DISRUPTIVE TECH TRENDS: BUILDING TECH VALLEY IN CENTRAL EUROPE

GLOBSEC 2021 BRATISLAVA FORUM SIDE EVENT

TOPICAL BACKGROUND

Central Europe has plenty of preconditions to benefit from disruptive technologies, ranging from a decent digital infrastructure (broadband coverage, telecom networks) to its educated workforce. In the context of Slovakia, the underdeveloped e-government services are frequently mentioned as one of the key deficiences. During the side event, we explored how the region can tak advantage of global tech trends, what are the risks and opportunities, and how to kickstart the post-pandemic growth in Central Europe.

EU CONTEXT

▸ EU is not a world-class innovator when it comes to new technologies; these tend to originate in the US, Russia, China, Israel, which adds to their competitive advantage & earns them geopolitical points

▸ However, EU's power lies in standard-setting (DSA, DMA, regulation of data flows, digital tax)

▸ Yet we need to consider the cost of regulations ('Brussels effect'); regulations can be a killer for small companies (e.g. GDPR); the challenge remains how to do regulations without hurting small players

PUBLIC SECTOR PERSPECTIVE – SLOVAKIA

▸ EU recovery funding brings a lot of opportunities for digitization and innovations

▸ Ministry of Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republicwill focus on investments into AI, supercomputing, quantum communications, as well we further building the digital infrastructure

▸ Slovakia needs to improve its digital readiness in several ways, including e-government, brain drain, education, digitization of SMEs

▸ The role of the state in stimulating innovations is to create a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem by legislation, lowering regulatory burdens, creating effective e-government services, stimulating taxation models, supporting relevant stakeholders, preparing analyses, creating financial instruments etc.

▸ State should create the role of 'chief agenda officers', who would act as single access points for the wider ecosystem in priority agendas (mobility, social innovation, digitization etc).

▸ Railway signalling – the most promising technology for export in Slovakia

PERSPECTIVE ON 5G

▸ Need to develop 5G infrastructure as a base for future innovations, eg. among SMEs

▸ In the B2B sector, there is an urgent need to have sufficient connectivity and mobile network everywhere; B2B sector can be fundamentally transformed with help of 5G

▸ Slovakia's just starting its journey towards 5G connectivity

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: WHAT ARE THE RISKS & HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

- ▶ AI will create one of the biggest challenges humans have ever experienced – we need to prepare for this

- ▶ AI is really good at deciphering human emotions; the rise of mental disorders and mental health problems among young people are at stake.

- ▶ Liberal democracy is also risk due to the rise of AI; the way it works now, it is perfecly fit for the use by autoritative regimes

- ▶ Other AI-related challenegs: the rise of inequality; we also need to be able to distinguish whether information is originating from humans or AI;

- ▶ Urgent need to deal with threats brought about by AI; we need to have

  - ▶ a revolution in education

  - ▶ strong ethical principles for AI (global normative framework on ethics of artificial intelligence by UNESCO is currently in the making)

  - ▶ revolution in the field of policy makers – we need to change the process of making legislation and implementing it; this required a new generation of 'AI scientists' as policy makers

WHAT IT TAKES TO BUILD AN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM AKA TECH VALLEY IN CENTRAL EUROPE

- ▶ Talent circulation as a key concept for small countries such as Slovakia;

- ▶ Importance of hacking the system to overcome the paralysis coming from dysfunctional systems (eg. education)

- ▶ We should try to identify small disruptors in the system and solve the challenges (education, poverty, equality, infrastructure...)

- ▶ The need to start building an **innovation infrastructure**; startups are not enough; it is also about policies, entrepreneurial culture

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KICK-OFF SPEAKERS

Marek Antal, State Secretary, Ministry of Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republic

Michal Gora, CEO Alfavox

Zsolt Komzsik, Country Manager Slovakia, Ericsson

Andrew Lee, Head of Government Affairs, ESET

Vladimír Šucha, Senior Policy Advisor, UNESCO

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Miroslav Beblavý, Founder, ESPRI

Mária Bieliková, Director General, Kempellen Institute of Intelligent Technologies

Ján Hrončák, CEO, Akular

Peter Karpaty, Ministry of Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republic

Peter Kolesár, Partner, Civitta

Andrew Lee, Head of Government Affairs, ESET

Ján Lunter, CEO, Innovatrics

Branislav Voška, CEO, Siemens Mobility