



# STRATEGY 2026-2030

**WE BUILD WHAT'S NEXT. TALENT. TECH. TRUST.**



# CONTENTS

<b>WHAT'S NEXT WITH THE CEO OF 28DIGITAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>VALUES, ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE: HOW WE ACT IS WHO WE ARE</b>	<b>30</b>
<hr/>		Core Values	31
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>6</b>	People	32
<hr/>		Organisation	32
<b>MISSION AND OBJECTIVES: THE STAKES ARE HIGH</b>	<b>10</b>	Governance	32
Europe at a Digital Crossroads:		<hr/>	
Technology, Geopolitics and Global Competition	11	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>34</b>
28DIGITAL's Strategic Response: Scaling Innovation	13	<hr/>	
Ecosystems through Knowledge Triangle Integration	15	<b>ANNEX I: OUR JOURNEY FROM FOUNDATION TO INDEPENDENCE</b>	<b>36</b>
Vision and Mission		<hr/>	
<hr/>		<b>ANNEX II: 28DIGITAL IN THE EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL INNOVATION LANDSCAPE</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH</b>	<b>18</b>	<hr/>	
Core Engagement Pillars: Knowledge, Market, Investments	19	<b>ANNEX III: SUCCESS STORIES</b>	<b>44</b>
Technology Domains Driving Europe's leadership	21		
Target Groups and Value Propositions	22		
Ecosystem Integration	22		
<hr/>			
<b>REGIONAL PRESENCE: ROOTED IN EUROPE AND CONNECTED TO THE WORLD</b>	<b>24</b>		
Hub Model: Three Complementary Presence Types	25		
Expansion Strategy	25		
<hr/>			
<b>GROWTH STRATEGY: BEYOND GRANTS AND BEYOND BORDERS</b>	<b>26</b>		
Growth Levers and Targets	27		
Financial Model and Projections	28		



**WHAT'S  
NEXT  
WITH THE  
CEO OF  
28DIGITAL**

## I AM THRILLED TO INTRODUCE OUR STRATEGY 2026-2030.

Europe stands at a defining moment for its future. Technological breakthroughs, geopolitical shifts, and global competition are reshaping the foundations of our economies and societies. In this context, Europe must strengthen its capacity not only to innovate, but also to scale innovation, mobilise talent, and transform ideas into global impact. This moment also coincides with renewed European ambition to strengthen competitiveness, accelerate technological leadership, and mobilise talent across the continent.

To succeed, Europe must complete the integration of its digital economy. We need a truly borderless One Market, where talent, innovation, and ventures can scale without barriers. Europe's world-class research must translate into globally competitive companies capable of leading in strategic technologies such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and quantum computing. The stakes are nothing less than Europe's technological leadership and digital sovereignty.

28DIGITAL was created to help make this possible. Born from the vision of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and building on more than a decade of experience as EIT Digital, we have grown into Europe's largest digital innovation ecosystem. Since becoming an independent organisation in 2025, we have entered a new chapter with a clear ambition: to help make Europe the world's leading hub for digital talent, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

At the heart of our strategy lies a simple principle: Talent. Tech. Trust. Europe's competitiveness depends on its ability to develop talent at scale, transform research into technology-driven ventures, and build trusted ecosystems where innovation can flourish.

Innovation rarely spreads evenly. It concentrates in ecosystems that connect universities, research centres, companies, startups, investors, and public institutions. When these actors collaborate, ideas move faster from lab to market, ventures scale more rapidly, and ecosystems grow stronger together. When they remain fragmented, innovation slows and Europe loses valuable time.

By 2030, we envision a Europe where thousands of globally competitive deep-tech ventures flourish, where millions of Europeans possess advanced digital skills, and where innovation ecosystems operate as one integrated platform. In this future, global entrepreneurs will see Europe as the most trusted place to build transformative technologies, and European values will help shape the global digital economy.

To achieve this vision, 28DIGITAL will expand its presence across Europe and globally through a multi-hub model — regional, technological, and global — connecting local strengths to global opportunities. With boots on the ground across innovation ecosystems, we will help mobilise talent, accelerate deep-tech ventures, and connect European innovators with global markets.

At the same time, we embrace a broader ambition for Europe: the "28th regime." A Europe-plus-one step toward deeper integration, where talent, capital, and innovation move freely across borders, and where ecosystems collaborate to create scale and global impact.

We firmly believe that Europe can compete globally while remaining true to its values. In fact, these values are Europe's competitive advantage in shaping a digital future that works for people, businesses, and society.

Together with our staff, members, and partners across Europe and around the world, we look forward to building what's next — together, with speed and clarity, and above all, for tomorrow and responsibly.

**Federico Menna**  
*CEO, 28DIGITAL*

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**28DIGITAL was born from Europe's ambition to connect business, academia, and research into a single engine of innovation. We were established in 2010 under the auspices of the European Institute of Technology (EIT). Under the name of EIT Digital, we have grown in the last decade into Europe's largest digital innovation ecosystem. 2025 marked our transition to independence from EIT, as a true European spin-off, independent yet faithful to our mission, fully aligned with the European Commission and its flagship programmes such as the EIC, Horizon Europe, and the Digital Europe Programme.**

Our new name 28DIGITAL reflects a new European ambition, the "28th regime": a borderless framework where innovation, talent, and entrepreneurship thrive across the Single Market. It aligns with Europe's Startup and Scaleup Strategy [6], turning our continent not only into a place where companies are created, but where they grow into global champions. It also embodies the vision of a Union of Skills: a Europe where people are empowered to build, move, and recognise skills across borders. "28" stands for Europe plus one, the extra step needed to turn fragmentation into integration, and ambition into impact.

28DIGITAL's mission resonates with the European Commission's priorities on competitiveness, sovereignty, and sustainability. We echo the urgency of the Draghi Competitiveness Report [3] and the recent Single Market Report by E. Letta [4]: Europe must invest boldly in talent, innovation, and scale-ups to become a global leader. At the same time, we answer the Union of Skills' call to invest in future-oriented education, lifelong upskilling, and mobility as the foundation of competitiveness.

28DIGITAL is Europe's digital innovation engine, scaling talent, technology, and ventures to secure Europe's leadership in the digital age.

We envision a world where Europe is the leading hub and global benchmark for digital talent, innovation, and entrepreneurship, rooted in European values. Through an open and borderless market, innovations scale globally, talents flow freely, and the digital economy serves people, competitiveness, and strategic autonomy.

By mobilizing a global multi-stakeholder ecosystem, rooted in European values and open to the world, we turn knowledge into innovation, scale startups into global ventures, and build the next generation of digital talent to shape a fair, competitive, and human-centric digital future.

Our strategy 2026-2030 positions 28DIGITAL as Europe's digital innovation engine to make this happen. We will drive impact through five strategic levers:

- **Talent creation, attraction and mobilisation:** we will develop and connect the next generation of digital leaders through higher education, executive learning, and lifelong upskilling, enabling talent mobility across Europe and globally.
- **Research mobilisation and tech transfer:** we will accelerate the conversion of Europe's scientific excellence into real-world impact through technology transfer, venture creation, and IP valorisation.

- **Startup and Scale-up growth:** we will strengthen Europe as a place to build and grow global deep-tech champions by mobilising capital at scale, remove barriers to scaling, and closing financing gaps.
- **Ecosystem building and orchestration:** we will design, build, and connect innovation ecosystems that unite universities, corporates, startups, investors, and governments across borders through our Ecosystem-as-a-Service model. By aligning public and private actors around shared objectives, we will accelerate systemic transformation to create strategic competitive advantages.
- **Values and trust:** we will ensure that Europe's digital transformation remains open, fair, inclusive, and responsible, grounded in human-centric values that make trust a competitive asset.

28 is also a perfect number—equal to the sum of its divisors ( $1 + 2 + 4 + 7 + 14 = 28$ )— symbol of harmony and completeness. In mathematics it anchors number theory, the basis of cryptography and quantum algorithms. In our world it evokes an ecosystem where trust and technology reinforce each other, each part contributing to the strength of the whole.

By 2030, 28DIGITAL will contribute to make Europe the world's leading hub for digital talent and innovation by:

Engaging 550+ corporate, university, research partners and public actors in open innovation, ecosystem building, and education.



**Educating 2,500,000 learners through degrees, professional training, and online courses.**



**Supporting 1,000 startups and scale-ups to become global champions.**



**Creating 500 new ventures and scaling deep tech innovations with global impact.**



**Mobilising €2 billion of investments into Europe's digital transformation.**



**Expanding our ecosystem to 35 countries globally, accelerating their digital transformation.**

We will continue to lead Europe's largest digital innovation ecosystem and expand its reach on the global stage. Europe has already proven its ability to build sustainable innovation ecosystems at scale: our revenue is growing and the returns from our equity portfolio are reinvested directly into new deep-tech ventures, multiplying impact and reinforcing a virtuous cycle of innovation. Our evolution embodies the broader European ambition of a continent where digital talent moves freely, where startups grow into global champions without leaving Europe, and where innovation drives competitiveness, sovereignty, and shared prosperity.



# **MISSION AND OBJECTIVES:**

THE STAKES ARE HIGH

## EUROPE AT A DIGITAL CROSSROADS: TECHNOLOGY, GEOPOLITICS AND GLOBAL COMPETITION

28DIGITAL's transition to independence from EIT coincides with unprecedented technological advancement and geopolitical tension. The explosion of generative and agentic AI has transformed from technological curiosity to market-defining force. At the same time, cybersecurity threats have become increasingly sophisticated and frequent. The intersection of AI capabilities with cybersecurity creates both defence opportunities and new attack vectors.

Geopolitical tensions, including conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, have reshaped global supply chains. Changing political priorities in the United States have cascaded through European policy circles, intensifying discussions about strategic autonomy. European leaders now actively pursue policies to reduce dependencies on non-European energy and rare earth metals while increasing defence spending, recognizing that technological capabilities and national as well as European security are increasingly intertwined.

At the same time, the global digital economy continues to be dominated by non-European actors. The United States leads in platform-based business models and global tech giants, while China has scaled rapidly in consumer technologies, e-commerce, and hardware manufacturing. Europe, despite its strong industrial base and research excellence, has historically struggled to translate innovation into global market leaders. Fragmented markets, limited scaleup pathways, and insufficient capital mobilisation have left European innovators at a structural disadvantage. As a result, the largest digital platforms, cloud infrastructures, consumer services shaping everyday life, and now also artificial intelligence, are predominantly controlled by U.S. and Asian firms. This asymmetry underscores the urgency for Europe not only to catch up in emerging domains like AI, semiconductors, and quantum, but also to build the conditions for European-born companies to scale globally without having to relocate or be acquired by non-European players.

These converging pressures present both challenges and opportunities for the European economy, society and businesses.

Europe's position to tackle those is challenged by internal factors such as fragmentation and lack of scaling up of digital innovation, hurdles in research to market and regulatory differences between member states.

Its structural challenges are highlighted in the October 2024 Align, Act, Accelerate report (Heitor Report, [2]). This report, published by the European Commission, focuses on revitalizing Europe's research, technology, and innovation to confront the global challenges and drive competitiveness, with climate change, digital disruption, and geopolitical shifts requiring urgent attention. It identifies five internal areas where Europe needs to improve: 1. governance and management issues in administering innovation programmes; 2. insufficient funding scale; 3. a fragmented approach to common challenges; 4. structural reorganisation of European programmes; 5. a gap in research and innovation for dual-use technologies.



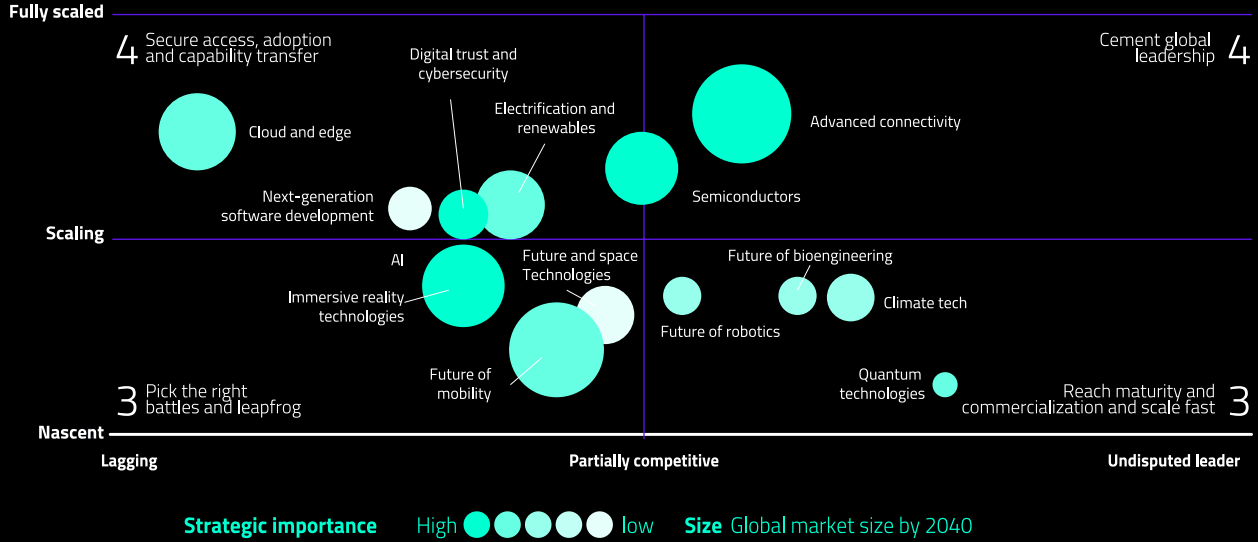


Figure 1: Europe's competitive position in various technologies, c.f. [6]

The Draghi Report, formally titled The Future of European Competitiveness [3], also presents a stark assessment of Europe's declining competitive position globally, identifying similar issues and adding the overall economic perspective of gaps in productivity and growth.

Gaps in the progress of digital transformation are particularly evident in the EU's own assessment. The EU says member states are lagging on key goals for connectivity, digital skills, AI and more, as highlighted in the World Economic Forum's coverage of the 2024 State of the Digital Decade report [5]. This report evaluates the progress—at both the EU and national levels—towards realising the objectives and targets set by the Digital Decade Policy Programme.

However, Europe is responding with renewed strategic focus. In May 2025, the European Commission launched an EU Startup and

Scaleup Strategy to make Europe a great place for starting and growing global technology-driven companies [6]. The strategy is a clear statement of purpose: to turn Europe's wealth of creativity, research and ambition into thriving new companies, quality jobs and real-world solutions. It complements the Union of Skills agenda by emphasising that scaling innovation is only possible if Europe addresses its skills shortages, accelerates lifelong learning, and ensures mobility and recognition of qualifications across borders.

The Draghi Report [3] and a WEF white paper "Europe in the Intelligent Age – From Ideas to Action" [7] identify technology areas where Europe is leading and should capitalise on its strengths (e.g. quantum computing, climate technologies, digital governance standards), as well as where catching up with world leaders is essential (e.g. artificial intelligence, semiconductors). Critical measures include accelerating

digital infrastructure development, investing in digital skills education and entrepreneurial capabilities, and creating regulatory frameworks that balance innovation with necessary protections.

At the same time, Europe has a unique opportunity: to position itself as the most attractive place in the world for innovators and entrepreneurs. With initiatives such as Choose Europe, supported by 28DIGITAL and other leading actors, Europe is actively working to promote its innovation ecosystems globally and attract the best talent and investors. This complements the Startup and Scaleup Strategy by not only helping European ventures grow but also by making Europe the preferred landing place for international entrepreneurs, students, and companies seeking a trusted, values-based environment for innovation. If leveraged properly, this opportunity can help Europe move from lagging in scale to leading in global talent mobilisation, skills circulation, and digital entrepreneurship.

## **28DIGITAL'S STRATEGIC RESPONSE: SCALING INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH KNOWLEDGE TRIANGLE INTEGRATION**

Europe is entering a period in which technological disruption, geopolitical instability, and global competition align with renewed political focus on competitiveness and digital sovereignty. These forces require coordinated, systemic action rather than incremental adjustments. 28DIGITAL's strategy is designed to respond to this moment with a practical, execution-oriented approach that mobilises the full breadth of Europe's talent, research, and innovation assets within a trusted ecosystem platform. Over the past decade, we have learned how to bridge public and private capital, turning funded projects into sustainable education programmes, ventures, and innovation partnerships. This ability to convert investments into long-term impact is part of our DNA and we will bring this capability to the world, applying Europe's model of values-based innovation on a global scale.

### **CORE CHALLENGES SHAPING OUR STRATEGY**

Europe faces four structural challenges to its economic

competitiveness that define 28DIGITAL's priorities for 2026–2030:

1. Digital and advanced tech talent shortages, constraining competitiveness across industries.
2. Low conversion of research into market-ready innovation, particularly in deep tech.
3. Limited private capital and fragmented scaleup pathways, slowing growth of high-potential ventures.
4. Fragmented regional ecosystems with uneven tech maturity, preventing cross-border collaboration and limiting scalability.

Addressing these requires coordinated action across education, innovation, entrepreneurship, and investments, areas in which 28DIGITAL provides integrated capabilities.

28DIGITAL responds to this challenge with a strategy that is both bold and pragmatic: bold in scale and ambition, pragmatic in building on what works, Europe's deep research, education, and industrial base, combined with a unique tradition of trust, fairness, and responsibility.

### **MOBILISING TALENT AT SCALE**

The first driver of competitiveness is people. 28DIGITAL expands Europe's digital talent pipeline through world-class education, entrepreneurship, and mobility.

- We will educate and train 2.5 million learners by 2030, ensuring the workforce is equipped for the twin green and digital transition.

**28DIGITAL is uniquely positioned to orchestrate ecosystems, mobilise and connect talent, and serve as Europe's digital engine. By bridging local strengths with global opportunities, and by aligning innovation with European values, 28DIGITAL ensures that Europe not only adapts to technological and geopolitical complexity but actively shapes the digital future on its own terms.**

This approach directly complements the Union of Skills agenda by strengthening basic and advanced digital skills, enabling lifelong learning, and fostering cross-border recognition and mobility.

- STEM and entrepreneurial education will remain at the core: 89% of our Master School graduates stay in Europe and 38% plan to launch a startup within two years, creating a direct impact on Europe's innovation capacity. By 2030, we aim to increase our annual cohort of students to more than 1,000, thus increasing both the number of graduates and the share starting new ventures, positioning the 28DIGITAL Master School as Europe's most effective deep-tech talent and venture creation engine.

**SPOTLIGHT ON LEVELS.** LEVELS is a young Italian startup founded in 2024, building Generative AI systems that act as digital collaborators within companies. The four founders — Emanuele Baldelli, Filippo Caliò, Dario Del Gaizo, and Tommaso Lucarelli — met through the EIT Digital Master School, completing a double degree in Data Science between Politecnico di Milano and KTH. After internships at Amazon in Luxembourg, they chose entrepreneurship over corporate careers. →

- Through initiatives like Choose Europe, we help position Europe as an attractive destination for global talent, researchers, and entrepreneurs.

**SPOTLIGHT ON 28DIGITAL'S CHOOSE EUROPE IMPLEMENTATION.** Building on the international reach of our ecosystem and the flagship EIT Digital Master School, cooperation agreements in Cambodia create pathways for engineering and computer science students to pursue advanced digital degrees in Europe. →

#### FROM RESEARCH TO MARKET IMPACT

Europe generates world-leading research, but too little becomes scalable innovation. 28DIGITAL will strengthen Europe's ability to turn discovery into market outcomes through a coordinated

research-to-market pipeline.

- We connect universities, research labs, and entrepreneurs to support spin-off creation, IP valorisation, and proof-of-concept development.
- Our SPIN and Venture Incubation Program will further grow and support the creation of more than 500 new ventures, thus positioning 28DIGITAL as one of Europe's largest research commercialisation engines.

**SPOTLIGHT ON VOICEMED,** 28DIGITAL equity portfolio company we invested in 2023, Co-founders Arianna Arienzo, Fulvio Cordella, Dr. Martina Antinozzi designed a solution that analyzes breath and voice to provide insights into cardiorespiratory fitness and lung function. →

#### POWERING STARTUPS AND SCALEUPS

Europe produces excellent startups but too few scale into global champions. 28DIGITAL directly addresses this gap by:

- Supporting 1,000 startups and scaleups by 2030 through acceleration and growth services, also by reinvesting returns from our equity portfolio into new deep tech ventures.
- Via our Access2Finance service we will connect the most promising European scaleups to investors and support them to attract at least €2B private and public capital.
- By exploring new models such as venture funds, blended finance, and public-private co-investments we will support Europe competing with global financial ecosystems.

**SPOTLIGHT ON OUR STRATEGIC COLLABORATION WITH THE EIC AND ECOSYSTEM COLLABORATION WITH THE ECB.** It is pivotal to deliver simplification and a perfect funnel for European Innovators and deep tech entrepreneurs - from student to unicorn. Check out the highlights of our collaboration raising €25M private capital for EIC Accelerator companies in 12 months. 28DIGITAL Accelerator alumnus Squirro Provides ECB with Augmented Intelligence Solution. →

## BUILDING AND ORCHESTRATING ECOSYSTEMS

Europe's fragmentation has long been a weakness. 28DIGITAL turns this into a strength by orchestrating a pan-European backbone with global reach. Our hubs link local strengths into a borderless platform where innovation flows freely between regions, sectors, and stakeholders.

- 28DIGITAL invests in and mobilises ecosystems around strategic domains such as Artificial Intelligence and Agentic AI, Semiconductors, HPC and Advanced Computing, Cybersecurity, Quantum Technologies, Green and Dual-Use Tech. By anchoring these domains in tech hubs across Europe, we will ensure that innovation does not remain fragmented but creates concentrated momentum at scale.
- By expanding our presence in 35 countries globally, we will act as Europe's trusted "place to land," helping international innovators connect with European ecosystems.

**SPOTLIGHT ON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS FROM HORIZON EUROPE PROGRAMME UNITE AND RIV CIRCULAR, UNITE is a major €20 million pan-European programme aimed at transforming healthcare through digital deep tech innovation to address challenges posed by demographic transitions and ageing populations. RIVCircular involves eight EU regions and territories (Madrid, Extremadura, Greece, Hauts-de-France, Vienna, Innlandet, Košice and Kyiv Oblast) around the topic of Circular Economy. →**

## ROOTED IN EUROPEAN VALUES

Finally, 28DIGITAL ensures that innovation serves society. By embedding openness, inclusivity, sustainability, and trust in all our actions, we make Europe's digital transformation both competitive and legitimate. Our governance mirrors the European approach: balancing ambition with responsibility, innovation with protection, and speed with fairness.

28DIGITAL is uniquely positioned to address these challenges and to align with Europe's planned strategic measures through its expertise digital and deep tech, in particular AI, cybersecurity, and digital

28DIGITAL's evolution represents a strategic repositioning to help Europe's economy and society navigate the complex intersection of technological advancement, geopolitical pressure, and the quest for digital sovereignty in an increasingly interconnected yet fragmented world. This not only includes creating and scaling innovations by Europeans for Europeans but also establishing structures for global talent and entrepreneurs to pursue their dreams in Europe, ensuring Europe becomes the preferred home for talent, scale-ups, and innovation.

infrastructure, combined with its extensive network of academic and industry partners across Europe. The organisations structure and governance equip it with the agility necessary to tackle multifaceted challenges facing European digital transformation while maintaining European values.

## VISION AND MISSION

Europe's ambition for innovation is to compete with Silicon Valley's scale and China's coordination while maintaining its commitment to European values. With our trusted governance model, its local presence and our ambition to extend influence beyond Europe we will contribute to realize this ambition.

By 2030, Europe will be a strong and trusted global hub for digital innovation, a place where talent, technology, and capital converge to create world-leading companies anchored in European values. This recognizes that Europe's tech leadership depends on more than individual breakthroughs: it requires talent, capital, and knowledge to move freely across borders. Europe's strength lies in



28DIGITAL CEO Federico Menna with Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation Ekaterina Zaharieva. Image credit European Commission audiovisual services, October 2025

the collective power of the EU27, and the “28th” ambition of true integration. 28DIGITAL is the catalyst of this ambition: transforming fragmentation into scale, enabling mobility across borders, and ensuring that Europe’s innovation assets operate as one trusted ecosystem. This ensures that breakthrough technologies reflect the principles that will define responsible innovation globally, making Europe the preferred place for innovators and entrepreneurs to build, grow, and scale.

Our mission is to strengthen Europe’s position in the digital world by developing talent, accelerating research to market, and scaling the next generation of global deep tech champions. This mission serves as the operational foundation for realizing a broader European ambition. By systematically connecting the continent’s fragmented innovation assets and removing barriers to collaboration, we enable Europe to better compete in digital on an international scale.

### **THE 28DIGITAL VISION**

*We envision a world where Europe is the leading hub and global benchmark for digital talent, innovation, and entrepreneurship, rooted in European values. Through an open and borderless market, innovations scale globally, talents flow freely, and the digital economy serves people, competitiveness, and strategic autonomy.*

### **THE 28DIGITAL MISSION**

*By mobilising a global multi-stakeholder platform, rooted in European values and open to the world, we turn knowledge into innovation, scale startups into global ventures, and build the next generation of digital talent to shape a fair, competitive, and human-centric digital future.*



# YOUR JOURNEY STARTS NOW!



**STRATEGIC  
IMPLEMENTATION  
FRAMEWORK:**  
A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER  
APPROACH

**To fulfil our mission of advancing Europe’s technology leadership, we will evolve our successful, trusted, multi-stakeholder ecosystem into a fully integrated model uniting Knowledge, Market, and Investments. By bringing together universities, RTOs, researchers, entrepreneurs, corporates, startups, SMEs, investors, and governments, we transform fragmentation into collaboration and create a platform where talent, technology, and capital reinforce each other**

We will leverage the strengths of each community and connect their excellence, turning research into ventures, scaling innovation globally, and developing the talent that will power a fair, competitive, and human-centric digital future.

## **CORE ENGAGEMENT PILLARS: KNOWLEDGE, MARKET, INVESTMENTS**

### **KNOWLEDGE**

We will activate universities, RTOs, TTOs, and education partners by educating, upskilling, and reskilling individuals, companies, and institutions across Europe and beyond. We will turn research, expertise, and innovation into new products, ventures, and capabilities ready to meet global challenges. By investing in people and skills, we will equip companies with the talent they need to innovate and grow, ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital transition. Our role is to connect knowledge with market and societal needs, enabling individuals and ideas to move, grow, and thrive in a borderless digital economy.

**SPOTLIGHT ON CECILIA PECCOLO** Master School alumna, today Data Scientist at FlyPix AI, in the satellite data domain. ↻

**We build what’s next by turning knowledge into impact, empowering people, scaling innovation, and shaping a digital future grounded in purpose, responsibility, and trust.**

**SPOTLIGHT ON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS: DICE X EUAN.** Through its engagement with the European Commission Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support and collaboration with the EU Agencies Network (EUAN), we contribute to advancing digital transformation across European public administrations. ↻

**SPOTLIGHT ON 28DIGITAL’S B2C UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING COURSES:** Essential Series and courses on Coursera. More than half a million citizens upskilled. ↻

### **MARKET**

We will connect Europe’s talent, technologies, and trusted innovation culture with real-world demand. By bringing together corporates, SMEs, startups, and governments, we will co-develop solutions that address the world’s biggest digital challenges and accelerate their path to market. Our ambition is to ensure that innovation does not remain in the lab but reaches industry and society with speed, scale, and purpose. We will help companies land, expand, and scale across Europe and globally, opening new pathways for growth. Through cross-border collaboration, we will reduce fragmentation, accelerate adoption, and ensure that businesses can access the talent, partners, and technologies they need to thrive.

**We build what’s next by turning innovation into global impact, across industries, borders and society**

**SPOTLIGHT ON 28DIGITAL EQUITY PORTFOLIO COMPANY BINARII LABS**, an Ireland-based deep-tech cybersecurity company founded in 2021, focused on sovereign, zero-trust security for unstructured data, we invested in 2023. Check out their story, co-founders Aidan Finn, Steven Garner, Ciarán McNamee, Nigel Carter are dominating their field. →

**SPOTLIGHT ON SPIN NEST**, developed by 28DIGITAL in partnership with Fondazione NEST, the initiative created an intensive training and pre-incubation pathway tailored specifically for scientists working on sustainable energy technologies. →

Our pan-European network positions us to identify and support exceptional entrepreneurs, researchers, and innovators, including those in emerging regions, ensuring that excellence and opportunity are not confined to traditional hubs. By helping researchers, RTOs, and universities translate knowledge into global innovation, we will close the gap between science and impact. We will mobilise venture funding, public investments, and strategic partnerships to fuel the growth of startups and scale-ups across Europe and expand their reach into global markets.

**We build what's next by fuelling the capacity to act, with purpose, speed, and ambition.**

**SPOTLIGHT ON 28DIGITAL EQUITY PORTFOLIO COMPANY FINQ BIT** from incubation to series A and a global expansion with 28DIGITAL, check out the story of founders Tomasz Cwik and Rafał Pracht. →

## INVESTMENTS

We will invest in people, ventures, and ecosystems to unlock the full value of technology for markets and societies. We will channel public and private capital where it creates the greatest impact: deep tech talent, entrepreneurial ventures, and high-performing ecosystems.



Figure 2: 28DIGITAL's multi-stakeholder approach

**SPOTLIGHT ON 28DIGITAL CHAMPION WSENSE,** check out founder Chiara Petrioli's story from series A fundraising, through US market expansion to series B fundraising with 28DIGITAL. →

- **Deep Tech:** breakthrough technologies that shape the future of industry and society
- **Strategic Tech:** critical capabilities for security, autonomy, and geopolitical influence
- **Green & Social Tech:** sustainable and inclusive technologies for Europe's twin transition

## TECHNOLOGY DOMAINS DRIVING EUROPE'S LEADERSHIP

As part of our 2026-2030 strategy, we will further focus our actions in domains where digital technology and innovation drive societal progress, addressing major global challenges and delivering tangible benefits for people, governments, businesses, and the planet:

In these fields, we will prioritize application areas where European values, expertise, and innovation capabilities can create distinctive competitive advantages while maintaining our commitment to ethical innovation, digital rights, and sustainable development.

### DeepTech: Breakthrough Technologies that shape the future of industry and Society

DeepTech comprises breakthrough science-based technologies that shape the future of industry and society, transforming what's possible in health, mobility, manufacturing, and beyond. We focus on cutting edge digital technologies that require advanced scientific expertise and engineering competencies in taking those technologies to market. These include artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced semiconductors, quantum computing, foundational technologies that drive the next wave in digital transformation. Impacted sectors include manufacturing, FinTech, retail, agriculture, smart cities, governments, health, sport & wellbeing.

Figure 3: DeepTech

### Strategic Tech: critical capabilities for security, autonomy, and geopolitical influence

Strategic tech represents the critical capabilities for security, autonomy, and geopolitical influence, where innovation supports both civil and defence applications. Europe needs to build competencies in technologies and solution that help to reduce the dependence on non-European companies in strategically and economically important sectors such as space, defence, dual use

Figure 4: Strategic Tech

### Green & Social Tech: sustainable and inclusive technologies for Europe's twin transition

Green Tech includes sustainable technologies that enable the twin digital and green transition, accelerating decarbonization and circularity. Social Tech leverages technology to address the needs of e.g. an aging population, displaced people, or minority groups. Reducing the environmental impact of technology-driven solutions, including digital data and computing infrastructures, is an imperative given the ever-increasing consumption of energy and other natural resources. Supporting societal needs is imperative for an inclusive, resilient, and cohesive society.

Figure 5: Green & Social Tech

## TARGET GROUPS AND VALUE PROPOSITIONS

28DIGITAL serves Europe's innovation ecosystem through differentiated value propositions tailored to three strategic stakeholder groups:

**Talent & Knowledge Stakeholders** (Universities, RTOs, Education Organisations, Students) gain access to Europe's premier digital education network, global talent flows, structured pathways from education to entrepreneurship, EU funding opportunities, and technology transfer support. Our Master and Doctoral Schools, Lifelong Learning programmes, and the (d)Academy platform create seamless student journeys from learning to career to venture creation.

**Market & Growth Stakeholders** (Corporates, SMEs, Startups, Scaleups) access curated deep-tech ventures, vetted talent pipelines, corporate innovation programmes, cascade funding, and investment-ready support services. We connect European innovation with global markets while providing international ventures trusted entry into Europe's ecosystem.

**Capital & Ecosystem Stakeholders** (Investors, Public Actors) access primed deal flow, co-investment opportunities, and instruments to mobilize public-private capital at scale. Public sector partners gain turnkey ecosystem development, regional innovation orchestration, and strategic alignment with EU priorities.

Organisations from those stakeholder groups can engage with us with varying levels of involvement. This structure ensures accessibility while scaling impact across Europe's fragmented innovation landscape.

## ECOSYSTEM INTEGRATION

28DIGITAL integrates Europe's fragmented innovation landscape into a borderless platform where Knowledge, Market, and Investments converge to accelerate digital transformation. Our ecosystem orchestrates the engagement pillars, the technology domains, and

the target group described above, using the engagement model to provide tangible pathways that transform Europe's structural advantages into competitive outcomes:

**Education-to-Enterprise Pipeline:** Universities develop STEM talent through our Master and Doctoral Schools, enabling students to launch and grow ventures through Venture Incubation Program and Open Innovation Factory, which then provide corporates with access to both skilled graduates and vetted startups. Investors fund these investment-ready companies while public actors support growth through ecosystem programs and EU funding. Result: 89% of graduates stay in Europe; 38% launch startups within two years.



**SPOTLIGHT ON 28DIGITAL DOCTORAL STUDENT CSABA GYÖRGYI** who completed his PhD through the programme in collaboration with Ericsson as an industrial partner. →



**SPOTLIGHT ON OUR ECOSYSTEM:** longstanding partner of 28DIGITAL, STMicroelectronics demonstrates how industry engagement can strengthen Europe's digital talent pipeline. →



**SPOTLIGHT ON THE 360 EXPERIENCE 28DIGITAL OFFERS ITS STUDENTS AND ECOSYSTEM PARTNERS** The graduation ceremonies of the EIT Digital Master School have become a key platform for connecting Europe's emerging digital talent with leading technology companies. Highlights from recent years: Thales, SAP, Arm, Kyndryl, and Amadeus. →

**Research-to-Market Acceleration:** RTOs generate breakthrough research that our Tech Transfer support converts into ventures via SPIN. Tech Hubs provide domain specialization in AI, cybersecurity, and quantum technologies, creating opportunities for corporates to co-develop solutions. Investors provide growth capital while public funding de-risks early stages. Result: 500+ new ventures by 2030 anchored in European research excellence.

**SPOTLIGHT ON DEEP TECH COMMERCIALIZATION WITH OUR KEY PARTNERS.** SPIN helps researchers turn scientific breakthroughs into real-world innovations, teaching multiple commercialisation pathways: licensing IP, building industry partnerships, or launching new ventures. Participants develop skills in business model design, market validation, and stakeholder communication. Read more about SPIN EXPLORE and SPIN RISE. [➔](#)

**Cross-Border Scaling Infrastructure:** Regional and City Hubs identify local talent and startups, feeding them into Acceleration programs that prepare ventures for growth. Growth Services then

connect scaleups to investors and corporates, while Global Hubs enable international expansion, giving investors access to primed dealflow across 35 countries. Result: European ventures scale without relocating; international ventures land in Europe's trusted ecosystem.

By connecting these flows across borders, sectors, and generations, 28DIGITAL transforms Europe's diversity from a fragmentation challenge into a scaling advantage—ensuring that breakthrough technologies, world-class talent, and growth capital flow seamlessly throughout a values-based, globally connected innovation ecosystem.



# **REGIONAL PRESENCE:**

ROOTED IN EUROPE  
AND CONNECTED TO  
THE WORLD

## HUB MODEL: THREE COMPLEMENTARY PRESENCE TYPES

28DIGITAL operates through three hub models that balance strategic depth with operational efficiency:

**City/Region Hubs** provide agile local presence embedded within partner institutions, delivering 28DIGITAL programmes while connecting regional ecosystems to European opportunities. Financially sustained through local government and partner support, these hubs act as two-way gateways that lower barriers to participation while gathering local intelligence.

**Tech Hubs** serve as specialized centers of excellence in strategic domains (AI, cybersecurity, semiconductors, quantum, digital health). Positioned where technological excellence and ecosystem maturity converge, they establish thought leadership, deliver thematic programming, and create pan-European reference points that demonstrate Europe's capabilities to the world.

**Global Hubs** represent full national deployments combining ecosystem orchestration, education, venture creation, and investments mobilization. Supported by significant public investment and aligned with national digital agendas, they function as two-way bridges—enabling local innovators to access European markets while opening host countries to European entrepreneurs, creating powerful leverage effects that multiply return on public spending. These hub types form an integrated network creating pathways from local ecosystems towards specialization and global scaling, ensuring innovation flows seamlessly while respecting regional diversity.

## EXPANSION STRATEGY

The expansion of our regional presence follows a dual logic: consolidating Europe (closing gaps in Central/Eastern Europe, Baltics, Southern Europe) while building global bridges (North America, Asia, Africa, Middle East).

**European Coverage:** By 2030, we will operate at least one hub in every EU27 Member State plus four specialized Tech Hubs across Europe focused on strategic deep-tech domains. In 2026, we expand our US footprint beyond Silicon Valley, recognizing that American innovation increasingly emerges from diverse regions aligned with European values.

**Global Priorities:** We will establish strategic presence in regions selected for growth potential, digital maturity, and values alignment:

- Middle East: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel—leveraging digital investments to introduce European approaches.



### SPOTLIGHT ON THE COLLABORATION WITH THE DUBAI CHAMBER OF DIGITAL ECONOMY AND THE UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION.

- Africa: Morocco, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria—supporting digitally-enabled development and leapfrogging opportunities
- Asia: Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Korea, Maldives—partnering with advanced ecosystems and pioneering digital transformation
- Western Balkans & EU Candidates: Albania, Georgia, Serbia, Turkey—strengthening Europe's innovation neighborhood

This balanced approach combines strategic roadmapping with responsive opportunism, ensuring comprehensive coverage while remaining agile for emerging opportunities. Strategic partnerships with organisations like UNIDO amplify global reach, with pilot projects launching in Slovenia, Georgia, Malta, Kenya, and Barbados from 2026.

Our expansion ensures European innovators can scale without relocating while positioning Europe as the preferred destination for global talent, entrepreneurs, and values-based innovation.

**GROWTH  
STRATEGY:**  
BEYOND GRANTS AND  
BEYOND BORDERS

**Sustainable growth will be the foundation of 28DIGITAL's 2026–2030 strategy. Having established Europe's largest digital innovation ecosystem, the next phase will focus on scaling our impact, expanding our reach, and deepening stakeholder engagement, positioning 28DIGITAL as a global organisation for digital innovation rooted in European values.**

## GROWTH LEVERS AND TARGETS

Growth is anchored in our "boots-on-the-ground" model combining local presence with digital reach, diversified revenue streams, and strategic partnerships. Our unique model combines public funding with commercial income, leveraging grants to catalyse innovation while generating sustainable revenues from services, partnerships, and investments. We will expand through: (1) acquiring and retaining members, partners, and customers via exceptional service; (2) developing new products anticipating European needs; (3) expanding investment capacity and equity portfolio through partnership with venture funds; (4) building global ecosystems extending Europe's collaborative model; (5) positioning 28DIGITAL as Europe's digital

innovation engine; and (6) embedding a growth-oriented culture across the organisation. This growth will build on our current services portfolio and increasingly on equity participation. Each year we will grow our equity portfolio with 50 new early-stage startups that we support through our services. To help the most promising companies scale, we also facilitate access to growth capital, connecting them with venture investors, while co-investing alongside partner funds. The 2030 Targets directly anchor our strategy:

- educate 2.5M learners;
- support 1,000 startups/scaleups with 500 new ventures created;
- mobilize €2B of investments;
- operate 35 hubs.

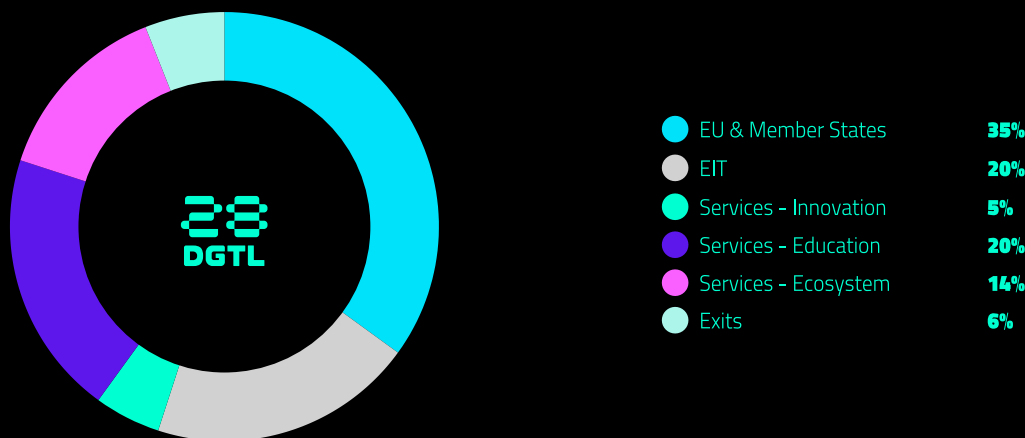


Figure 6: Revenue stream distribution in 2025

These metrics guide resource allocation, organisational priorities and performance monitoring.

## FINANCIAL MODEL AND PROJECTIONS

28DIGITAL operates a resilient mixed-funding model combining EU/national programmes with commercial revenues and equity returns. Our unique Investments-to-Impact capability transforms public funding into sustainable programmes, thriving ventures, and long-term partnerships—a proven methodology now scaling globally. After the 2020–2022 EIT funding cycle decline, revenues resumed growth from 2023 through diversified streams. See Figure 6 for a snapshot of the revenue stream distribution in 2025.

By 2030, commercial revenues will represent an increasing share, ensuring organisational independence while maintaining strategic alignment with European priorities.

Figure 7 illustrates our financial trajectory toward 2030. After the expected decline between 2020 and 2022, linked to the bell-shaped EIT funding model, revenues began rising again from 2023 onward. This growth reflects both income generated by the 28DIGITAL legal entity and the broader funding mobilised for our partner network. The sustained upward trend underscores the strength of our diversified business model and the momentum behind our transition into a financially independent, globally scalable organisation.

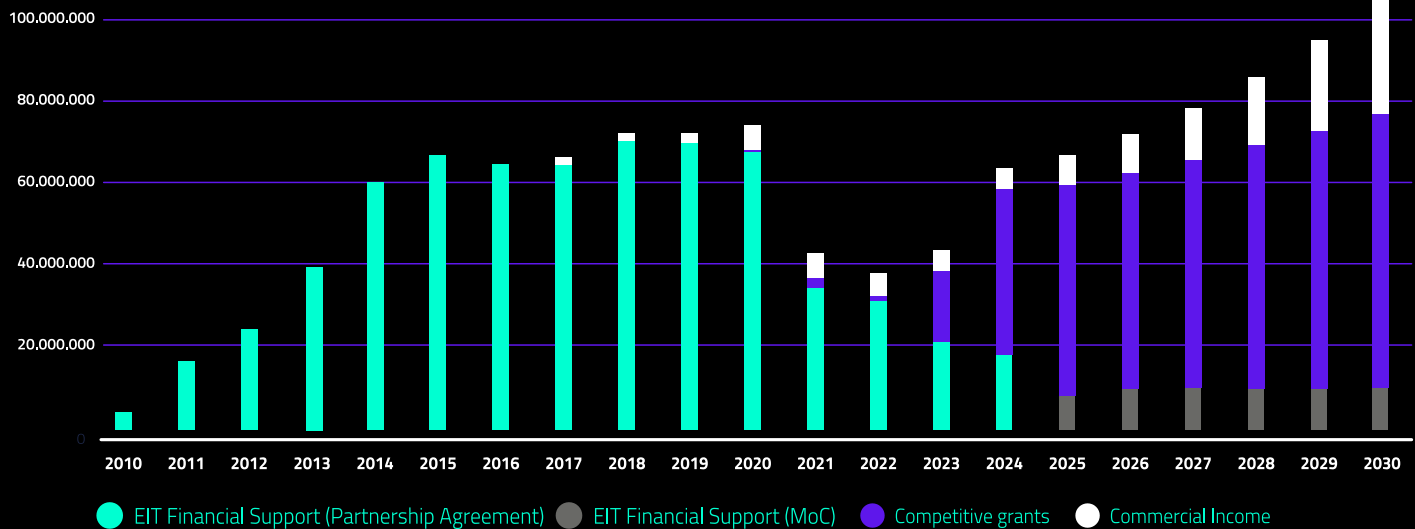


Figure 7: 28DIGITAL revenue evolution



**VALUES,  
ORGANISATION  
AND GOVERNANCE:**

HOW WE ACT IS WHO  
WE ARE

## CORE VALUES

28DIGITAL's position as Europe's digital engine rests not only on what we achieve, but on how we act. We are recognised by our partners, stakeholders, and the wider public as a trusted, fair, and inclusive organisation.

- **Trust:** we are a reliable platform for innovators, investors, policymakers, industrial players and educators. Our governance is transparent, our operations are predictable, and our commitment to European values ensures that our partners know they can count on us. We push Europe's agenda to strengthen the continent's competitiveness, sovereignty, and innovation capacity.

- **Fairness:** we ensure that opportunities in our ecosystem are accessible, decisions are impartial, and benefits are shared equitably across regions, sectors, and stakeholders.
- **Inclusiveness:** we embrace diversity in all its forms, geographical, cultural, social, and disciplinary. A key part of this commitment is gender diversity: we design our programmes, activities, and leadership development initiatives to ensure equal participation and opportunities for everyone across the digital ecosystem.

This gives us a distinctive global edge: while others compete on speed or scale, we compete on European values as differentiators, ensuring that digital transformation serves people, competitiveness, and strategic autonomy.



Figure 8: 28DIGITAL team in 2026

## PEOPLE

To live our core values, we embed sustainability, inclusiveness, gender equality, and ethical responsibility in our actions. We recruit, collaborate, and grow our people for the ability to work according to the following principles:

- **Ownership:** we own the outcome. Everyone at 28DIGITAL takes responsibility for driving impact, asking “how can I help?” rather than waiting for others to act.
- **Speed:** we act with urgency. If something crosses our path and requires action, we don’t let it sit. We follow up immediately maintaining momentum in everything we do.
- **Flexibility:** we adapt. Collaboration across teams and geographies requires trust, respect, and accountability. We operate with openness and agility, making complexity manageable and ensuring that innovation does not get lost in bureaucracy.
- **Diversity and inclusiveness:** 28DIGITAL reflects the diversity of Europe itself. Our teams span more than 20 geographies and include over 30 nationalities, creating a truly global and collaborative culture.

## ORGANISATION

28DIGITAL operates as a Belgian international not-for-profit association (IVZW), headquartered in Brussels, with subsidiaries and branches across Europe and internationally. This legal form provides strong alignment with European standards of transparency, accountability, and compliance, while supporting global operations. The 28DIGITAL Education Foundation and the 28DIGITAL Alumni Foundation operate as specialised entities responsible for education-related financial flows, including tuition fees and scholarships, and for the governance and activation of our global alumni and innovator community.

To allow the us to better combine mission-driven objectives with the agility required to grow commercial income, equity investments, and other revenue-generating operations, we are considering

the creation of a dedicated for-profit entity within the group. This structure would complement our non-profit objectives with revenue generating operations and strategic investments, scaling our overall impact.

## GOVERNANCE

28DIGITAL’s governance model has been built and refined over more than a decade, combining the independence of a financially sustainable organisation with the credibility of European institutions. Our structure is transparent, trusted, and effective, qualities consistently recognised through our work within the EIT Community and through the rigorous oversight of the EIT, the European Commission, and independent auditors:

- The General Assembly, the highest decision-making body, represents all Members and holds ultimate authority over key decisions such as approving accounts, amending statutes and appointing directors.
- The Supervisory Board ensures compliance, financial integrity, and strategic alignment. Its composition reflects our commitment to balanced governance: 50% independent directors, 50% member representatives, and an independent Chair.
- The Management Committee and executive leadership ensure effective execution of operations, programmes, and growth initiatives.

In addition, at regional level, partners and members are engaged through Regional Committees, which provide structured input, ensure local alignment, and strengthen ecosystem coordination across Europe. As 28DIGITAL enters its next phase of growth, governance will remain one of our core strategic assets. During the 2026–2030 strategy period, we will further strengthen this governance model with enhanced mechanisms for accountability, agility, and stakeholder participation, supported by the growth of commercial income to secure long-term sustainability.



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# **ANNEX I:**

OUR JOURNEY FROM  
FOUNDATION TO  
INDEPENDENCE

**28DIGITAL was established in 2010 as one of the three inaugural Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), following a competitive European call for proposals. It was initially launched under the name of EIT ICT Labs, later rebranded to EIT Digital, and in 2025 renamed to 28DIGITAL.**

Its founding mission was to strengthen Europe's digital competitiveness by applying the EIT "Knowledge Triangle", connecting education, research, and business to accelerate innovation and breed entrepreneurial talent.

Over the following decade, we have grown into Europe's largest digital innovation ecosystem and became a cornerstone of Europe's digital transformation efforts by:

- Mobilising more than 800 leading universities, research centres, corporations, SMEs, startups, and public authorities in 20+ offices across Europe and in Silicon Valley.
- Equipping over 4,000 students with entrepreneurial and deep tech skills through the EIT Digital Master School, Doctoral School, and upskilling more than 500,000 professionals through its Professional School and MOOCs.
- Supporting more than 500 startups and scale-ups to grow internationally, creating over 400 ventures, and raising more than €1.5 billion.
- Managing more than €50M annually in grant budgets to foster digital innovation and entrepreneurship, educate the next generation of digital talent, upskill and reskill Europe's workforce and citizens, and advance a strong digital Europe that is inclusive, fair, and sustainable.
- Establishing a vibrant Alumni Community of Europe's tech innovators.

For some further information, see reference [1] "EIT Digital 2010-2020", our publication describing the first the years of the organisation.

The year 2024 marked a turning point: 28DIGITAL's final year under the traditional EIT funding framework. Since its inception, 28DIGITAL had been tasked not only with delivering innovation and education impact, but also with preparing for long-term financial

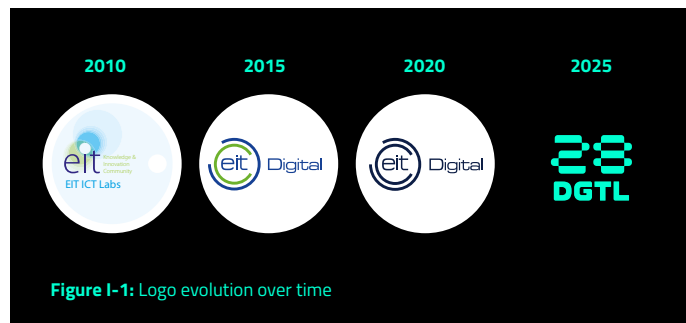


Figure I-1: Logo evolution over time

independence. Over the years, the organisation diversified its revenue base, expanded strategic partnerships, and built a resilient governance and operating model.

As shown in Figure 2, after the expected decline in revenue between 2020 and 2022, reflecting the bell-shaped trajectory of the EIT funding model, revenues began to grow again. This growth includes both the revenue generated by the 28DIGITAL legal entity and the wider funding mobilised for our partner network. The upward trend from 2023 onwards demonstrates the strength of our diversified business model and the momentum supporting our transition into a financially independent organisation.

In 2025, this journey brought us to a new chapter to continue serving European digital innovators as a spin off from the EIT, as an independent KIC. With our transition to financial independence, we took on a new name, 28DIGITAL, symbolising our mission to connect talent, technology, and capital across a unique, trusted, pan-European ecosystem that accelerates deep tech innovation, entrepreneurship, and education.

Next to EIT InnoEnergy, now InnoEnergy, and EIT Climate-KIC, now Climate-KIC, we became the first KICs to operate sustainably

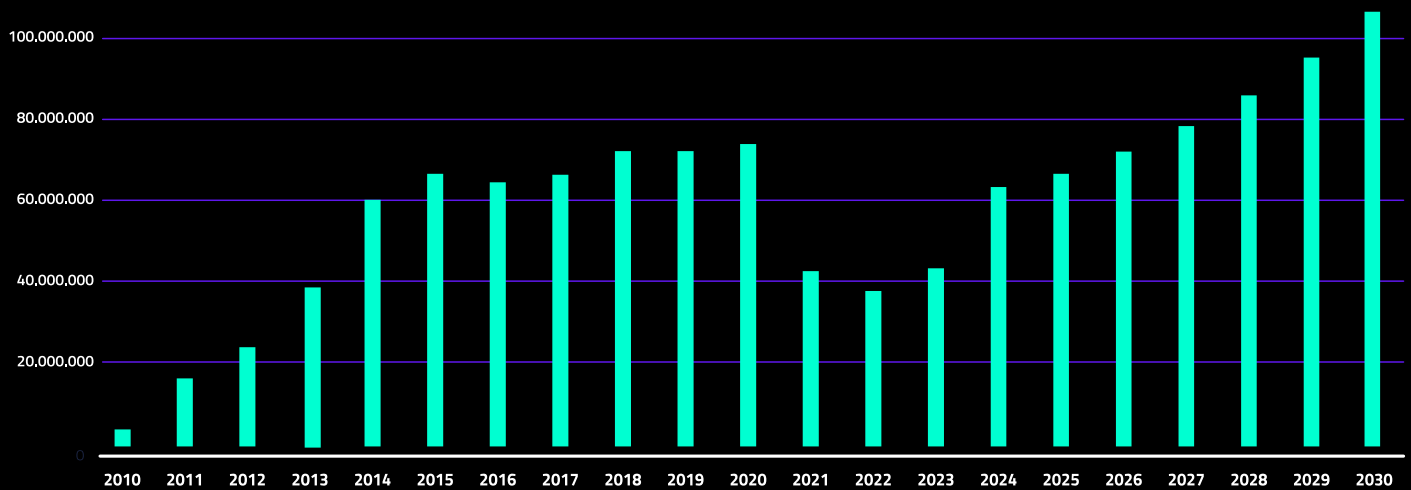


Figure I-2: 28DIGITAL revenue evolution

outside of the EIT's core grant structure - a landmark achievement in Europe's innovation landscape. Our legal form remains that of a Belgian not-for-profit association headquartered in Brussels, with fully owned subsidiaries and branches across EU27 and in the US, ensuring a strong local presence and boots on the ground. A Memorandum of Cooperation with the EIT was signed in 2024 to continue offering activities aligned with the EIT model and to remain part of the EIT Community as a financially sustainable ecosystem.

This milestone also marked the launch of a new identity: 28DIGITAL. This name reflects a renewed ambition for Europe - to build a truly unified digital space, where talent, technology, and capital flow freely, and where startups and scale-ups can grow into global champions. It also echoes the idea of a European "spin-off": independent yet closely connected to the European Commission and its instruments,

faithful to its original mission but ready to scale globally. It aligns with the EU Startup & Scaleup Strategy [6] by reducing fragmentation, mobilising cross-border capital, and enabling deep tech companies to grow without relocating. At the same time, it reflects the Union of Skills vision by ensuring that people across Europe, regardless of geography or background, have the opportunity to acquire, move, and apply skills in a borderless way.



**ANNEX II:**  
28DIGITAL IN THE  
EUROPEAN AND  
GLOBAL INNOVATION  
LANDSCAPE

**28DIGITAL's integrated model of education, innovation, talent mobility, and ecosystem orchestration gives it a distinct positioning in the European innovation landscape. Crucially, 28DIGITAL, instead of competing, acts as a strategic multiplier that collaborates across the board to reduce fragmentation and amplify impact, in line with EU policy goals and with openness to global partnerships.**

A multitude of actors, public and private, European and global, contribute to the innovation space, each focusing on different aspects such as startups, scale-ups, deep tech, education, talent development, investments, and infrastructure. Below is a mapping of relevant actors and initiatives that define the broader ecosystem in which 28DIGITAL operates:

- **European Innovation Council (EIC):** EU's flagship deep-tech innovation funder. The EIC's focus on game-changing deep tech and its pan-European reach (EU Member States plus associated countries) make it a key partner for 28DIGITAL in supporting startup scale-ups and technological sovereignty.
- **Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT):** 28DIGITAL plays a complementary and horizontal role within this family, serving as the digital enabler across all domains. This positions 28DIGITAL not only as a peer but also as a connector in the EIT ecosystem: strengthening collaborations, fostering joint ventures, and helping Europe's sectoral innovation hubs benefit from the transformative power of digital technologies.
- **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN):** World's largest SME support network with global reach. By connecting local SMEs to global opportunities, EEN provides complementary breadth as a cross-sector SME booster, an integrated approach to scale-ups that matches the approach.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and European Institutionalised Partnerships:** 28DIGITAL acts as both a partner and bridge within landscape of partnership models supported by the European Union, connecting PPP-driven initiatives, sharing governance experience, and promoting cross-sector synergies.
- **National and Regional Innovation Agencies and Funding Bodies:** 28DIGITAL's pan-European scope means it works alongside these bodies: it often sources talent and startups from national and regional ecosystems and can help them internationalize through its EU-wide network. Rather than duplicating national programs, 28DIGITAL connects them reducing siloed efforts and enabling innovations to scale across borders.
- **European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs):** 28DIGITAL has actively engaged with this initiative, participating in various EDIHs in Finland, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy and leading the Digital Tech EDIH in Hungary. Through such involvement, 28DIGITAL can align e.g. EU-level innovation activities and national digitalisation efforts.





- **Universities and Talent Programs:** Higher Education Institutions and skills initiatives fuelling technical and innovation talent. Europe's world-class universities are key actors when it comes to science, research, master and PhD degrees. 28DIGITAL is deeply embedded in this ecosystem. By integrating with academia and EU skill initiatives, 28DIGITAL both leverages and enriches Europe's talent development capacity.
- **Incubators, Accelerators and Venture Studios:** While these private initiatives operate on different models (often for-profit and highly selective in focus), they represent a vital entrepreneurship support layer both in Europe and globally. By contrast, 28DIGITAL's incubation, acceleration and growth programs are designed as trusted, values-based alternatives. Thus, synergy exists rather than direct competition, with 28DIGITAL acting as a connector that multiplies the value of Europe's diverse entrepreneurship landscape, while ensuring that European values and fairness remain at the core.
- **Major Global Innovation Hubs:** International centres of tech innovation outside the EU. Beyond Europe, ecosystems such as Silicon Valley in the US, Beijing/Shenzhen in China, and Tel Aviv in Israel set the pace in entrepreneurship culture, investments capital, and tech breakthroughs. As early as in 2019, 28DIGITAL led the way for a joint EIT Hub in Silicon Valley. In 2025 28DIGITAL started a collaboration with Dubai to create a mutual inflow of impactful startups and talents and has developed a strong global growth plan. 28DIGITAL will further collaborate with non-European countries building 2-way bridges for talents, entrepreneurs and startups.

In summary, the innovation ecosystem spanning Europe and beyond includes a rich set of actors: EU instruments, national and regional agencies and clusters, educational and talent networks, private accelerators/incubators, and iconic tech hubs worldwide. 28DIGITAL sits at the intersection of these layers, engaging with each in its mission to advance Europe's digital innovation capacity.



# **ANNEX III:** SUCCESS STORIES

## FROM DATA SCIENCE TO AI STARTUP: THE STORY OF LEVELS

LEVELS is a young Italian startup founded in 2024, building Generative AI systems that act as digital collaborators within companies. Its first product is a SaaS platform for the construction sector, where complex safety and compliance procedures create heavy administrative burdens. By applying Generative AI to compliance workflows, LEVELS helps contractors manage documentation more efficiently and reduce bureaucratic friction in large infrastructure projects.

The four founders — Emanuele Baldelli, Filippo Caliò, Dario Del Gaizo, and Tommaso Lucarelli — met through the EIT Digital Master School, completing a double degree in Data Science between Politecnico di Milano and KTH. After internships at Amazon in Luxembourg, they chose entrepreneurship over corporate careers.

Within months of focusing on compliance management in construction, LEVELS reached over €160,000 in ARR and signed 16 customers — proving that solving "smart but unglamorous" problems can be a solid foundation for building the next generation of AI-driven business infrastructure.

## EXPANDING CHOOSE EUROPE TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

Through new partnerships with the Institute of Technology of Cambodia and the Cambodia Academy of Digital Technology, we demonstrated how the European Commission's Choose Europe Initiative can extend beyond its initial focus on the United States. Building on the international reach of our ecosystem and the flagship EIT Digital Master School, cooperation agreements in Cambodia create pathways for engineering and computer science students to pursue advanced digital degrees in Europe. This initiative shows how the Choose Europe agenda can translate into concrete global talent partnerships, reinforcing Europe's role as a hub for digital talent and innovation while deepening EU-ASEAN cooperation.



## VOICEMED

A pioneering digital-wellbeing startup in our Equity Portfolio since 2023, offers a solution that analyzes breath and voice to provide insights into cardiorespiratory fitness and lung function. They were awarded third prize in the EIT Innovation Team Award category at the 2025 EIT Awards, one of Europe's most prestigious recognitions for breakthrough innovation.





**A STRATEGIC COLLABORATION WITH EIC IS KEY IN ACHIEVING SIMPLIFICATION AND A PERFECT FUNNEL FOR EUROPEAN INNOVATORS AND DEEP TECH ENTREPRENEURS, FROM STUDENT TO UNICORN.**

Two examples of this are the EIC – 28DIGITAL (previously EIT Digital) Venture Acceleration Programme and the EIC – 28DIGITAL (previously EIT Digital) Venture Building Programme

The EIC – 28DIGITAL (previously EIT Digital) Venture Acceleration Programme welcomed EIC Accelerator companies and Seal-of-Excellence recipients to apply for the 28DIGITAL Accelerator scale-up programme and be supported by venture capital experts & business experts specialized in deep tech. The EIC – 28DIGITAL Venture Building Programme is an incubation bootcamp that allows innovators supported by the European Innovation Council (EIC) to benefit from the support of 28DIGITAL to transform knowledge into impact and gain entrepreneurial skills to build and boost their deep-tech start-up.

We have raised €25M for the EIC Accelerator companies (private capital) through this programme, in 12 months. We are looking forward continuing our collaboration with the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)

**28DIGITAL ACCELERATOR ALUMNUS SQUIRRO PROVIDES ECB WITH AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE SOLUTION.**

Their Risk Insights solution delivers contextual insights and recommendations to support supervisors in assessing bank risks. By supplying its Insight Engine and Risk Insights solution to the central bank of the 19 European Union countries that have adopted the euro. This comes on top of Squirro already working with central banks such as the Bank of England and the German Bundesbank.

**RIVS**

UNITE is a major €20 million pan-European programme aimed at transforming healthcare through digital deep tech innovation to address challenges posed by demographic transitions and ageing populations. Led by 28DIGITAL, in partnership with 7 regional authorities, UNITE launched open calls to cascade funding to highly innovative European companies in the digital health sector, selecting 3 projects in its first cohort, each awarded nearly €1 million.

RIVCircular is a Horizon Europe project involving eight EU regions and territories (Madrid, Extremadura, Greece, Hauts-de-France, Vienna, Innlandet, Košice and Kyiv Oblast). It aims to accelerate innovation, strengthen local ecosystems and connect them, while dedicating around €13M to fund collaborative innovation projects on Circular Economy around 5 topics: Construction waste; Circular energy integration; EV batteries recycling; Textiles; and Digital solutions for the Circular Economy, which this one being managed by 28DIGITAL.

## THE PATH OF CECILIA PECCOLO, AN MSL STUDENT DRIVING SOCIETAL IMPACT

Cecilia Peccolo studied Data Science at the EIT Digital Master School, part of 28DIGITAL, where advanced technical training was combined with a strong focus on real-world impact.

Through the programme's network, she completed her Master's thesis at ESA's  $\Phi$ -lab, designing an AI model to predict forest states by combining satellite imagery with environmental variables — exploring how AI and Earth Observation could build more transparent methodologies for estimating carbon credits.

Today she works as a Data Scientist at FlyPix AI, a startup transforming satellite data into actionable environmental intelligence. Her work focuses on pre-trained Earth Observation models that allow organisations and non-technical users alike to analyse ecosystems, detect environmental changes, and estimate carbon dynamics.

Cecilia's career shows how combining AI with satellite data can translate complex environmental information into insights that support climate monitoring, biodiversity protection, and sustainable decision-making — and how the EIT Digital Master School turns data science students into professionals driving real societal impact.

## SUCCESS STORY: STRENGTHENING DIGITAL SKILLS IN EUROPEAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Through its engagement with the European Commission Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support and collaboration with the EU Agencies Network (EUAN), we contribute to advancing digital transformation across European public administrations. Building on the expertise of our ecosystem, the DICE initiative supports capacity-building efforts to transform competition law enforcement in 15 EU Member States, while our engagement with EUAN provides tailored executive education programmes to decentralised EU agencies across 21 Member States. These activities focus on strengthening skills in areas such as artificial intelligence, data governance, and



digital innovation management. The engagement shows how Europe's innovation ecosystems can support EU institutions and agencies in building the digital capabilities required to implement policy priorities and accelerate public-sector transformation.

## GENERATIVE AI ESSENTIALS + COURSERA

The Generative AI Essentials course was delivered in both 2023 and 2024 as a short instructor-led training programme introducing the practical applications and implications of generative AI across key business functions. The course consisted of four two-hour sessions, each followed by a competency quiz, and both editions combined trained more than 1200 participants, primarily from across Europe. The sessions covered four key topics:

- A Year of Progression: Unlocking Generative AI's Applications and Impact
- Project Management Reimagined: AI's Role in Project Planning and Execution
- Marketing Transformation: Moving Ideas into Strategies through Generative AI
- Exercising Vigilance: Exploring the Landscape of AI-Enabled Cyber Threats

28DIGITAL delivers high-quality innovation and entrepreneurship

education from over 20 leading European technical universities to students and professionals worldwide. Using Coursera's flexible online portfolio, 28DIGITAL bridges the gap between technical excellence and business skills to empower the next generation of digital innovators.

## **SPIN FOR NEST: TRAINING ENERGY RESEARCHERS TO INNOVATE**

Turning cutting-edge research into practical innovation was the central mission of SPIN for NEST – Energy Innovation for a Sustainable Future, a specialised programme designed to help energy researchers bring their discoveries closer to real-world impact. Developed by 28DIGITAL in partnership with Fondazione NEST, the initiative created an intensive training and pre-incubation pathway tailored specifically for scientists working on sustainable energy technologies.

The programme selected 25 researchers through a competitive process. Over six weeks of online training beginning in November 2025, participants explored the full pathway from research discovery

to innovation. Sessions covered European energy policy priorities, venture capital dynamics in cleantech, innovation readiness assessment, stakeholder and supply-chain mapping, intellectual property strategy, and collaboration models between academia and industry. Experts from across Europe—including investors, technology transfer specialists, energy entrepreneurs, and leading researchers—guided participants through each stage.

The experience culminated in a three-day intensive bootcamp in Lisbon in February 2026, organised with the Portuguese innovation accelerator BGI. During this final stage, researchers refined their value propositions, tested their ideas through case work and stakeholder discussions, and received live feedback from industry experts and innovation coaches.

## **BINARII LABS: SECURING DATA BY DESIGN**

Binarii Labs is an Ireland-based deep-tech cybersecurity company founded in 2021, focused on sovereign, zero-trust security for unstructured data. Its core platform automatically duplicates, encrypts, fragments, and distributes each file across three user-



owned storage locations — meaning a breach exposes only encrypted, unusable fragments, while full data access is maintained even if one location goes offline.

Selected as the only Irish company in 28DIGITAL's Open Innovation Factory, Binarii Labs received business and technical support to optimise its platform and reach early clients. 28DIGITAL later became a shareholder, signalling long-term confidence in the technology.

In 2023, the company secured €2 million in funding — backed by 28DIGITAL, angel investors, and a crowdfunding campaign — and has since built a network of 25+ resellers across the US, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

Binarii Labs illustrates how targeted European innovation support can turn a breakthrough cybersecurity idea into globally competitive, regulation-ready infrastructure.

## **FINQBIT**

finQbit entered the equity portfolio via venture Incubation program in 2024, after initial funding from us (€ 25k), they raised € 120k from Techstars in Berlin, and most recently round end of 2025. They were invited to Expand North Star in Dubai as part of 28DIGITAL's contingent and their interest in expanding into UAE, following the UAE-EU Free Trade Agreement.

## **WSENSE**

Wsense, an EIT Digital 2022 Challenge winner and blue tech company created as a spinoff of Rome's Sapienza University enabling the Internet of Underwater Things with its "subsea wifi" systems - successfully closed a series A round of €9 million in 2023. Our Growth Services team is particularly proud to have supported the fundraising efforts of this truly innovative digital deep tech scaleup and our A2F services are helping them to support their Series B fundraising.

## **SUCCESS STORY: FROM DOCTORAL TRAINING TO INNOVATION IMPACT**

The EIT Digital Doctoral School cultivates Europe's next generation of deep-tech innovators. One example is Csaba Györgyi, who completed his PhD through the programme in collaboration with Ericsson as an industrial partner. During his doctoral journey, Csaba combined academic excellence with real-world innovation. His collaboration with Ericsson led to five co-invented patents, while his research produced three top-tier conference papers and guest lectures at TU Berlin. Beyond academia, he launched the open-source project P4RROT, building a contributor community and demonstrating how open innovation can generate business value. Csaba's trajectory exemplifies how the 28DIGITAL ecosystem transforms talented students into innovators who bridge research, industry, and entrepreneurship — strengthening Europe's digital leadership.

## **SUCCESS STORY: INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP FOR EUROPE'S DIGITAL TALENT**

A longstanding partner of 28DIGITAL, STMicroelectronics demonstrates how industry engagement can strengthen Europe's digital talent pipeline. Over the years, STMicroelectronics has actively supported key education initiatives such as the 28DIGITAL Master School kick-off events and Summer Schools, helping connect students with real-world industrial challenges and emerging semiconductor technologies. This collaboration reflects ST's broader commitment to educating and inspiring the next generation of engineers and innovators, going beyond technology development to invest in skills, mentorship, and industry-academia collaboration. Through its engagement with 28DIGITAL's education and training programmes, the company helps shape a new generation of digital professionals equipped to drive Europe's competitiveness in deep-tech sectors.

## **SUCCESS STORY: CONNECTING EUROPE'S DIGITAL TALENT WITH INDUSTRY**

The graduation ceremonies of the EIT Digital Master School have become a key platform for connecting Europe's emerging digital talent with leading technology companies. Organised by 28DIGITAL, these events bring together students, universities, and corporate partners to celebrate achievements while strengthening industry-academia collaboration. The 2025 graduation ceremony in Sophia Antipolis, France, showcased this engagement with the presence of companies such as Thales, SAP, Arm, Kyndryl, and Amadeus, reflecting strong industry interest in recruiting and collaborating

with the programme's graduates. This builds on previous editions, such as the 2024 ceremony hosted by Bosch in Budapest, Hungary, where the company opened its premises to celebrate graduates and engage directly with the next generation of digital innovators. Together, these ceremonies demonstrate how Europe's innovation ecosystem connects education, industry, and entrepreneurship, strengthening the continent's capacity to develop and retain world-class digital talent.

## **TURNING EUROPEAN RESEARCH INTO REAL-WORLD IMPACT: THE SPIN PROGRAMME**

Europe excels at producing world-class research — but too often, discoveries stay in academic journals rather than reaching society as products or companies. Bridging this gap is the mission of 28DIGITAL's SPIN programme.

SPIN helps researchers turn scientific breakthroughs into real-world innovations, teaching multiple commercialisation pathways: licensing IP, building industry partnerships, or launching new ventures. Participants develop skills in business model design, market validation, and stakeholder communication.

The programme operates at two levels: SPIN: Explore offers an accessible introduction through short online modules, while SPIN: RISE combines training, coaching, and in-person bootcamps across Europe. Specialised tracks cover smart manufacturing, digital health, cyber-resilience, and dual-use technologies.

Participants also connect with 28DIGITAL's pan-European network of universities, companies, and investors — opening doors to collaboration and funding.

As competition intensifies in AI, quantum computing, and advanced materials, SPIN helps ensure Europe's scientific excellence translates into economic value and societal impact.





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