



Outcome Document

The 4th UfM Digital Transformation Conference Bratislava, 16-17 July 2025

Background:

This year's edition of the UfM Digital Transformation Conference, co-organised with the German Development Cooperation and supported by the European Commission (DG EMPL), focused on the opportunities, challenges and best practices associated with three interlinked facets of digital transition, namely skills and job creation, rights and principles, as well as the role of cities in promoting digital transformation in a just and inclusive way. It benefitted from the expertise of the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic, as well as the Digital Coalition of Slovakia.

The Conference brought together over 50 participants including high-level speakers, partners and stakeholders from different sectors of the Euro-Mediterranean region. They were engaged in three fit-for-purpose panels that combined interventions with elements of gamification to engage the participants in focused discussions with a view to compiling insights and recommendations upon which they converge.



Content:

During the Opening Remarks, Mr. Mr. Vojtech Przybyla (Chief State Counsellor at the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic) took stock of the current efforts underway in Slovakia. For his part, Dr. Khaled El Attar (Former Vice Minister for Digital Transformation, Automation and Administrative Development of Egypt) stressed the need for the right data in order to inspire the right policies and highlighted the role of cities as digital transformation catalysts.

This was followed by a scene setter presenting the current macroeconomic realities and key figures and statistics associated with the field by Dr. Anas Al Natsheh (Kajaani University of Applied Sciences) and Mr. Alessandro Brolpito (European Training Foundation).



Several representatives of Governments and Public Sector bodies, Private Sector entities, Academia and young entrepreneurs took the floor to share best practices that inspired synergy-building during the networking event held on the second day of the Conference, fully dedicated to exchanging views and seeking meaningful complementarities.

Modality:

Throughout three sessions and to ensure full engagement of all the participants, the audience was introduced to the modality and the thematic, then introduced to the topics of the Conference by 3 to 5 speakers per panel before engaging in interactive discussions on Opportunities, Challenges, and Best Practice in the form of a speed networking session comprising 12 one-on-one slots of 5 minutes each.

The panelists shared experiences from UfM countries, mostly from the Private Sector from Albania, Belgium, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Slovakia, Spain, and Tunisia, and called for the importance of maintaining regular exchanges on digital transformation going forward. They agreed on the crucial role of the Private Sector as a vehicle of digital transformation and stressed its multiplier effect in bridging the prevailing skills and jobs gaps.

Key findings:

Over the three panels and during the speed networking session, the participants coincided on several opportunities, threats, and best practices under the three thematic areas of discussion. The table hereunder lists the most prominent findings in a representative -rather than exhaustive- manner:

Pane I – Digital Rights and Principles	
<i>Opportunities and Best Practices</i>	<i>Threats and Challenges</i>
1.Digital and data humanism are a growing field of study and policy research, with awareness constantly on the rise.	1.Access to digital technology is far from being democratized. The industry perpetuates gender and economic class gaps.
2.Digital penetration, though uneven across and within the region (including between urban and rural areas) is improving over the successive years.	2.Data privacy and protection remain to be a major concern. Data mining is not properly regulated across the region and data exploitation by Big Tech companies is a threat.
3.Digital literacy and inclusivity are enabled through new digital technologies, making access to services possible to broader segments of the society.	3.Digital Twin initiatives to test adaptability and acceptability to new policies and laws could pose a breach of digital rights if not properly regulated.
Panel II – Digital Skills and Job Creation	
<i>Opportunities and Best Practices</i>	<i>Threats and Challenges</i>
1.The Private Sector is increasingly engaging in co-designing curricula to anticipate market needs and equip people with fit-for-purpose skills at a younger age.	1.The digital skill gap persists and is aggravated by gender and by geography. This gap does not allow for inclusive labour access.
2.Fin-tech is empowering Private Sector businesses and entrepreneurs financially,	2.Transition to digital labour ecosystems outpaces the reskilling and upskilling of



whereas a plethora new business models is emerging to back innovative products and services.	broad spectra of job seekers and even job creators.
3.Public-Private Partnerships are increasingly shaping the future of labour markets. In parallel, the growing education-skilling-employment nexus is facilitating transition to -and creation of- new jobs. Digital nomadism allows for better work-life balance.	3.Digital jobs still perpetuate a gender gap inequality in job positions and paygrades. Digital skills and jobs need to be green, and no effort should be spared to offset the elevated energy consumption associated with data centres and other tech facilities.
Panel III – The Role of Cities	
<i>Opportunities and Best Practices</i>	<i>Threats and Challenges</i>
1.Human-centric digital transformation initiatives have proven to be the most sustainable and inclusive, putting people over profit and well-being over modernization.	1.Top-down deployment of digital transformation measures aggravate inequalities and do not make cities “a better place to live” for all inhabitants on equal footing.
2.Cities that have been successful enablers of digital transformation have something in common: a triple bottom-line approach to digitalisation that emphasizes social, economic and environmental transition.	2.Cybersecurity is a major concern. The centralization of data in many metropolises translates into a hazardous concentration of risk.
3.Smart cities that have succeeded in striking a balance between modernization, interoperability and inclusivity are inspiring other cities to follow the same example.	3.Digital dictatorships remain to be a threat in the case of governments using digital technologies for surveillance and for serving controversial political agendas



Annexes: Graphic representation of the three panels



