it up immediately, but they could reach out later. Be available, prepared and responsive. Journalists work on tight deadlines. They'll go somewhere else if you make them wait for days, and they will definitely appreciate a quick response and come back to you whenever they need a comment in the future.

Be friendly, respectful and grateful. When I ask start-ups what they do after they have just had a story published, they say they "we publish it on our social media channels". Maybe 5 per cent of them say they reach out and thank them for the article. We are all humans and want to be appreciated. This will strengthen your relationship with a journalist.

Watch the whole session below.



The poster is for a session titled "Creating relationships and pitching stories to media and policy-makers" as part of the "Ecosystem champions track" on Wednesday, 28 October, from 13:00 to 14:00 GMT+1. It features three speakers: Sara Berkai (Founder, Ambessa Play), Andrew Wrobel (Founding Partner, Emerging Europe), and Theodore Bachrach (Founder, Participate Strategies). The poster also includes the ITU logo, a Zoom logo, and the text "Contributors EQUALS".

Thursday, 29 October

The Global Innovation Forum goes regional

On Thursday, the event broke from its format to host five separate Regional Innovation Forums. Each forum focused on one of five ITU regions: Africa, the Americas, Arab States, Asia-Pacific and Europe. Each forum built on ITU's Regional Initiatives on innovation. All regional forums featured interventions from high-level experts from the public and private sector, ITU Innovation Challenges winners, and good practice holders. The goal of these sessions was to empower participants from all ecosystem stakeholder groups with new approaches, insights, tools, frameworks, communities and relevant case studies to help them understand how to mainstream sustainable ecosystems that accelerate digital transformation; paying special attention to the specific challenges that each region faces.

Regional Innovation Forums

Africa region

Despite the creativity and industriousness displayed by innovators across the Africa region, it was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Livelihoods – especially those in the informal sector, which comprises most of the region's employment—were hit particularly hard. The region's entrepreneurs were instrumental in helping society navigate the “new normal”, but the digital innovation divide means that those who already had access to connectivity, entrepreneurship and ICT skills, and funding availability were more likely to benefit. The Regional Innovation Forum for Africa explored the ICT-centric innovation landscape from throughout the continent.

Watch:

- [Session 1: Regional collaboration and partnerships](#),*
- [Session 2: Regional good practices accelerating ecosystem development and digital transformation](#),**and
- [Session 3: An innovation journey: stories from the field](#).**

Americas region

Digital technologies integrated into sectors like health, education, commerce and labour had a leading role in the fight against COVID-19 in the Americas region. According to research from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the use of teleworking solutions shot up by 324 per cent, while e-commerce and delivery services grew by more than 150 per cent during the global crisis. However, economies were still severely impacted by the crisis. The Regional Innovation Forum for the Americas discovered how to enable a full social and economic recovery, by having enabling the region's innovators to develop the digital solutions to ensure that no one is left behind.

Watch [An innovation journey: stories from the frontlines](#).**

Arab States region

The Regional Innovation Forum for Arab States illuminated how the region adapted to COVID-19. The region's diversity makes it impossible to present a universal experience of the crisis: while some countries were relatively well prepared to make the transition to moving from physical to virtual spaces, others

struggled due to lack of proper ICT infrastructure, low levels of connectivity and lack of digital platforms to enable the transition.

Watch:

- [Session 1: Regional collaboration and partnerships](#),*
- [Session 2: Regional good practices accelerating ecosystem development and digital transformation](#),** and
- [Session 3: An innovation journey: stories from the frontlines](#).**

Asia and the Pacific region

The fourth day of the forum kicked off with the Regional Innovation Forum for Asia and the Pacific. Stakeholders discussed the way ICT-centric innovation can transform the public sector, and allow governments, civil society and the private sector to work together to develop ICT solutions and share knowledge. The ecosystem should allow innovative start-ups to more easily access to capital, develop talent, minimize bureaucracy and create a culture where taking risks is not punished.

Watch:

- [Session 1: Regional collaboration and partnerships](#),*
- [Session 2: Innovation journey – stories from the frontlines](#)** and
- [Session 3: Regional good practices accelerating ecosystem development and digital transformation](#).**

Europe region

Many countries in Europe were prepared for the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic due to generally higher levels of connectivity, more developed infrastructure, and greater opportunities for skills development in ICTs, innovation and entrepreneurship. This, however, is not uniform across the region. The Regional Innovation Forum for Europe explored how the crisis revealed the shortcomings of many systems and highlighted just how important digital technologies are in enabling economic growth, entrepreneurship, digital inclusion and the capacity to respond quickly to new challenges; and accelerating the digital development of economies at large.

Watch:

- [Session 1: Regional collaboration and partnerships](#),*
- [Session 2: Regional good practices accelerating ecosystem development and digital transformation](#),** and
- [Session 3: Innovation journey – stories from the frontlines](#).**

*High-level dialogue track: Regional collaboration and partnerships

** Ecosystem champions track: Regional good practices accelerating ecosystem development and digital transformation

*** Ecosystem champions track: Innovation journey: Stories from the frontlines

Friday, 30 October

Session highlights

Day 5 brought together the lessons learned throughout the week. The day started with a live pitch session by the ITU Innovation Challenge winners. Two sessions followed: a high-level panel on gender equality in mainstreaming digital innovation; and the closing ceremony, during which the top three challenge winners were crowned and Ms. Bogdan-Martin presented closing remarks.

Ecosystem champions track

The best of the 2020 ITU Innovation Challenges

The final day of the Global Innovation Forum began with live pitches by the seven of the 20 winners of the ITU Innovation Challenges. Over the course of the week, the winners had been pitching their ideas on Swapcard. Attendees were able to vote for their favourite pitches.

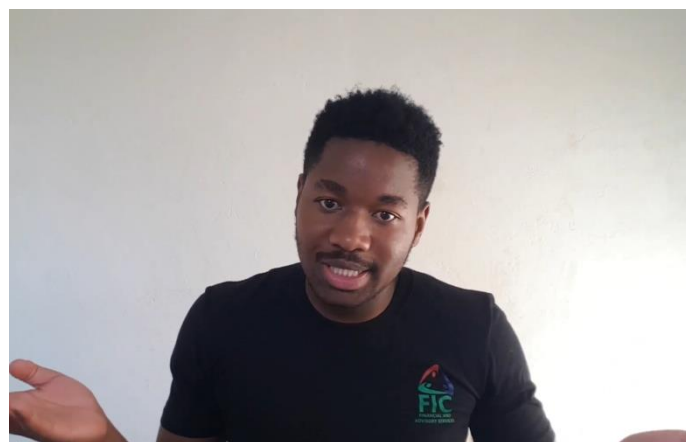
The seven shortlisted winners pitched live on Friday morning before a jury of experts.

The shortlisted winners are listed below by category. Click the link in their names to see their individual pitches:

1. Funding potential



Publiseer, [Dominic Chidiebere Nwaogu](#) (Nigeria)



Agro, [Tafadzwa Ronald Chikwereti](#) (Zimbabwe)

2. An impactful solution in the age of COVID-19

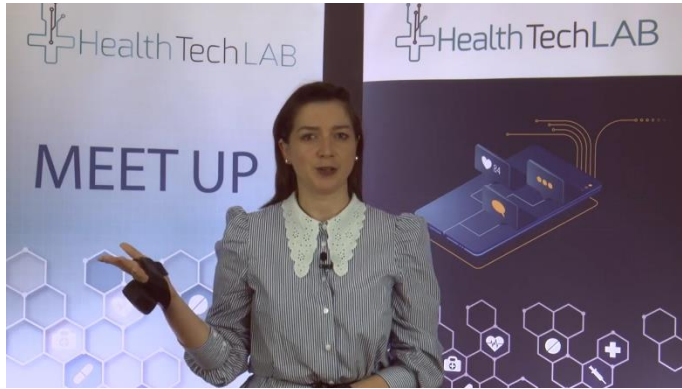


Bullyid Indonesia, [Nindya Miesye Agita Pasaribu](#) (Indonesia)



Teach a Kid Make Individual Life, [Zainab Khan](#) (Canada/Pakistan)

3. A replicable ecosystem best practice



Health Tech Lab, [Ivana Kostić](#) (Serbia)



Smart City Ambassadors, [Laila Al Hadhrami](#) (Oman)

4. Most voted online



Women in Digital, [Achia Khaleda Nila](#) (Bangladesh)

Key takeaways

“Women in tech seem to be aware of challenges in their own sectors, but when it comes to engaging other stakeholders, they need to understand that decisions are made outside of their own circles. You need to know who the people making policies are in your own country before you go regional and international.”



— [Ida Ng'ang'a](#), Regional Head, UNESCO Emerging Technologies



“Very few women are entrepreneurs in Afghanistan. This situation is mainly due to a gender gap in STEM education. The most important challenges we are facing in Afghanistan are around family expectations and stereotypes: uneducated parents, cultural issues, teacher capacity, old school curricula, and lack of digital skills and safe learning environments for girls. Recently, the government has started developing policies and strategic plans to improve girls' education and participation in STEM. We believe that equal access to STEM education and, ultimately, careers is imperative from the human rights, scientific and development perspectives.”

— [Zahra Nazari](#), Board Member, Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority

“We know the opportunities of investing in women's digital entrepreneurship. Women's increased participation in economy correlates positively to wider development gains. We need to do more and do better to create an enabling ecosystem. One persistent barrier is access to funding. In Europe, women make up only 19 per cent of ICT entrepreneurs. According the European Commission, 90 per cent of capital invested went to all-male founding teams. We need to address the issue of access to financing in both the public and private sectors.”



— [Lindsey Nefesh-Clarke](#), Founder and Managing Director, Women's WorldWide Web (W4)



“Women mean business. It’s not a matter of feeling sorry for us because we have been left behind. Today, women accomplish more degrees than men. At SheWorks! [Moschini’s company], we connect the dots between talent and the opportunities. A silver lining of COVID is that we understand that work is something that you do, not somewhere that you go. If you have Internet, we can have access to training that we need, no matter where we are, and we can have jobs that fit into women’s lives.”

— [Silvana Moschini](#), Founder, SheWorks!

“We have to make things happen. Bring everybody together and make changes.”

— [Francis Olivier Cubahiro](#), Director, ICT Infrastructures and ITU National Focal Point, Burundi



Watch the entire session below.

The poster features the following text and graphics:

- Global Innovation Forum (Unlock your digital ecosystem's potential)
- ITU logo
- Women in Tech**
- High-level dialogue track
- Friday, 30 October, 13:00 - 14:00, CEST, GMT+1
- Five circular portraits of speakers: Anna Zaleski Mori, Lindsey Nefesh-Clarke, Silvana Moschini, Iida Nganga, and Francis Cubahiro.
- Portrait of Zahra Nazari.
- Contributors: IN EQUALS

Accelerating entrepreneurship-driven innovation to unlock communities' potential

This session, which served as an executive summary, was a discussion between key ecosystem stakeholders, moderated by Mr Mohamed Ba, Senior Coordinator of Digital Innovation Ecosystems at ITU. Problem owners and solution owners came together to share insights and messages.

Key takeaways

“What we need from the ecosystem is open doors and opportunities for entrepreneurs that are tackling challenges, from climate change to health and education; not classic entrepreneurs that are using tech for profit. They have a strong purpose beyond profit. These mission-driven companies are totally different.”

— [Lorenzo Niola](#), Ecosystem Developer, Hatch



“We need a lot of patience. It takes one to two generations to develop a strong ecosystem. We all want to do it in two to three years, which is impossible.”

— [Nicolas Bürer](#), Managing Director, Digital Switzerland

“Let's find ways to help ideas grow from local to global.”

— [Erik de Heer](#), Associate Partner EY



Don't do the same thing everybody else is doing. The narrative for ecosystems comes from Silicon Valley: there's somebody in their garage, building this idea, turns it into a business and then he becomes a billionaire. In an African context, it's very different. So don't do that! Do it differently.”

— [Norman Schraepel](#), Program Director, Digital Transformation, GIZ

“In order to succeed in an ecosystem— whether that’s Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean or the world— we need to have a shared vision, initiatives that collaborate and test ideas and tap into support we wouldn’t get if everyone is an island onto their own self.”

— [Shawn Melville](#), Managing Director, PRT



“Let’s innovate at scale to meet our developmental challenges and structurally alter the system to do that.”

— [Kiru Pillay](#), Manager, Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT)

“There is a belief in entrepreneurship that you don’t need much to be able to create a product. We managed with Google, but to fundraise further it’s difficult to find pre-seed funding for such little amounts of money because of loss in the past, money that was thrown out, COVID 19 and because the money has now shifted. Youth-led initiatives in the Arab world aren’t taken seriously. I need more courageous conversations on the details of those bigger topics.”

— [Khadija Hamouchi](#), Co-founder and CEO, Jawla



“The very fact that we are able to have this session today shows that access to digital infrastructure is crucial. Regulations need to be modernized to adapt to new tech development that can help with access and deployment of these technologies.”

— [Bienvenu Agbokponto Soglo](#), Government and Policy Director for Africa, INTEL

Watch the entire session below.



Global Innovation Forum
Unlock your digital ecosystem's potential

ITU

Accelerating entrepreneurship-driven innovation to unlock communities' potential
High-level dialogue track

Friday, 30 October | 14:00 – 15:00 GMT+1

Norman Schrippeel
Program Director, Digital Transformation, GIZ

Dr Blawawu Agbokpono Segbo
Government and Policy Director for Africa, INTEL

Nicolas Börer
Managing Director, digitalswitzerland

Lorenzo Niola
Ecosystem Developer, Hatch CoLab

Khadija Hamouchi
Co-Founder and CEO, Jawa Inc

Erik de Heer
Associate Partner EY

Shawn Melville
Managing Director, Ipaam Technologies Limited

Contributors: **IN** **EQUALS**

Closing remarks and award ceremony

The final session of the forum began with the announcement of the top three winners of the 2020 ITU Innovation Challenges.



“Deliberating [on the challenge winners] was a very exciting experience. They made us travel from Pakistan to Europe to Africa”.

—Barbara Laurenceau, Benin Country Representative, UNFPA

The top three winners of 2020:



Ivana Kostić, **Health Tech Lab** (mentor: Niedja Cavalcante)
Tafadzwa Ronald Chikwereti, **Agro** (mentor: Shawn Melville)
Dominic Chidiebere Nwaogu, **Publiseer** (mentor: Rahim Iqbal)

The event closed with Doreen Bogdan-Martin thanking participants, attendees and ITU Innovation Challenge winners for their participation.

“The collaborative spirit that was displayed by all of the attendees is a great indication for the future of the DIE for your country and your communities for achieving sustainable development as a whole.”

— Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director, BDT, ITU

Watch the final ceremony below.



Speakers

The event featured over 70 talented speakers. The bios of the high-level global panellists are below.

H.E. Ali Amur Ali Al Shidhani became the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in August 2020. His previous roles include Group VP of Technology at ASYAD Group, Director of the Communications and the Information Sector at the Research Council of Oman, and visiting researcher at City University London, where he researched information security in future cities. He received his doctorate in electrical and computer engineering from the University of British Columbia, Canada and his Master of IT in data communications from Queensland University of Technology, Australia. He received his Bachelor of Engineering in electrical and computer engineering from Sultan Qaboos University in 2001.

Mr Károly Balázs Solymár has been the Deputy State Secretary for Digitalisation at the Ministry for Innovation and Technology since 2013. He studied at the István Bibó College of Law, ELTE Faculty of Law. He graduated summa cum laude in 2003. Throughout his career, he has worked at various levels of public administration to develop the information and communications sector. Previously, he worked for the Ministry of IT and Communications, the Ministry of Economy and Transport and the Prime Minister's Office. Mr Solymár has over a decade of experience in regulatory, economic and development in the infocommunication sector.

Senator Gregorio Ballesteros Honasan II was first elected to the Philippines Senate in 1995. After a year at the University of the Philippines Diliman, Mr Honasan entered the Philippines Military Academy in 1967 and was a lieutenant in the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Mr Honasan's entry into the Philippine Senate marked his evolution from rebel-soldier to statesman. He has since been a consistent advocate of proactive governance that addresses poverty, homelessness, hunger, ignorance, social injustice, deeper forms of violence, divisive partisan politics, and upholds national sovereignty and ensures national security. His landmark contributions to legislation include the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act.

Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin was elected Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau in November 2018 and took office on 1 January 2019. She is a strategic leader with 30 years of high-level experience in international and intergovernmental relations, and a long history of success in policy and strategy development, analysis and execution. From 2008 to 2018, she led the Strategic Planning & Membership Department of ITU, and served as Coordinator of United Nations Affairs. She was one of the architects of the annual Global Symposium for Regulators and leads ITU's contribution to the EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age. She serves as Executive Director of the UN Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, and leads ITU's collaboration with UNICEF and others on the GIGA project to connect the world's school. She holds a master's degree in international communications policy from the American University in Washington, DC and a postgraduate certificate in strategies for leadership from the Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland. She is an affiliate of the Harvard University Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society, and a Generation Unlimited Champion. She serves on a number of advisory bodies, including the Geneva Tsingua Initiative, the SDG Lab Advisory Board, and the UN Technology Innovation Labs. She is also an amateur radio operator. Ms Bogdan-Martin is married with four children.

H.E. Minette Libom Li Likeng is fully a product of the Cameroonian school system. She has a Bachelor of Science in promotion from the University of Yaoundé, and a diploma from the National School of Administration and Magistracy in promotion. H.E. Libom Li Likeng was named Minister of Posts and Telecommunications by President Paul Biya in 2015. In this position, she leads the implementation of the presidential vision of a digital economy. She led the drafting Digital Plan 2020, a guide for the government to translate the head of State's directives into concrete actions to fully realize the potential of the Cameroonian digital economy.

Senator the Honourable Allyson West was appointed Minister of Public Administration and Digital Transformation on August 19, 2020. She has also served as Minister of Public Administration and Minister of Finance. In her current capacity, Ms West is responsible for leading the transformation of Trinidad and Tobago to becoming a digital nation, including transforming the public service to becoming a digital government. Ms West was recently elected Vice President of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) and is positioned to play an active leadership role in the digital transformation of the Caribbean region.

Mr Houlin Zhao was first elected 19th Secretary-General of the ITU at the Busan Plenipotentiary in October 2014. He took up his post on 1 January 2015. ITU Member States re-elected Houlin Zhao as Secretary-General on 1 November 2018. He began his second four-year term on 1 January 2019. Prior to his election, he served two terms of office as ITU Deputy Secretary-General (2007–2014), as well as two terms as elected Director of ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (1999–2006). Mr Zhao is committed to further streamlining ITU's efficiency, to strengthening its membership base through greater involvement of the academic community and of small- and medium-sized enterprises, and to broadening multistakeholder participation in ITU's work