



## **Digitising Europe** Opportunities for the Next Generation

### **International Summit on the Digital Transformation of Education and Employment in the Age of Connectivity**

Opening statement by **Vittorio Colao, CEO Vodafone Group Plc**

Berlin, 4 December 2014

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**Sehr geehrte Frau Bundeskanzlerin, meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren,  
Herzlich willkommen zu Digitising Europe.**

[Dear Chancellor Merkel, dear ladies and gentlemen, Welcome to Digitising Europe.]

*Is it realistic to be optimistic about the future of Europe today?*

- It's a real pleasure to be here today and to talk here in Germany about the digital future of Europe.
- I would like to start with a question: is it realistic to be optimistic about the future of Europe today? We have big economic challenges and the challenges are particularly big for the young generation.
- Now here we have a strange situation. On one hand we have 23% youth unemployment, which is bad, but on the other hand we know that by 2020 there will be 900,000 jobs in ICT in Europe which will not be filled.
- And how do we reconcile these two things? In this event we will share some important research that we have done recently, which indicates that in Europe only around 15% of the young generation believes technology will give more jobs in the future.
- And between 30% and 40% of people, and unfortunately particularly in southern Europe, of young people think that technology will destroy jobs. Now this is bad, this is bad because they will not engage in technology with us, but also the political commitment and political engagement will be lower. And this is not what we need for Europe.
- So we need to be optimistic about Europe inside Europe if we want to convince the rest of the world that Europe has a future. And I think that we can work on it and I really want to indicate three areas I think we can build optimism about.

*The three areas we can build optimism about*

- **First, we need to build strong digital foundations for Europe.**
  - Here I would like to have a small dream. We often feel that innovation and new things are created either in the US or the Far East, in particularly China. I think we should have the dream that new technologies and new services in the near future will be created for the first time in Europe.



- And in order to do it the telecom industry can really provide the investment which is necessary for the big infrastructure investment which is necessary, and also, working together with the public sector, we need to create the opportunity for the young generation to see they can be entrepreneurs in technology. That they can use technology to create jobs for themselves.
- This is very important because if we can create this feeling then the telecommunication infrastructure would really be the backbone for small companies, for medium companies, for large companies, not only to create growth, which we know happens, but also to create jobs and to create the certainty and optimism about the jobs.
- So the first point is we need infrastructure, and we need fair competition conditions to allow large companies and small companies to create growth and create jobs.
- **The second strong recommendation is digital skills.**
  - We often think that everybody knows technology. I always share this small personal thing of my family. I have a young girl and when we moved to London, and the first time she got into a London taxi she sees the advertising, my five year old daughter starts to try to touch the screen and move it. And of course the advertising on the car does not move. And as a five year you think every screen is a touch screen and you think you can choose what you look at.
  - Now this is good so the young generation is digital natives but this is not enough because we need to digitise the schools, we need to digitise the public administration, we need to digitise the cities, the buildings, we need to really use technology not just for my little girl but to really improve our environments.
  - Now I travel a lot to emerging markets, I have to say the impact of technology in emerging markets is amazing, in particular in the area of education. Vodafone has programs where we use technology to improve conditions of education.
  - Specifically in many markets in Egypt we trained 240,000 people out of illiteracy. We give lessons in refugee camps in Kenya, DRC and South Sudan. I gave a business lesson from my office in London into a refugee camp in Africa and I have to tell you the quality of the questions I was getting from these high school students was not below the quality of the questions I get in London when I do similar things.
  - We as Vodafone want to bring leaders, experts, opinion shapers of the world into Africa, into refugee camps to give these children an opportunity, optimism again for the future.
  - **Now this is Emerging Markets, can we do more in Europe?** We think we should do more in Europe. We have a program called 'Return to Technology'. We are training people who have been out of a job. We give them money to have 26 weeks of training on digital skills to go back into the job. We have a program in Italy for 100,000 senior or old



people to help them catch up with digital skills. It is called 'School Of Internet'.

- **And today we are announcing 'Intern Avenue' which is a program to link interns to jobs and to make a perfect match, if I can, of skills that your interns have with the job, where the job is available.**
- Now, we need to do this everywhere and we need to link Europe as a single job market, again to give optimism to the younger students. I think education is going to be as important, digital education is going to be as important as my infrastructure and the infrastructure of my competitors. So lifelong learning, kids, work and senior people should be trained all the way through.
- **The third thing I recommend is important is clearly innovation, digital innovation, to enable change.**
  - We as Vodafone are investing a huge amount of money, €23bn, mostly in Europe and, thanks to the negotiation skills of Jens [Schulte-Bockum, CEO Vodafone Germany], a lot in Germany, to really improve the infrastructure of fibre, of 4G. Just to give you an idea, this is like building in two years, with two times the amount of money that has been necessary for the euro tunnels, so we are building two euro tunnels in two years. I hope I will make a little bit more money than the euro tunnel. And by 2016 we will have 91% coverage of 4G.
- **Now three areas I would like to recommend to focus on for innovation for Europe.**
  - First we need to really work on innovation on new generation networks, LTE, and fibre, because it is very important.
  - Second, Machine-To-Machine or 'Internet of Things' or what is sometimes called 'Industry 4.0'. I have to say, in this field Europe is actually ahead. We are very pleased to be the suppliers to all the German manufacturers of cars, but also energy, also insurance, also transportation. So Internet Of Things can come very quickly to Europe, actually probably quicker than in other parts because Europe is small, it is very densely populated, and needs to save resources and to be very efficient.
  - The third area, I'm very pleased we have a partnership with Dresden University of Technology, and here another personal thing. When I was young, Europe was the leader in technology in the 90's in 2G. We have lost a little bit in the next 10 years. We have the opportunity now as Europeans to be leaders in 5G, in tactile internet and in everything that will be developed to really create the Internet of Things and the connected society.
  - So my recommendation would be innovation focused on networks, innovation focused on Machine-To-Machine, innovation focused on 5G.



*How do we achieve this?*

- So the leading question for today is how to achieve this? I am pleased, really pleased, that we focus on this very important topic. We need private, public, small, big, NGO's, young generations, older generations to debate how to make this happen.
- I would really make the point that, my suggestion is the real purpose of this day is to create optimism on the impact of technology and the real purpose of this event should be: ***let's communicate optimism about the future of Digital Europe.***

*Vittorio Colao welcomes Dr Angela Merkel, Federal Chancellor of Germany, to the stage.*

To watch the video of Vittorio Colao's speech click [here](#)

To watch the video of Chancellor Merkel's speech click [here](#)

To watch the Digitising Europe highlights video click [here](#)

To see our tweets from the event visit @VodafoneGroup @VodafoneInstitute #digitisingEU

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