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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY FOR CONNECTIVITY ACCELERATING DIGITAL  
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ACCELERATING INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DIGITAL  
TRANSFORMATION - EUROPE

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>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning, good afternoon, to all of you who are following us today at this regional webinar towards the ITU regional innovation forum for Europe, Accelerating innovation, entrepreneurship and digital transformation - Europe. I'm Jaroslav Ponder and as head of the ITU office for Europe It is my great pleasure to open and welcome all stakeholders at this ITU event.

Before we start our session, I would like to give the floor to our technical moderator that will share with us housekeeping information.

The floor is yours.

>> TECHNICAL MODERATOR: Dear participants, thank you for joining.

I will be the participation moderator for the event. I would like to give you instructions on the Zoom platform and the meeting. This meeting is entirely remote, the audience is kindly asked to keep the microphones switched

off. The moderator will address speakers and give you the floor when your turn comes you may use the chat for any questions or comments.

Please include name and affiliation to make it easier for the organizers. Moderator also be monitoring and any comment may be read out if time allows. When the floor is open to the audience, please raise your hand to request the floor. The raise hand function is located at the bottom of the participant window. To access the participant window click the participant button on the bottom bar of the Zoom interface, you can view and activate the captioning by clicking on closed captioning. We ask you to display your full name and affiliation if possible in complete -- incomplete or suspicious information will cause you to be removed from the meeting room. The meeting is being recorded and the recording will be used for report writing and communication purposes. Every effort is being made to facilitate the smooth flow of the meeting.

Thank you very much. Have a positive event.

>> JAROSLAW PONDER: Thank you for sharing this information.

Ladies and gentlemen, this event today marks an important milestone as it is dedicated to the launch of the ITU regional good practice report for Europe which aims at strengthening the engagement of the European innovation community in the implementation of regional initiatives and also in being done in line with the strategic goal of the ITU focusing on the innovation, enabling innovation in telecommunication and ICT in support of the Digital Transformation of society. Member States, in 2018 the Plenipotentiary Conference has agreed that by 2023 all countries should have policies, strategies, fostering telecommunication ICT -centric innovation ecosystems. Therefore, we are working hand in hand with stakeholders making sure that this target is reached by the 2023.

Innovation and digitalization hat become even more important as the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the ever changing nature of the world and the need for ongoing transformation of new and unexpected changes. Although countries from Europe region are making great effort and to overcome the challenge, some countries are more successful than others mobilizing entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial support organization, academia, public, private sector stakeholders and financiers to a degree that's sufficient to foster country's Digital Transformation.

To overcome this divide countries should not only take advantage of collaboration and exchange of best practice

with more developed ICT-centric ecosystem but also design new innovative solutions to accelerate Digital Transformation.

To support this process and equip countries with the tools and knowledge for harnessing ambitions, this report, it provides an overview of the innovation capacity of Europe region through ICT-centric innovation activity comparison. It also offers an insight into how the good practices can strengthen capacity to integrate ICT innovation international Development Agendas.

The lessons learned from the exercise, as well as the report itself will equip stakeholders with the instrumental know how and offer a starting point and to create a thriving ICT-centric ecosystem.

I invite you all to download the report available online on our event website and to learn more about what are we going to be discussing further.

I thank very much to 14 countries from the E.U., but also non-E.U. countries of Europe region covering 46 countries of the region and that engage in making that report happen.

We have reached experiences shared and this is only a key part of the preparations towards the ITU regional innovation forum which we're kindly inviting you and to book and to engage in the preparations to ensure that your community is with us at the time of the event.

Finally, before giving the floor to our exceptional speakers and moderator I invite you all to turn on your camera and join us in a group photo.

With this, I'm handing over to Valentina Stadnic.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you.

Do we have a picture?

>> If everyone turns on the camera and smile that would be great. I'll counted down.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you everyone.

Hello, welcome, everyone.

I'm Valentina Stadnic. I'm privileged to be your moderator during this session. I wanted to remind everyone that this event is live streamed on Twitter and YouTube. Over the next hour we will discuss the regional context, we will be looking at good practices to strengthen the digital innovation and systems.

Today we have distinguished panelists I would like to introduce, Katarzyna Jakimowicz, Digital Innovation Ecosystem Expert, Annie Vashakmadze, Head of Department of International Relations and Relations with Donor, Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency, Mr. Jens von Axelson,

programme manager at the Challenge-Driven Innovation, Sweden's innovation agency, Olgeta Dhono, IT Director, National Agency for Information Society from Albania, and Ivana Kostic, cofounder of Health-Tech Lab Serbia. Thank you for joining us today from all over the Europe and for willingness to share your knowledge and expertise. Before we start, I would like to invite participants to type the questions in the chat as we'll have a short Q&A session at the end.

I would like now to give the floor to Katarzyna Jakimowicz to share with us the report findings.

>> KATARZYNA JAKIMOWICZ: I'm going to say next to change the slide.

Good. I guess good afternoon, everybody. I'm so happy to be able to join you today, especially that I was just traveling from U.S. and successfully managed to reach Europe.

It is my pleasure to be able to give you a little bit of an overview of the report itself. I have been working on the report last year and the idea is just to give you the background, a little bit of explanation of how the report was created and share some findings.

Next.

Jaroslaw Ponder has introduced the report. Maybe I can repeat it one more time, the main aim of the report is to provide evidence-based guidance on measuring innovation capacity in the European region and countries themselves. This is the first of the report, of this type of the report, so European region as a first, but other regions will follow. The report as well provides insights on good practices that can be replicated by innovation champions in the countries.

What's more specific, the report uses international indicators to measure and to compare the current State of innovation performance in the European countries and then synchronize the performance on free engines of growth and compare it with the current State of 7 enablers of Digital Transformation.

Next.

So the report is based on the methodology that's been developed by ITU in 2017. Digital innovation framework and it was updated in 2020 with a toolkit for developing sustainable ICT-centric ecosystem projects. I'll cover it a little bit more while discussing the report itself.

Next.

The underlying idea, let's start from the ICT-centric innovation ecosystem. The underlying idea is that the

ecosystem is a combination of free engines of growth, national innovation ecosystem, entrepreneurial ecosystem and technological ecosystem. On the coordination, it is synchronizing of all of those free ecosystems that can make a successful ICT-centric innovation ecosystem to thrive.

Next.

As I mentioned before, ITU methodology relies on using international indexes as a proxy to measure free engines of growth and the international indicators of ICT development index to measure ICT infrastructure and the status of ICT infrastructure, global innovation index for innovation, global entrepreneurship index that measures 14 entrepreneurship and 18PRs and global competitive index developed by the World Economic Forum.

I will give you a little bit of a snapshot, snapshots of how different countries are performing. I'm not going in details. I thought I would just create a comparison of the top five and bottom five to give you an idea of what's going on in the region. What I decided to do is to have a look at what are the top five performing countries in Europe in each free engine of growth and put it altogether. As you can see within the top performing countries in each of the engines of growth if I would compare all of the countries together, we'll come up to 7 because different countries are in different engine, but all of the country, countries from Western Europe, the European Union countries, that's, of course, the UK and Iceland. If we're going to go next and look on what's on the other side and if we see the bottom five countries, again, different five countries, they're performing differently for different engines of growth, but more or less, the situation is the same. We came up with the list of seven countries that are bottom five. It doesn't mean that they are performing really bad, but they perform -- the performance is moderate compared to what's going on with the top five countries that are somewhere in the middle. As you see, these are all countries that are non-E.U. countries.

Next. I'm not going to go into the detail of the report. I just wanted to show you how the comparison of the countries looks in practice. In reality to make it easier to stakeholders to understand the situation, the ITU has developed the color coding system and using three different colors, green indicates strong performance and presence of good practices, yellow indicates insufficient performance, and that's a presence of good practices and red indicates performance with absence of very few good practices.

As you can see, you have the insufficient/moderate performance.

Next.

As I mentioned before, the E.U. countries plus U.K. are performing much better than others and among E.U.27, that's okay. Of the four European countries that demonstrate moderate levels of performance is mentioned.

Next.

The good news is, non-E.U. countries are catching up and the situation is not very bad. I showed you the three snapshots, and as you could probably notice, nobody is performing poorly, none of the countries is in the red zone. It means that the situation is quite moderate and the non-E.U. country, they're actually catching up, some better, some not.

Next.

The report also, not on -- not only comparing different engines of growth, indicators, but it also goes into policies for different countries and I call it a screen shot or a better word would be a snapshot, a snapshot of the policies introduced by different countries in -- on all three engines of growth. Here I just wanted to show you that the snapshot for U.K., one of the countries that was in our top five or rather top seven, and, you know, some of you may ask, yeah, but it may say, you know, policies is not -- looking at policies, it is not sufficient with ICT, what's the state of ICT-centric innovation ecosystem. That's true. It is also needed to understand what is the current level and give you the basis for further analysis. This is one of the examples. Within the example, I want to draw your attention to one of the initiatives, the sandboxes.

This policy initiative was actually presented in detail in the report as one of the good practices and it is an example of not only an innovative policy that turns out totally new -- that created a safe environment for totally new business models to be tested in a safe environment and actual allow policymakers to learn and draw conclusions for further actions as well. It also is an example of a good practice that in spite of other countries, and as far as I know, around 57 countries follow the U.K.'s footsteps and introduced the regulatory sandbox in one or the other form.

Next.

I mentioned good practice of -- one of the good practices introduced by the U.K. The report presents 15 different good practices as mentioned. The practices, they're described and assessed on three different

dimensions. They are guiding innovation dynamics, so general innovation environment. We have the building innovation capacity, providing developing infrastructure and talent pool with sufficient amount of resources.

Whether they enable integrating ICT innovations or facilitate the innovations in the key sectors.

Next.

In the report we covered 15 of those. They are also ready mentioned, all of the countries. Actually before the presentation, I height for myself, a small comparison of all of the good practices and what's interesting, even though across the good dimensions of good practices, whether it is in the facility dynamic, the innovation, introducing ICT in key sectors, just enabling environment, most of the best practices cover at least two dimensions of those three mentioned.

It is never one or the other.

Usually the initiatives and practices are -- it is also in a way connected to the idea of ICT-centric innovation ecosystem that requires coordination of the different actions and policies.

Next.

I know we don't have too much time. Just to finish up, maybe a minute for future discussion with our panelists, the ITU also developed the toolkit that I mentioned before for strengthening ICT-centric ecosystem and it introduces ecosystem canvas that helps stakeholders understand that innovators face when they embark on the innovation journey.

The ecosystem canvas has 7 pillar, 7 enablers of Digital Transformation, the vision and strategy, infrastructure and programmes, talents and champion, capital, markets and networks, culture and communities, regulation and policy.

The report assesses, compares the State of each of the enablers across the European region.

Next.

Here, just to give you a little bit of a snapshot of the results that I covered, I'm not going to go much into the details, but in general, when we assess the State of all seven enablers, the situation is moderate, there is still a lot of -- there is still a lot of progress to be made.

I guess from what you see here, maybe I want to stretch just one thing. One of the aspects that's probably requiring the most of the attention is actually markets and networks. As you can see on the 25 countries performing

well, very well on the dimension, and the markets sophistication, it means collaboration between ecosystems stakeholders and international collaboration and connection to other markets still requires quite a lot of work in most of the countries.

I want to finish here. I want to give the floor to other stakeholders. I hope that was just a little bit of an overview to help us in this first discussion. I would like to thank you for your attention.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you for the great presentation.

Now that we have a clear understanding of the-centric innovation ecosystem and a view on how all of the elements work together, the session will continue with presentation of outstanding national practices that were recognized as a good practice and presented in this report.

So now I invite Annie Vashakmadze to tell us more about the innovation and technology agency and its approach to supporting the development of an ICT-centric ecosystem.

The floor is yours.

>> ANNIE VASHAKMADZE: Did you share the presentation? Thank you? The government has established the agency in 2014, and since 2014 our agencies the main coordinator and mediator for building the innovation ecosystem in the country.

Next slide, please.

You see that our main mandate is create entrepreneurial ecosystem and coordinate the development, simulating innovation as more than technologies and to support innovative start-ups and their competitiveness growth and facilitate cooperation between the representatives of scientists and businesses and promote digital literacy all over the country.

Next slide, please.

Here you see the escalation of what kind of opportunities is given by our agency to the ecosystem. Firstly, the legal support is in place, the IPs are in place, low and crowdfunding is under collaboration under the preparation. You can see that at every stage, any entity can come with an idea, the Georgia innovation technology agency and go with the business plan, increased knowledge.

At this stage of no idea, they can participate in the hackathons, innovation booths and the trainings and the community events. People can apply for the mini grants and also apply for the skills development and University preacceleration.



When the start-up has and the individuals have the prototype they can apply for grants and the grants, they're quite popular, access to financing instruments in Georgia and I will speak about that more when I characterize the second component which is the dedicated to dollar to dollar investment.

When the entities have the MVP, they can apply for our programmes and use the benefit with the coworking spaces and the international accelerator.

When the start-up is already ready for the market, they can apply for the 650,000 grants which as I already mentioned, it is dollar for dollar investment and encouraging the sector to leverage the government funding.

Also at this stage of growth, we provide the mentoring opportunities to the start-ups and also some facilitation into the global value chains.

All the mini grants, the 100,000 grants, the 650,000 matching grants, they're dedicated towards the increasing critical mass of start-ups in Georgia because the ecosystem is quite young and the stakeholders, the main challenges intrigues awareness about also opportunities to the stakeholders.

Next slide, please.

Let me highlight the project, Technology Transfer pilot project, on the one hand it is essential to have technology start-ups and on the other hand, it is essential to have the opportunity for the universities to commercialize ideas and applied research. European Union dedicated one million euro to this particular project, and Georgia's innovation and technology agency facilitates the communication between the international universities and we conducted memorandums of understanding within the ten universities and examine the industries and the projects according to the technology readiness level and business readiness level and at the end of the day we identified nine projects and 16 industries and on those industries, now we're working to integrate that into the global value chains.

Next.

Here you can see the stakeholders which are interested in the commercialization of all those nine projects of Technology Transfer pilot project and you can look at this as a promising one in order to -- in order to decrease the gap between industry and science in the country.

Next, please.

Let me speak also regarding the skills development programmes. Of course the academic education, it is tiered

under the supervision of the Ministry of Education but under the Ministry of Economic Sustainable Development of Georgia we are mostly oriented on the skills development, particularly on the entrepreneurship skills development and also ICT skills development. We have announced the programme for free to give the trainings to the 3,000 IT specialists with the licensing opportunities and with the opportunity of the employment and in compliance with this incentive, we decreased the employer tax for internationalized companies to 5% and already we open the door to the international ICT company which entered through Georgia and created demand, digital demand of the ICT specialists.

Next, please.

In terms of the infrastructure, except the capital, we have seven tech parks and innovation centres all over the country and they already mentioned the individuals have opportunity to come with the IT and go with the business plan in all of those rural areas and the border areas of Georgia.

Next, please.

Let me highlight that during our programmes the essential parties that we invite experts from Silicon Valley, from the famous ecosystem leaders and say assess the process of the acceleration of the start-ups. Afterwards, they have taken decision instead of the government and all of those processes, they're transparent and start-ups have opportunity to be prepared for the demo days, to pitch in front of those investors, so we have built this bridge with Silicon Valley since 2015. The results in 2020 was that world's leading national accelerator, 500 start-ups entered Georgia with a chapter of 500 Georgia and it entered with the interest to the region and we received that verification from the region and even from Australia and Brazil and accelerated our start-ups among the preselected candidates, there were nine Georgia start-ups and also with this event the essential part was that the first private fund was created, financed the start-up, because you see before it was the good will of the government and non-government and also to access the financial mechanism, it was on -- it was provided by the government.

With this international accelerator, Bank of Georgia, one of the banks in Georgia created this one million U.S.A. fund which it was like a good match, a skills development, providing the money, and next, please, hopefully we'll -- we will revitalize our practices where we have

conducted the international events in Georgia to have the country and the entrepreneurial ecosystem defined very well.

Next, please.

With this slide, I would like to show you the first Georgia start-up that benefited from our programmes and also with the international acceleration and has a first -- they have raised several million USD from Ambassadors. It was a really good result for the ecosystem of the five years. Now we're working also on the preacceleration programmes to boost the opportunities of other start-ups and to give them an opportunity to be integrated in the global value chains.

Thank you.

Next, please. Thank you.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you.

Now I would like to invite Mr. Jens von Axelson to tell us more about an important and unique component of the Swedish growth and the innovation engine of the country. If that's possible, the floor is yours.

>> JENS VON AXELSON: Thank you. Good afternoon.

I would like to tell you a little bit about Digital transformation and a programme called Challenge Driven Innovation and if this programme is fit for the time's new challenges.

Vinnova is the Swedish innovation agency organized under the Ministry of Innovation.

The previous, please.

Thank you.

Regarding the growth, you can see that the national ecosystem, every circle, there is one actor as a financier. We have quite a broad actor, there is a lot of different enterprises and different organizations that actually fund innovation in Sweden which make it is a little bit not difficult but we need to actually be able to cooperate in a big way.

We have also the entrepreneurial ecosystem. We have -- there is a lack between the national innovation ecosystem and the entrepreneurial innovation system as well. Sweden comes from a long time of innovators and innovations and a lot of companies which today represents the ecological ecosystem with large companies such as Ericsson, others, so holistical perspective is very important in our world.

Please, next.

We have recently addressed ten different areas of innovation. Societal challenge areas, sustainable food

systems, sustainable industry, sustainable mobility systems, precision health and built environments and five innovative abilities, what we're talking about today in Digital Transformation and also ecosystem for companies, emerging innovation, skill supply and transforming the public and civil sectors. With these focuses, we're trying to -- we're trying to rebuild our portfolio of different initiatives.

Next, please.

In each of these areas we have been developing sort of a new strategic agenda, and we have a registry of the digitalization in Sweden. We also have a lot of challenges. We have been in good position, but we still need to address the weaknesses and we have this agenda for this.

If I can read the different milestones, on the different time perspectives that have been in our strategy, one can see that cooperation between different parties in the innovation and the different ecosystems is a statement for a lot of the milestones.

Next, please.

This is my programme, that challenge driven innovation, and there are a lot of -- there are five basic principles that we are striving for, that challenge, societal challenge, it must be in focus. It is not -- we don't focus on problems that are -- with only one solution, the problem is sort of simple and we're focusing on problems and challenges that are more of a logic. We need to have the system perspective in this programme where the different consortium that's applied for funds, that they need to explain to us how to look upon the system and what is broken within it and how they actually will work to try to fix it together.

There is a strong need in the programme for the cross collaboration between both companies and for the societal -- for the society actors and universities and researching institutes and we provide a series of -- entered in the programme, we -- in step one they give -- they have a shot at -- for some research around the problem and then in the third step they try to test and demonstrate that for others.

For working against the Agenda 2030 SDGs, of course.

One example of a project that's recently granted, it is the rural ICT testbed #fullcover, Sweden, we're not that many people, 10 million, we have a large country, so a lot of the territory -- a lot of the area is rural and having coverage -- having coverage in this data coverage, it is

vital to us to be -- not at lowest for the inhabitants in the rural areas and closer for tourism as well. A typical project in step, it is like 10 million euros in grant, it is a total amount, the budget, it is around 5 million euros and in this case there is 24 actors from academia industry and public sector.

Next, please.

So earlier this year we wrote the report to the ministry about how we could design a programme to address these issues. We concluded a successful gathering of forces for a sustainable digitalized Sweden presupposes that we have governance, collaboration and leadership, strategic governance, coordination and collaboration between key actors and we have to prior ties and have different investment, long-term investments, because innovation is not a quick fix, it takes a long time.

Also we need to learn along the way, and also learning together, it is a huge part for the systematic collaboration for pro activity.

Next, please.

My programme, the CDI, this is a bottom-up programme looking at the future in this context. We can see that not only we need a high-level of coordination that's needed, not only in the different products, but also we need to meet the bottom-up with top-down perspectives. We need to have a mission-oriented programme and as an umbrella for the wholeness, for the realistic view. There are two -- we need to have these two components, top-down and bottom-up. We also need to simulate and we need to have system demonstrated arenas that could show ourselves and others what we are doing but only -- and only -- it is forgiving feedback to the different actors.

We are actually reinventing the programme design at the moment for this new environment that we're having in the innovation system. Stay tuned.

Thank you.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you.

I would like to continue at this point and invite Olgeta Dhono to share Albania's approach to the facilitating of the development of ecosystems human capital.

Olgeta Dhono, the floor is yours.

>> OLGETA DHONO: Hello, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this event.

I'm going to represent the Albania innovation ecosystem and tech space as a good practice.

Next, please.

The national agency of Information Society has become one of the main institutions in our country in developing and implementing projects and key services, supporting innovation and adding value through the Digital Transformation from November 2017 it has widened the activity in technical, human capacities and the main purpose, it is to offer better services to the citizens, businesses, administration through Digital Transformation.

Next one, please.

One of the main achievements in the field of Digital Transformation of course is our governmental portal operating as one-stop single access point to citizens 24/7 around 2 million users are registered in the portal offering at this moment in time, 1207 online services which makes the 95% of all of the public services offered online.

In the application forums, around 63% of the data are filled in automatically as a result of our interoperability platform where 55 registers communicate in realtime with each other. We are aiming to eliminate the accompanying documents which are not requested any more from citizens and the burden, it is for the public administration.

In the graphic we can see the huge increase of innovation applications during the years 2013 and 2020 of course as a result of the increase in the online services offered.

Next one, please.

One of our main purposes is to support innovation and create easy, accessible environment for start-ups in the field of digitalization. In our innovation ecosystem, the government is supporting innovation through different programmes and we have created the innovation hub as a possibility to offer innovation on the premises opportunities for developing their ideas. We have collaboration agreements assigned with ICT universities, with vocational high schools as well and we're trying to create an easy, accessible environment for start-ups and small, medium enterprises with delivering the technological innovation. They complete the cycle in relation to the government and from opening to the new business, application for permits and licenses, paying taxes, submitting sheets, tax payments, everything is done online without the need to go to the physical area.

The signature for businesses, it also is very -- it is a very easy tool that enables operations which makes it possible to exchange electronically the signed documents with value.

We have a collaboration of local and international

companies with an aim to offer professionals and start-ups, the needed help to build their capacities.

Next one, please.

We're going to present as a good practice to support innovation tech space, which is the largest technological lab in Albania founded in February, 2019 with the aim to support start-ups and students to reinforce, encourage them in delivering innovative projects and ideas in the field of ICT, the aim of the centre, it is to be one of the most frequented environments by technology and innovation enthusiasts who will have the opportunity to use our space as a work area and develop innovative ideas. Of course.

Next one, please.

Tech space is modern, fully equipped environment which is open daily 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ensuring the counseling and developing and promotion of the new ideas and the building of capacities.

Next one.

Here are some of the main activities of the tech space. It has more than 1200 registered young people and more than 90 start-up business ideas with more than 80 of them visited the tech space daily, that was before the pandemic, tech space enables the codesign of innovative product, testing, sharing of ideas and regional prototypes through programmes provided to professional consulting and step by step follow-up and support of start-up ideas by experts, specialized in various fields.

We organized job fairs where more than 20 ICT students were hired in 10 different private companies.

Tech space is supporting the software development academy which is offering its premises and being a serious partner.

Next slide, please.

One of the projects that the tech space has launched is going to be the start-up programme, the roadmap of Silicon Valley in cooperation with Albania. 25 selected start-ups were trained through an intensive programme of workshops related to start-up development by successful international experts. The programme was providing supervision mentoring, training in different fields, specific consultants for the need of start-ups and 12 finalists pitched in front of investors during the demo day. The final phase of the programme, the visit to the Silicon Valley has been postponed due to the pandemic.

Next slide.

We have in collaboration with Microsoft organized numerous information sessions on Digital Transformation and

discussions with young people with the support of various Microsoft experts focused on introduction of new technologies. Some of the fields where the training was focused, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, blockchain, et cetera.

Next slide, please.

Yes.

Here are some pictures showing some of the events that's been organized in the tech space. Albania Cyber Academy, informative sessions on quantum computing with experts and informative sessions on blockchain.

Thank you.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you for sharing your experience and your presentation.

I invite the last speaker Ivana Kostic to give a Serbia perspective and to share the impact of the practice of bringing the community together.

The floor is yours.

>> IVANA KOSTIC: Thank you.

Hello, everyone. I'm very happy to be here to present Health Tech Lab and the Serbian ecosystem, we invite you for the recognition for the case study and for the ecosystem best practice award 2020 last year.

.  
A short introduction of the ICT-centric ecosystem of Serbia. We start with entrepreneurial and innovation, in Serbia we started to have them gather spontaneously and creating NGO private organizations such as ICT hub that over time created or pushed the international ecosystem to create policy, laws, strategies such as innovation law that actually boosted and potentially created innovation funds, later on the science funds, similar funds presented from Georgia or Sweden and actually they were joint efforts of the World Bank, the European Union and the local ministries that actually are still boosting innovation and science in Serbia.

Of course, the national innovation ecosystem is also supported by the strategies, some of them developed, some being developed mainly on entrepreneurship, digitalization and on the digitalization in recent times.

Also the technology ecosystem is very important and I would like to say that we have a few success stories. They are mainly in the gaming industries, such as a lot of gaming fans have heard about, but also a few that are appearing in the health sector, the positions, for example, of the first private hospital and so on.

Here in the technological part of ecosystem, I would



stress that the important part is having RND centres of the big international companies and in this case, in Serbia, Microsoft is the first one that opened RND representation in Serbia and we are looking forward to those RND Sectors in pharmaceutical, health industry as well in the near future.

Next slide, please.

Health tech lab. As I was finishing my Ph.D. I actually participated in the health hackathon and wanted to share this knowledge in Serbia, I was following the whole ecosystem and I noticed that there was a baseline of gaming, entrepreneurship that was set up at the time and that now is the right time to introduce the sector-specific entrepreneurs such as health tech and actually use all of the talents, knowledge in technology that was used for gaming and then just slightly refocus it to health. We organized that hackathon and noticed there were great solutions but they would not survive for a long time. They needed long-term support, they needed systematic ecosystem support and this is how the idea of health tech lab was created. Today health tech lab is an ecosystem gathering communities, professionals and students from different kinds of technologies and health and we create, promote health tech innovations in Serbia and this is a short diagram representation of all of the sector, of the linkages basically with which the health tech lab is communicating and working.

The main goal is to create the health without borders, something that was mentioned at the beginning from the report, you can clearly see that there is a huge innovation gap between the developed and the developing countries and health tech lab would like to decrease this difference in the gap that currently exists through different kinds of events and projects that we're doing and that we're planning to do.

Next slide.

Here is a short description of details of health tech labs activities within the good practice canvas. I can say that it is an NGO, private organization, it is supported by founders and international advisory board, and the international advisory board gathers actually representatives from health tech ecosystems of developed countries such as U.K., U.S., Israel, E.U. and of course representatives from Serbia which is the basis of the model of health tech lab, we want to use the mentoring, funding from the developed ecosystems in the developing countries.

Then, of course, resources, they're networks, partner,

local and international and two sponsorships and projects, we're building everything up that we're doing. Some of the key activities that we started with, they are the ones that are really seenable, such as meet-ups, conferences, acceleration programmes, matchmaking events, from the investors on one side, and start-ups on the other side, but I would also like to mention here that there are a lot of activities that are not so noticeable and seeable but we're very active in advocacy and policy adjustments and collaborating with the government and as a -- with all of the linkages that are important for developing and impacting the successful pathway for healthy start-ups in the country, in the developing settings such as Serbia.

The goals for the next period, I will split into local and international. For the local one, the main goal, it is definitely to build the physical space that would support development of innovation starting from RND and prototyping, so on.

Further, of course, supporting the acceleration and mentoring that's already happening and that could be also virtual. Also some of the international goals are actually developing the model that was awarded by the ITU of creating HTL chapters in the Developing Countries and interconnecting them. We have gathered around 60 local start-ups and the successes, they're various and multiple, I will just mention them as our own success, but of course I would like to also mention the opening of the first international health club Chapter in Georgia during the conference that will happen from the first to 3rd of disease. I'm also happy to say that the representative of Georgia is here, I hope to see you there in the conference and with the opening of this first chapter.

Next slide, please.

We were presented as the culture and communities good practice. I would like to say that from the first story, if you followed the stories, that noticing and organizing a hackathon we noticed there are no supporting systems and that start-ups will soon die. Soon die means that they would have problems that are not connected to standard problems of start-ups in the developed world. Basically they wouldn't -- even if they had ideas, even if they had solutions, they wouldn't risk because the chance of dying was 100%. Basically in order to create this situation where someone would take a risk, to be in that 10% of successful start-ups, we wanted to actually create this supporting system and community that could enable that. Of course communities do need to communicate. This is also

very important within the ecosystem and within and in between ecosystems.

This is my main conclusion. Next slide.

This is a short representation of the award which we can talk about in more details later. Next slide.

Thank you so much. Here are the contacts. This is it.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you for introducing us to the health tech lab in Serbia and congratulations on opening that in Georgia. Thank you to all of the panelists for presenting. To wrap up the sessions and to give insights to what our panelists have already said, I would like to address them a round of questions and I will do it in the same order as we had the pleasure to hear the presentations.

Unfortunately, Katarzyna Jakimowicz had to leave so I'll start with Annie Vashakmadze.

I hope you don't mind.

I know your country has taken further steps to engage with ITU in performing ITU's digital ecosystem assessment. How do you think that Georgia can benefit from such a country-tailored assessment in addition to the report we're launching today?

>> ANNIE VASHAKMADZE: Thank you for this question.

I express gratitude to the ITU team that worked on this particular report and for their dedication and all of the processes which we're -- which were conducted in Georgia, especially virtually, because we conducted several seminars, gathered the stakeholders. This report, it is external evaluation of the ecosystem and the Digital Transformation. It is essential to show the stakeholders how they complement each other, how they have increased the opportunities in the ecosystem and we have the main enabler for them to boost the entrepreneurial mindset in this society.

Particularly we asked the ITU team to have the specific secretary -- the sector specific evaluation and this sector and we identified as an artificial intelligence. We are looking forward to this assessment and for the recommendation of artificial intelligence, best practices, some specific recommendations for Georgia.

As I already mentioned, it is quite young, we have the equal opportunity for all sectors, but at this stage, we have identified two sectors, which is fintech and AI and we have the future plans to develop the fintech ecosystem and the AI ecosystem in Georgia.

Thank you.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you for a great answer.

I would like to point out that we have also questions coming in the chat. I will get back to you with another one. For now I will move to our next speaker.

Jens von Axelson, you introduced a new programme design that's currently being developed for the challenge driven innovation and taking into account that we now it is now focused on the ten challenge and ability areas, how does that effect the structure of CDI programme? Can you tell me, please?

>> JENS VON AXELSON: Well, thank you.

Thank you for the question.

CDI is a general instrument for us to use. I would like to give you a -- it is a bit long answer to a short question. Earlier, the first version of CDI then would focus on four different areas. It was ICT, it was an industry so we actually had a plan -- we focused the different products towards these areas. Now we have ten areas that we're focusing on -- by the way, the second that we're working today, the second version, it is refocused on Agenda 2030. In a broad sense where the applicants, they are -- they are giving us, saying that this is the problem that we would like to work with and we don't focus them. I think we need to go back to where we actually focus the different applicants, addressing more directly specific areas. That's the connection between these areas and the programme as an instrument.

One question that I'm struggling with, how do I -- how do I find the commitment in the applicants and the consortiums that are putting a lot of effort to write applications and finding the project. We need to balance this, so they are still committed, we can still direct them given the challenges. That is the struggle. I'm not quite sure yet how, but shortly. Thank you.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you. That's a lot of food for thought for everyone that's trying to revolutionize their area of activity.

All of us are asking the question how when trying to do something and the answer doesn't usually come very easily.

The good news, we also have questions in the chat for you as well. I'll get back to you as well.

Now I want to switch to Olgeta Dhono. I would like to mention that as we know, Albania ranked first in the 2019 global competitive report regarding the use of hiring foreign labour meaning that you're offering favorable conditions for companies to hire people from abroad but had

from what you have told us today, the advancing and supporting of them, how do you see things evolving in the country and what are the next steps to accelerate this Digital Transformation?

>> OLGETA DHONO: Thank you.

Yes. As you said, we have done progress in the field and we want to do more in this perspective. We're working we're working with a new digital agenda and we are trying to involve that joining of the residency in the next years, the Digital Transformation, we're aware that this will encourage the business owners and the freelancers from all over the world to come to the country and to raise their companies here. The residency project can be important for attraction of the digital Nomads in the country as well, and this is also another point that we want to have our focus and we're not working only with a digital agenda and strategy in this perspective and we're also working at the same time with a legal framework, we're aware that on -- that some changes need to be done in order to not make all of the environment and the infrastructure easy for the companies to come here to Albania.

Thank you.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you.

I guess the last speaker that I'm going to approach with a question, it is Ivana Kostic. As you have mentioned, you participated last year in innovation challenge and your practice was recognized as a best practice. Can you tell us what was making the health tech lab model so unique, what are the next steps in the development?

>> IVANA KOSTIC: Thank you.

I would say that, of course, health tech lab is at the moment in the first phases ICT based, supporting technologies that are in the sector and supporting innovations in the sector in health as this is the low-hanging fruit, the technology that could be developed the fastest with the least investments and another advantage of actually spreading to the different chapters, it is interconnecting other developing countries and so on.

This is the main advantage and this is also one of the goals of the ITU of interconnecting and basically crossing the innovation gap and digitalization gap that exists. I would say that that is the main advantage.

Of course, also using the mentoring, the experience and the knowledge of the developed ecosystems that already have good practices and skipping the time and getting the funding from those institutions, from those developed

ecosystem that could then benefit everyone.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Sounds very interesting.

Actually we have a question to you in the chat. We will address it to you, Jens von Axelson.

Do you think that ITU and other organizations could further support the efforts? Could you elaborate on that?

>> IVANA KOSTIC: We would love that.

As I mentioned also, Georgia is the first chapter and there is a long way to go. We would also love to have other strong partner, partners that we're collaborating with in the projects that are considering interconnecting and, of course, spreading throughout the developing countries.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Okay.

Well noted.

I think I'll go backwards since we're starting already to return to our speakers. I have a question for Jens von Axelson, the challenges are huge and complex regarding the system perspective, for example the seven pillars, what could you expect with the cooperation project to fix in a few years?

>> JENS VON AXELSON: Well, thank you for the question by the way.

It is a huge question. In Sweden now we have a little bit of a delay in our 5G implementation due to policy questions and culture questions. It depends -- it depends really on the problem that the project is trying to solve. If you have the 7 pillars, another holistic model to use, we use culture, business infrastructure and technology, projects that are intending to try to solve policy and culture problems, they tend not to -- they could come up with suggestions and they're really not near implementation because it is due to politics and maybe larger questions that need to be addressed and the actors themselves, they really couldn't -- they couldn't really deal and make the decisions by themselves and implement.

On the other hand, if the problems could be -- you know, solved by just business models, technology, something like that, then it is much easier. That's my opinion in a way.

So to say, in Sweden, in ICT, it is much condensed to policy, culture, the technology, it is easy, business models, it is easy. I think.

Well that's my answer. A little faster.

Thank you.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: No simple questions for you today from us. Pretty complex ones.

Thank you again. I guess we'll close this Q&A session with addressing questions to Annie.

Would you be able to tell us what are the main challenges in the process of Digital Transformation in Georgia and in the region?

>> ANNIE VASHAKMADZE: Thank you. Thank you for the author of the question.

Surely challenges exists but Georgia for instance follows a path of Sustainable Development where innovation plays a crucial role and there are still challenges in Digital Transformation.

First, skills development, the appropriate entrepreneurial and ICT skills and also brain drain in this context and the second challenge could be non-existence of the private funds for start-ups, even in the region there are -- these challenges existed, that there are no venture funds and angel investors. In some countries, they are created with the networks and of the connections and the private funds, those saw other access to finance mechanisms that are depending on the development of the legislation such as crowdfunding opportunities and innovation procurement.

More or less, this is the main challenges in the region and there are some positive trends nowadays because all of this global connectivity and entrepreneurial networks are increasing and this gives us the expectation for the positive outcomes and developments in the country and in the region.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: I understand we're running out of time. The last question is also coming from our audience. If it comes quickly to your mind to give an answer to it, with the current pandemic what kind of start-ups have you seen observed emerge in Georgia since the beginning of the COVID? Anything coming to mind?

>> ANNIE VASHAKMADZE: Yeah. I will say, again, the artificial intelligence start-up and some med techs are existing. We also conducted the hackathon which we called corona-thon, it was in 2020 March and we identified three winner, one was dedicated for artificial breathing, we all remember how we were, like, oriented on some urgent issues and such as equipment of the hospitals and so on.

The second winner, edu tech, because all of our schools, universities were closed and it was crucial to create some edu techs. Yeah. I would -- those come to mind. Also first Georgian Internet browser tech.

>> VALENTINA STADNIC: Thank you very much for your answers.

Many thanks to all of the great panelists for sharing their insights with us today. We're now heading into our closing and my apologies for taking a little bit longer than were expected for the session.

I give the floor to my colleague Ana Maria Meshkurti, programme officer from the ITU office for Europe. The floor is yours.

>> ANA MARIA MESHKRTI: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much to all the speakers.

Thank you to everyone following us today on Twitter, on YouTube, I was just on Twitter myself right now, I noticed we have around 70 followers going on during this live stream. It is great to see so much interest today in this very important report that's being launched as well as in the best practices. It is really interesting to see that we dive today further in the methodology of the report that's been launched as I mentioned and you can download it from the website, the links were shared already in the chat. It is also great to hear firsthand from all of the speakers that shared their good practices with us which really allowed us to be in a better understanding of the opportunities as well as challenges that came with building such interesting programmes.

As Jaroslaw Ponder, head of ITU office for Europe mentioned earlier in the opening remark, COVID-19 indeed served as an accelerator for everything digital. Innovations took centerstage in all aspects and it is great to see that many have already taken the innovative role and launched various activities to accelerate further entrepreneurship and Digital Transformation as we witnessed here today by the many examples shared.

I would like to again thank all speakers today from our digital innovation ecosystem expert that worked on this report, to colleagues from GITA, Sweden innovation agency, NAIS, health tech lab, thank you for providing the insights only you can provide. Special thanks to my colleague for the great moderation.

This is the first step in our journey this year and we invite you all to participate later this year at the upcoming ITU Regional Innovation Forum for Europe which will be held on the 22nd and 23rd of September, 2021. This forum will touch upon accessibility entrepreneurs and look at more best practices and sharing knowledge and action taken by entrepreneurs.

The Regional Innovation Forum for Europe is organized within the framework of the 2020 ITU Global Innovation Forum. This edition of the European Regional Innovation



Forum will bring together regional stakeholders to share insights and offer the much-needed opportunities for leaders and innovators of cross-sectors to really provide the pioneering approaches and share best practices, as well as the forum will be covering really three main areas, the general innovation ecosystem, the agricultural ecosystem and the ICT system. The forum will foster inclusive, constructive, practical dialogue between key stakeholders and the regional ecosystems and will provide also an opportunity to connect the communities across the region and to take bold action and to create a more resilient ICT-centric health system that's been put through the test throughout the COVID pandemic. This forum targets all stakeholders involved in nurturing the digital innovation ecosystems with, of course, particular emphasis in a COVID-19 pandemic, issues that happen such as tourism, commerce, digital inclusion, digital health, online learning, public services, digital agriculture and much more.

New thinking is needed to accelerate Digital Transformation across the key sectors which were affected by the pandemic as well.

The forum's agenda has been customized for the needs of ICT policymakers, regulators, national innovation agencies, development agencies as well as entrepreneurs and any institution that is willing to work together to develop further the ICT ecosystem.

The forum will further nurture cross community engagement with ideas and actions that will shape the future of Digital Transformation in the Europe region.

I invite you all again to really download the report, to read it, to join us in this important forum in September.

We're really looking to cocreate this forum together and we invite you all to visit the website of the innovation forum and to submit various speaker suggestions as well as suggestions of best practices from different innovators. We really want your input in making this forum, cocreating it together.

I will stop here, I would like to thank again all of the speaker, the active participants and special thanks also to our technical moderator and captioner for the support throughout the event and I really look forward to see you at the regional innovation forum in September.

Thank you very much.

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