



TALENT. TECH. TRUST.

Welcome to the latest edition of the 28DIGITAL newsletter!

From chips to systems, from Europe to the world. This edition captures a defining shift in how innovation is built and scaled today. As highlighted in the new *Grow Digital Insights*, Europe's challenge is no longer generating breakthrough technologies, but **transforming** them into integrated, competitive systems that can succeed globally.

Across this issue, we explore how that transition is taking shape. From the **DICE initiative** strengthening the digital capabilities of competition authorities, to new cross-sector **collaboration** with the European Platform for Sport Innovation, the focus is increasingly on building ecosystems that connect technology, policy, and market deployment.

At the same time, 28DIGITAL continues to expand its global engagement. Our presence at **GITEX Africa** reflects a growing commitment to connecting European innovation with fast-moving international markets, while the strong response to the **LLM-BRIDGE** Open Call signals rising demand for structured support in Europe's GenAI ecosystem. The selection of the first **UNITE Digital Health projects** further highlights a parallel shift — from pilot initiatives to cross-border deployment of scalable solutions in critical sectors.

Taken together, these developments point to a clear direction: Europe's competitiveness will depend on its ability to integrate talent, infrastructure, and investment into systems that scale and deliver impact across regions and industries.

Thank you for being part of this evolving and interconnected innovation community.



Europe's Deep-Tech Challenge: From Chips to Systems

Europe has the talent, research, and industrial base to lead in AI and high-performance computing — so why aren't more global champions emerging? In this *Grow Digital Insights* issue, Iván Rodero (Chief Innovation Officer at Openchip) points to **the real bottleneck**: not invention, but industrial execution.

The gap:

Europe excels at research and IP creation, but too few breakthroughs make it from prototype to scalable, global products. The reasons are structural — fragmented markets, limited growth capital, and weak integration between engineering, product, and commercialization.

What's changed:

In AI and HPC, competitive advantage no longer comes from a single chip. It comes from **integrated systems** — where hardware, software, and infrastructure evolve together. Customers don't buy components; they buy performance, reliability, and long-term operability.

Key insight:

Designing the chip is only step one. Winning means controlling the full stack — from silicon to software — and delivering solutions that can scale, adapt, and endure.

Where RISC-V fits:

Open architectures like RISC-V offer Europe more flexibility and sovereignty. But openness alone isn't enough — value comes from what's built on top: complete, optimized systems with strong software ecosystems and long-term roadmaps.

What needs to change:

- Shift from project cycles to long-term platform thinking
- Integrate hardware, software, and product teams from the start
- Invest earlier in software, tooling, and developer experience
- Build companies capable of scaling full systems, not just components

Bottom line:

Europe's future in AI won't be defined by better chips — but by its ability to build, deploy, and sustain complete systems at scale.



DICE: Upgrading Europe's Competition Playbook with AI

A new initiative called **DICE** is helping modernise how competition is enforced across Europe — by bringing AI into the toolkit of regulators. Implemented by 28DIGITAL, the project supports **15 National Competition Authorities (NCAs)**

within the European Competition Network to strengthen their digital and analytical capabilities. DICE focuses on equipping NCA staff with advanced skills in AI and digital technologies — with the goal of making competition enforcement faster, more precise, and better aligned with increasingly complex digital markets.

What's new:

A **major milestone** has been reached with the development of a **Digital & AI Maturity Assessment**, created by 28DIGITAL and Politecnico di Milano with support from the European Commission's SG REFORM. The framework provides a clear, evidence-based view of each authority's capabilities — highlighting strengths, gaps, and priorities for investment.

Why it matters:

This isn't just a diagnostic tool. It's a strategic roadmap. By helping authorities plan their digital transformation and adopt new enforcement tools, DICE is building institutional readiness for a rapidly evolving market landscape. As AI reshapes industries, competition policy needs to keep pace. Stronger digital capabilities mean stronger, more resilient enforcement across the EU.

Bottom line:

Smarter markets require smarter regulators — and DICE is helping make that shift happen.



When Sport Meets Startups, Innovation Gets a New Playing Field

Big move: 28DIGITAL and the European Platform for Sport Innovation just teamed up to **accelerate innovation across Europe's sports ecosystem** — blending digital transformation, startup support, and policy muscle.

The game plan:

This partnership connects two ecosystems: 28DIGITAL's strength in startups, tech, and policy, with EPSI's deep network in sport and physical activity. The goal? More joint projects, easier access to EU funding, and stronger influence on the future of sport policy in Europe.

The bigger picture:

The collaboration aligns with broader European efforts like "Sport For All" and upcoming EU strategy on sport, aiming to treat sport as a **public good** — accessible, inclusive, and resilient.

What's coming first:

A flagship initiative called **Speed Master** (May 2026) will bring together startups, corporates, investors, and sports organisations to fast-track market-ready innovation.

Why it matters:

Sport is becoming a testing ground for digital innovation — from health and wellbeing to community engagement. But scaling solutions requires ecosystems, not silos.



Africa Isn't Catching Up. It's Building What's Next

On the ground in Marrakesh: **28DIGITAL** took part in **GITEX Africa** — one of the continent's fastest-growing tech events — marking another step in its global expansion and engagement with emerging innovation ecosystems.

Why Africa, why now:

Africa's digital economy is scaling rapidly, with strong growth across sectors like cleantech, digital infrastructure, agritech, and fintech. With fewer legacy systems and a fast-growing talent base, the continent is uniquely positioned to **leapfrog into the AI-driven economy**.

What stood out:

During the panel on *"Sustainability, Power & Value of AI,"* CEO Federico Menna and fellow speakers made one point clear: Africa is not a follower — it's a **builder of next-generation systems**, grounded in local needs and global ambition.

What it means for Europe:

28DIGITAL is actively building bridges between African and European ecosystems — opening new markets for startups and scaleups, and enabling cross-regional collaboration in areas like agritech, retail tech, and water innovation.

The bigger picture:

As Federico Menna noted, every region must understand its strengths and build strategic partnerships accordingly. Africa's advantage? Speed, adaptability, and a clean slate for innovation.



Europe's GenAI Push Just Drew Record Attention

Big signal: The [LLM-BRIDGE Open Call for incubators](#) has closed with a *record number of applications* — a clear sign that Europe's GenAI ecosystem is heating up fast. The call, part of the EU-funded LLM-BRIDGE initiative, is designed to select one incubator to run a **12-week Venture Incubation Programme** supporting early-stage startups in Generative AI and Large Language Models.

Why the surge:

Europe is racing to build its own AI capacity — and incubators are stepping in as key players. The programme offers funding (up to €60K), access to infrastructure, and a structured pathway to help startups move from prototype to market.

What it means:

The strong response highlights growing demand for GenAI-focused incubation programmes, access to technical resources and data infrastructure and Pan-European collaboration across startups, investors, and research

Bottom line:

Europe's AI race isn't just about models — it's about ecosystems. And right now, the builders are lining up.



In Other News: Founder Training, GenAI Incubation & Digital Health at Scale

Speed Master Executive Course — Applications Open

Entrepreneurs looking to accelerate their startup journey can apply to the next edition of the **Speed Master Executive Course**, a 16-hour online programme designed to build traction, sharpen decision-making, and support growth. Running weekly from **21 April to 9 June**, the course covers key topics such as fundraising, scaling challenges, and strategic decision-making, led by experienced mentors including Denes Csiszar and Katya de Freedericksz. Applications are open until **10 April**, with discounted access available for 28DIGITAL partners.

[Apply now](#)

LLM-BRIDGE Venture Incubation Programme — Call for Startups

Startups working in Generative AI, LLMs, NLP, and related technologies can apply to join the **LLM-BRIDGE Venture Incubation Programme**. The selected 30 startups will participate in a **12-week incubation journey**, with the top five invited to Demo Day and receiving **€25,000 each**. One standout startup will also gain free access to the MentorMe programme. Applications are open until **1 June**, offering a strong pathway from prototype to market in Europe's fast-growing GenAI ecosystem.

[Learn more & apply](#)

UNITE Digital Health Projects — First Cohort Selected

The **UNITE initiative** has selected its first three interregional projects, marking a step forward in scaling digital health solutions across Europe. Following strong interest from over 1,000 organisations, the chosen projects — **CARDIO-HUB**,

NEODATA+, and RAD-TRACK EU — focus on cross-border health data sharing and personalised remote care. Backed by a €20M programme under the European Commission's Regional Innovation Valleys initiative, UNITE aims to move beyond pilot projects and enable real deployment of digital health solutions across regions.

[Learn more](#)

AI-on-Demand Open Call — AI Providers Wanted

AI innovators can now apply to the **AI-on-Demand (AloD) Open Call**, aimed at accelerating the adoption of trustworthy and ethical AI across Europe. SMEs and research organisations with mature AI solutions (TRL 7+) can integrate their products into the AloD platform, validate their business models, and deploy solutions with real adopters. The programme offers up to **€60,000 in funding**, access to technical infrastructure, expert mentoring, and visibility at major industry events. Deadline: **8 June 2026**.

[Apply now](#)

28DIGITAL Venture Incubation Programme — Call for Entrepreneurs

Applications are open for the **28DIGITAL Venture Incubation Programme**, a two-stage initiative supporting the creation and growth of digital and deep-tech ventures across Europe. Teams will benefit from a bootcamp and 12-week incubation programme, including mentoring, MVP validation, and Demo Day participation, with initial funding of **€5,000** and the opportunity to compete for up to **€25,000** in the final stage. Deadline: **9 June 2026**.

[More information](#)

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28DIGITAL, Rue Guimard 7, Brussels, 1040, Belgium