

Wednesday 27 June 2012

An open letter to EU decision-makers from Neelie Kroes's Young Advisors to President Schulz, President Van Rompuy, President Barroso, Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Vice President Kroes

We are young web entrepreneurs. We come from across the EU, including the countries worst hit by crisis. We are determined, in our different fields, to use the power of the Internet to grow our business ideas and create jobs. And we are writing this open letter to the EU's decision-makers to let them know how they can best support us in this task.

Key messages: we must build trust, awareness and access to on line services. Access to fibre broadband networks will boost jobs and growth. Start-up and innovation-friendly environment is essential for growth. Education is key - Europe must invest in training our unemployed "next generation" in fields like maths, physics, biology, computing and networking skills.

1. Get more people and more businesses online

To get the most value from the digital revolution, we need to build trust, awareness and access to online services.

Initiatives such as the 'Getting Business Online Initiative' in Ireland show the importance of getting business on line and raising awareness of the opportunities they forgo by not doing so.

Political leaders and public institutions have to advocate a new generation of age-friendly secured, trusted and verified online services while protecting the unquestionable innovation potential of a free, academic and uncensored internet. That requires the web infrastructure that is both secure and innovation-oriented.

Poor, isolated communities with low access to education, job and business opportunities and with no access to the Internet should get connected. Often they lack the basic infrastructure required or access to it. Internet connections and basic digital literacy skills can give them access to a world beyond their immediate community, and help them better identify education, training, business and job opportunities.

This can be done, for example, through a special package from mobile providers and ISPs targeting talented school children in disadvantaged groups (including, for example, ethnic minorities or those with disabilities), by providing them with a laptop and Internet access. Funding of the program can be covered by the corporate social responsibility budget of mobile providers, ISPs and multinational companies.

2. Rollout fibre networks to provide jobs

Widespread access to fibre broadband networks itself boosts jobs and growth, through enhancing productivity and opportunity.

But many jobs are created directly by the process of rolling out fibre networks. These jobs are blue- and white-collar and regional, and a good way to get the long term unemployed back into work.

Once a "next generation access" network is ubiquitous, many new jobs we haven't even dreamed of will start to become available; and small businesses, including in rural areas, will become more productive and employ more staff.

3. Create a Start-up and innovation-friendly environment

The rise of startup ecosystems across the world is a driver for global innovation and to create jobs and economic growth. Even entrepreneurs who can't sustain themselves will acquire knowledge, skills and digital capacities, which they can bring to the benefit of the more traditional labour market; traditional businesses need to adapt to this new type of a highly qualified workforce.

While others could succeed in ensuring the next "big web idea" is European – boosting jobs and growth for years to come.

How?

- Integrate “startup attributes” such as ownership/participation, iterative innovation, entrepreneurial thinking and Enterprise 2.0 into established and traditional organisations.
- Allowing entrepreneurs to operate with limited government interaction until a certain threshold is reached (e.g operating for 1-2 years, up to 7-10 employees, profitability, other indicators) could position Europe as a macro-level business incubator and thus facilitate the growth of excellence poles across the continent.
- Bridge the gap between R&D and job creation: by creating a new funding instrument within Horizon 2020, Start-up Innovation Fast-track funding (“SIFT”). This could be a funding tool focused on developing a specific innovative research prototype. It should simplify access to research for SMEs and start-ups.

4. Focus on digital skills in both education and SMEs

We hear contradictory messages today: youth unemployment is high everywhere, yet there is a shortfall of 700,000 ICT workers by 2015. The missing link between these two apparently different stories can be identified: it's education. It's high time for Europe to invest in training our unemployed “next generation” in fields like math, physics, biology, computing and networking skills. Cutting budgets in education as has been done in southern Europe is a fatal signal, not at all suitable to create hope for Europe's future in general, nor in particular for youth, parents, taxpayers or entrepreneurs.


Also it remains difficult to recruit young talent by SMEs. The main cause of this is not a deficit of preparation, but a deficit of pro-activeness and applied knowledge — which are very much needed in a resource scarce environment. To achieve this, a significant number of improvements on our educational systems may be needed.

How?


- Reformulating the unknown "Erasmus for entrepreneurs" program into a strong, joint effort between authorities, universities and potential employers for encouraging students' international mobility and a combination of academic and workplace formation.
- Skills clubs like "Coder Dojo" (where children are taught to code in Ireland) to be rolled out further; encourage and spotlight on "teach yourself to code" platforms like Code Academy, or programs that teach kids to code in schools
- A certain percentage of financial aid and funding should be irrevocably tied to education
- Run a competition, maybe in collaboration with an incubator, to reward development of new platforms

Signed

NICO(LAS) PEREZ (Spain)



Tobias Kartens
(Germany)



ERCIANO UNTERLUGGER
(Austria)



Leontios Stampoulidis
(Greece)



Efstratios Kehayas
(Greece)



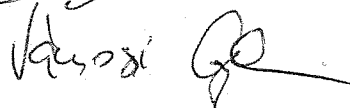
Tomasz Witaszczyk
(Poland)

T. Witaszczyk

Javier Agüera
(Spain)



Gyula Vamosi
(Hungary)



CHRIS CODER
(UK)

