



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Recognition, rules and resources: a new partnership for Europe's web startups

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The President has outlined the great growth challenge we face. And how we can tackle it.

This is an issue we absolutely have to focus on .

And I want you to remember, as you discuss this, what this is ultimately about. Not about tables and tools and targets. Not about programmes and processes.

We need all those things. But let's remember what it's really about.

It's about people. People who do not have a job, do not have hope, do not have opportunity. Who cannot start to plan their lives, their homes, their families. Millions of young people who risk being part of a lost generation.

That's something that keeps me up at night. And all of us in the Commission. We need to give those young people back their chances and their opportunities.

I want to do something about this. We all do: desperately. And there isn't much time.

I don't just mean because the Commission's mandate is coming to an end.

Every week I Skype my granddaughter. Recently she asked me "how old are you?"

I said, "I'm 72"; and she asked – "grandma, how come you're still alive?"

So you'll forgive me if I'm in a rush.

But we have a solution: getting Europe's house in order isn't just about cutting deficits. It's about investing in tomorrow's growth. Supporting the ideas and innovations that can create jobs in the year and decades to come.

When I travel around Europe, when I go on social networks – one of the things that really gives me hope are Europe's army of web startups. The entrepreneurs using the power of technology to innovate.

Because their bright ideas can help everyone.

Already today the European app economy employs millions, generating billions in revenues. And that's growing sharply every year.

But it's not about the number of people directly employed.

It's the number of people it can support and empower, the range of sectors it can transform.

I've seen this technology help everyone: young and old, rich and poor, men and women.

With applications from education to energy, transport to television.

I've seen 13 year olds who aren't just playing games – they're creating them and selling them.

I've seen new kinds of healthcare, effective and empowering. In Italy there's one lady, Nonna Lea. She is trying out a new EU funded project, a robot that helps her stay active and independent at home. And she loves it. I know because she says so on her blog. She's 94 years old. Technology isn't just for the young!

And nor is it just a "toy" for the well-off. I'm just back from the UN where we've been discussing the role ICT plays in the developing world. How, even in the poorest places, these tools and this innovation can emancipate, educate, empower.

And it's for women as well as men. Today, too many women think digital careers "aren't for them". They're missing out – so is our economy. Europe needs digital human capital for the 21st century – and we simply cannot afford to ignore half our talent.

The fact is: the Internet is an incredible innovative platform.

Because you don't need permission to try things out online. You just go out there and do it. The technology doesn't have a barrier: the only limit is your imagination.

But there are many other barriers faced by those would-be innovators. Too many obstacles that stand in their way.

Those barriers can be internal. People might be put off by fear of failure, they might think this career is "not for them", they might not see the right role models.

Or it can be external – a lack of recognition, a lack of resources, or having to deal with a tangle of different digital rules across our single market.

Either way – we need to take those barriers away.

That is what these new organisations, the Startup Europe Partnership and the European Digital Forum are set up to deliver.

Giving a platform for startups to compete, raise funding, break through the glass ceiling to global success.

Showing the facts, highlighting the opportunities, giving a political voice to this essential economic sector.

Showing how well Europe is doing – and how we could do better.

So I am proud to formally launch those two new organisations today. And I wish you the best of luck.

This is really important work you will be doing. One of the "EU top jobs" really worth fighting for.

Of course: this is not the only way we are supporting startups.

We will also be investing more than ever before in this area. Our research programme Horizon 2020 will not just be the largest ever. It will be the most ever focused on

innovation. The most ever focused on smaller businesses. With about one euro in five going straight to small and medium sized companies who deliver innovations to market. And, in its first year alone, we are making 15 million euros available specifically for ICT entrepreneurs and web startups.

We will be boosting Europe's digital skills. Cutting unemployment while boosting competitiveness. With a grand coalition for digital jobs. And with grassroots initiatives like Europe code week in October. So more Europeans have the skills they need to capture tomorrow's opportunities.

Plus, we are taking away the barriers innovators face online. Safeguarding the open innovative internet so new bright ideas don't get blocked by operators or slow networks. Removing roaming charges so you don't have to switch your phone off at the border, and lose all those apps.

And we are making it easier to share and spread bright ideas across the digital single market. I hope national governments can take that final step to agreeing those new rules soon—the rules we need for vibrant telecommunications in a connected continent.

And we are doing much much more as part of our Startup Europe programme.

But most of all I am going to keep championing this cause. I am going to keep fighting for this issue as long as I am digital agenda commissioner. These people are out there creating jobs and they deserve support – recognition, rules, resources.

Today is one big step further towards a Startup Europe.

Thank you.