



Telecommunication  
Development Bureau (BDT)



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Geneva, 2 June 2021

- Administrations of ITU Member States
- ITU-D Sector Members
- Regulators, Academia and Associates
- Regional organizations

**Subject: ITU Innovation Challenges 2021**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am pleased to announce the launch of the 3rd edition of the ITU Innovation Challenges.

One year in, the COVID-19 crisis continues to have a significant impact on societies. It has exposed the fragility of the current economic system across the globe, but it has also provided a powerful lens to examine the underlying conditions that led to this fragility, and illuminated gaps in economic and social values chains, providing the opportunity to improve socioeconomic resilience and related issues.

This year's challenges, therefore, highlight the significance of digital innovations and communities fueling COVID-19 resilience. Each challenge category focuses on a specific community — from youth to ecosystem builders — which is accelerating digital transformation during the pandemic, and future-proofing economies and societies.

The ITU Innovation Challenges is an open competition platform for all ecosystem stakeholders to present their ideas and projects, empowering them to transform their communities into thriving digital societies. The following challenges will be launched in June, while additional challenges will be added at later stages.

1. **Global South COVID-19 Digital Innovation Challenge** (co-organized by the [United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation \(UNOSSC\)](#)) – will be launched on 2 June 2021
  - This challenge seeks scalable innovative digital solutions that will:
    - enable countries, societies, communities, institutions, and individuals from the Global South to deal with the cascading effects of the pandemic across governance, economy, social sectors and wellbeing; and
    - contribute to the organizations' respective focus on South-South Cooperation and digital technologies.

- **Legally registered organizations/institutions from developing countries<sup>1</sup>** are eligible to participate in this challenge. The challenge is open to governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, private sector and start-ups, research institutions, academia, and civil society organization (CSOs).
2. **Generation Connect Video Pitch Challenge** (co-organized by ITU's [Generation Connect programme](#)) – will be launched on 2 June 2021
- This challenge seeks promising and meaningful ideas to connect the unconnected to close the digital divide, highlighting the importance of youth involvement.
  - Youth aged 18 to 30 years are eligible to participate in this challenge.

Awards vary based on challenge category and sponsors. Up to 10 winners per challenge will be chosen by selection committees of experts. Detailed information about awards, application criteria and guidelines are available <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Innovation/Pages/2021-ITU-Innovation-Challenges.aspx>.

For enquiries about the challenges, please email to [Mohamed.Ba@itu.int](mailto:Mohamed.Ba@itu.int).

I invite you to promote the ITU Innovation Challenges and share them with local stakeholders, youth, entrepreneurs, academics, entrepreneurial support organizations, policy-makers, and start-ups in your country.

I look forward to your active participation.

Yours faithfully,

[Original signed]

Doreen Bogdan-Martin  
Director

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<sup>1</sup> These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries, middle-income, low-income countries and countries with economies in transition.