

DIGITAL TRANS FORMATION IN GREECE 2021-2022

A step back, a leap forward

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We may have overcome the initial shock of the coronavirus pandemic, but the key realization for everyone is that the crisis is not over yet. As we have adapted to this new reality, we have had the time to also think about the positive implications of this unprecedented disruption. We are now familiar not only with the things that changed around us in the last two

years, but also with all we would like to change in the future, as this is our new real world.

The reality of digital transformation is something that has been significantly accelerated by the pandemic, but we quickly realized that the necessity for this development preexisted and will continue to light the way in the future. The pandemic has revealed that any kind of transformation, no matter how extremely difficult it may have seemed in the past, can be achieved if there is alignment of motives.

The advantages of modern technologies can have significant benefits on the efficiency, operation, services and agility of any organization. As each company transforms, new structures are created as a natural consequence and the old pyramid model of the organizational structure may change. Change, however, is not something that can happen on its own, as humans are the cogs and fuel of companies.

The focus must be on people, who must stay in the spotlight. People need to be given priority and this could happen in two different ways. Firstly, new fresh talent, with up-to-date knowledge and new ideas, needs to be brought into our organizations and integrate with the existing team. However, the crucial point is to create a cohesive team, in which new people will learn the particularities of the business from the old guard, while veterans should be open to new ideas, new ways of working and

will be willing to develop too. So, at the same time, as new talents enter the game, it is important to help the existing workforce acquire new skills but, first and foremost, to understand the possibilities, nuances and threats that digital technologies bring. The truth is that the former is much more difficult than the latter, as young talent is currently scarce and acquiring them can be a costly exercise. Both are a necessity for businesses to move forward, but, currently, upgrading skills seems to be the instant priority.

Nowadays, people are required to have both technological and softer skills, more than ever. Skills such as creative thinking, adaptability, communication skills, entrepreneurial mindset and more are crucial, though one of the most important of them is maybe something that sits between the spectrum of hard and soft skills. The need to acquire an understanding of what changes technology can bring to our lives and our businesses. Understanding is ultimately the key for our people, so that they will be able to move forward and integrate all these things that are now generously offered by technology in order to help evolve our companies and transform our offerings centered around the user.

As new realities and terms such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, metaverse and IoT are brought in our lives, we need understand the impact these things will have to our businesses. We have to put ourselves and our people around us in the place of a constant learner, who always has the willingness to understand the new changes, evolve himself and be prepared to flourish in an ever-changing environment.

ABOUT



www.eitdigital.eu

EIT Digital is a leading European digital innovation and entrepreneurial education organisation driving Europe's digital transformation. Its way of working embodies the future of innovation through a pan-European ecosystem of over 200 top European corporations, SMEs, startups, universities and research institutes, where students, researchers, engineers, business developers and entrepreneurs collaborate in an open innovation setting. This pan-European ecosystem is located in Amsterdam, Berlin, Braga, Budapest, Brussels, Eindhoven, Edinburgh, Helsinki, London, Madrid, Milano, Munich, Nice, Paris, Rennes, Stockholm, Trento, and San Francisco.

As a Knowledge and Innovation Community of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (eit.europa.eu), EIT Digital invests in strategic areas to accelerate the market uptake and scaling of research-based digital technologies (deep tech) focusing on Europe's strategic, societal challenges: Digital Tech, Digital Cities, Digital Industry, Digital Wellbeing, and Digital Finance. EIT Digital breeds T-shaped entrepreneurial digital talent focused on innovation through a blended Education Strategy that includes a Master School, an Industrial Doctoral School and a Professional School.



www.thefoundation.gr

Found.ation helps brands embrace Digital Transformation by disrupting every sector of their operation, unlocking potentials and resources, setting the foundations for future development and accelerating growth, based on innovation. We connect brands, startups, business leaders and young talent in order to create successful, future-ready companies in the tech space and across various industries. Since 2015, Found.ation has been cooperating with EIT Digital, with the objective of strengthening the Greek entrepreneurial and business ecosystem.

Found.ation is a leading startup-enabling platform for tech-oriented products & services in SE Europe, a digital transformation accelerator for corporations and a tech education hub.

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ready companies in the tech space and across various industries.

The Found.ation team strongly believes in the interaction between established corporations and startups. One of the key roles of Found.ation is to highlight these opportunities for cooperation between these two polar opposites. It already works with companies and organisations such as Eurobank, Papastratos - PMI, Microsoft and the Municipality of Athens.

In 2016, Found.ation started cooperating with EIT Digital, under the ARISE Europe Programme, with the objective of strengthening the Greek startup ecosystem and enhancing the Digital Transformation of local corporations even further. Through the implementation of common, well-structured initiatives the aim of the collaboration is to initiate discussions and enhance cooperation between small and big companies. This will help both startups expand and grow and corporates adapt and evolve. Currently, the collaboration has been extended to include Cyprus, Romania, Albania and Bulgaria.



Objective of this report & METHODOLOGY

Found.ation prepared this report to provide an invaluable scope of the Greek business ecosystem. Also, it offers important insights and examples on up to date practices, examines how much companies and large organisations have adopted Digital Transformation procedures, and pinpoints the reasons for any delays. The report follows the strategy of selected large organisations that operate in the country and aims at drawing attention to the need for transformation.

Instead of trying to define what Digital Transformation is, the report focuses on key points that summarize the strategies most commonly practised by industry leaders. But we need to provide a context, to understand the frame in which Greek companies operate. A brief review of developments in Europe and the world, as well as a summary of the Greek economic and digital indexes, follows.

The major limitation of this report is access to data, as digital transformation is not easily measurable. Similar reports focused on the region are usually based on quantitative research; mostly questionnaires sent to companies. This report is partly based on and refers to their findings but goes beyond that in an attempt to give a good indication of insights and outlooks of the Greek landscape, its needs and perspectives. We have conducted a research of our own, targeting a very specific sample - namely business executives of large companies that operate in Greece. In the 'Private Sector' chapter, the report presents infographics and data in charts that come from this research.

WHAT'S NEW?

For the fifth version of this report about Digital Transformation, Found.ation conducted once again a survey completed by industry stakeholders from various Greek and multinational companies that operate in a broad spectrum of sectors. The purpose of the survey was to examine how much companies and large organisations have adopted Digital Transformation, and identify the extent of knowledge that individual employees have, regarding Digital Transformation and its practices. This year's questionnaire also focused on the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, to examine how it affected companies and their employees after two almost full years of remote or hybrid working, and social distancing measures.. Therefore, this updated version offers a better look into the transformation from the employer's point of view and provides more data to help us understand the situation in the country.

The report includes a statement from the Minister of Digital Governance to provide a scope of what has been achieved in digitally transforming a public sector that has long been ranking low on a European level, and also what comes next for the Greek business ecosystem, from the government's point of view. Lastly, to offer a fresh perspective on what drives innovation in Greece today, it includes an interesting op-ed from InfoQuest, a pioneering Greek company, and two professionals whose role in their organizations can provide us with valuable insights.

Re-Defining DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

1. 2021: A WORLD (STILL) IN TURMOIL

As the year 2021 developed, we all went through various cycles of uncertainty, instability, doubt and indecisiveness, longing for the comfort of what is known and proven, hoping for the quick psychological and physiological relief offered by a new vaccine and trying to keep a sense of normality in our lives.

People all over the world have suffered from COVID-19 itself and its repercussions in different degrees. It has not been an easy or pleasant ride. The last 18 or so months have been challenging the stability western society habitants enjoyed for decades, especially in their basic needs regarding safety. One can say that the last time the western world felt this level of threat concurrently was during World War II. And of course, other parts of the world have had it more difficult, owing to different levels of preparedness, access to vaccines or funds. There, virus outbreaks and lockdowns have put great pressure on societies and their healthcare systems, creating precarious realities for individual welfare, threatening even the most basic of human needs - the physiological, in contrast to other

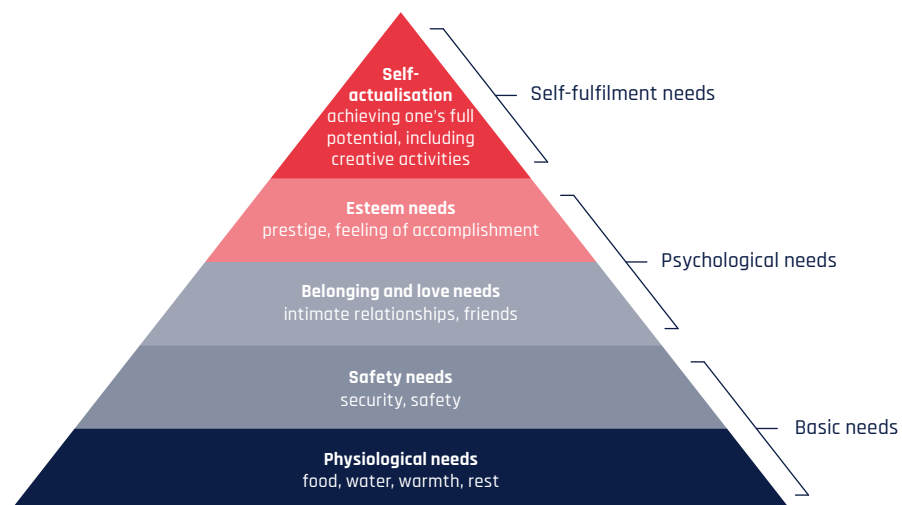
locations that have been privileged to secure and administer a 3rd vaccine to their inhabitants.

A world in turmoil, some people systematically following scientific research and results, others holding these in disdain, there has hardly been a time in recent history where we were in such a loss. Yet, despite the personal and business insecurities, we all have had to carry on working, taking up new challenges, searching for new tools to help our daily lives, striving to make ends meet, while staying safe and unharmed, wondering how might our contacts from the previous two weeks affect our health today.

As professionals we have struggled to keep a straight face, and might now be wondering if this has taken a toll in regard to our inner peace. Maybe we shouldn't have pretended all is OK. Perhaps an emotionally accepting workplace that allowed sentiments to be safely expressed, more in tune with the cataclysmic set of events would be a healthier environment. Recent reports indicate that major shifts are brewing on the way we work. The future of work is a vivid theme, with a feeling of uncertainty as the pandemic begins to fade, and the rise of a new-normal that will soon be a reality. How did this year affect the workplace? What could have been done better?

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Which ones do you think have been affected most during the pandemic?



How might we have been better prepared? These questions should eventually be answered not for academic reasons, but for pure practical ones - to shed light to opportunities and steps forward that can make the workplace better and actually help us humans as any other great catastrophe in our history has: to be a catalyst for new mindsets, new ideas and innovation.

2. "I HOPE MY EMAIL FINDS YOU WELL"

A lot has shifted during the pandemic, in our personal lives and business realities. Although before 2020 only specific professionals were able to work remotely, new tools and social distancing were the reason for many more of us to follow. With many pros and cons, hybrid working is a new mode of work many are considering - teams working between office and remote locations, employees in fluid working environments such as their home, a remote office, the company office or a coffee shop¹. Some businesses have already taken steps for employees to permanently have the option to work remotely², and others are expecting this hybrid shift³ while, inevitably, as many as 72% of employees begin to actively seek it out⁴. Though not the best option for all employees - the introverts had it better during working from home since characteristics such as reliability, thoughtfulness, deep thinking and deep diving in projects one by one where very useful to move ahead⁵ - managers will have to consider new realities⁵. The "office" as it used to be, was setup for the extroverts. Now, while remote working might not be a team wide mode of work, managers would have to consider the balance to strike for bringing in employees. How would the team benefit from the skills introverts showcased in the pandemic, without them being overwhelmed by the old office reality? Can there be a sweet spot where both introverts and extroverts shine equally, and none is left behind in the career development ladder?

This new arising uncertainty, along with reported prevailing sentiments of anxiety and finding purpose in work can have a number of consequences⁷. A different approach towards employees, as burnout seems to be widespread after the pandemic, and "The Great Resignation"⁸, a trend that may soon be mainstream. Being in touch with business and employee needs possibly requires a different skillset in order for a team to carry on functioning, helping employees be productive yet step by step healing the pandemic's scars, aiding them to find meaning in their work, belong to the group and flourish once again.

The steps ahead are surely not walked, but are not unimaginable either. Already businesses are making plans on how to navigate the new reality balancing business, employee and customer needs. Some allow employees to work remotely once a week, so long that it is not Monday or Friday. Others consider bringing in employees and teams in the office to complete specific tasks, such as brainstorming meetings, or product development sessions⁹. Others might consider a reduced paycheck even up to 25% once permanently working from home, while some opt for location-agnostic pay models¹⁰. These decisions ought to be considered trials in a state of limbo, experiments that highlight side effects and benefits of future best practices. Nobody currently knows the best scenario to host the future of work. An experimental outlook and a "let's take it day by day" mentality can be an interesting exercise for business, so long as it pays justice to those affected and does not threaten their work-life balance. Managers and employees alike could embrace this fluid environment and agree to a trial-and-error era of developing the post-COVID workplace, especially since matters change so swiftly and what is "OK" this month, may not be "OK" next semester.

This would entail a fluid mindset, a new rearrangement in the workplace: spaces should be designed for inclusivity, health, wellbeing and collaboration¹¹, employees' work should be appreciated by result rather than office presence

1. Costa, M, Alternative offices: how working from the pub might work for some, Raconteur, 2021, <https://www.raconteur.net/workplace/making-best-working-away-from-home-pubs-cafes/>
2. NG, K., Deloitte tells its 20,000 UK employees they can work from home forever, Independent, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/deloitte-work-from-home-employees-b1868977.html>
3. Microsoft, The Next Great Disruption is Hybrid Work - Are we ready?, 2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report
4. PwC, Hopes and Fears 2021, <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/upskilling/hopes-and-fears.html>
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8. Stahl, A, Post-Pandemic Burnout Spurs The "Great Resignation" Among Workers, Forbes, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashleystahl/2021/07/22/post-pandemic-burnout-spurs-the-great-resignation-among-workers/?sh=1f1ef4e858b9>
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10. Kaye, D, Pay cut: Google employees who work from home could lose money, Reuters, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/the-great-reboot/pay-cut-google-employees-who-work-home-could-lose-money-2021-08-10/>
11. Steelcase, Collaboration in the Hybrid Workplace, A guide for designing spaces to support in-office and remote collaboration.

and public policy should find more appropriate ways to tax and provide incentives for work¹².

In all opportunities and changes we have witnessed during the pandemic, technology has been the enabler for allowing the world to carry on somewhat undisturbed. E-commerce has allowed commerce to carry on, teleconference platforms have allowed conferring and discussing to progress matters, cloud-based file systems have allowed working and developing documents while team members have been dispersed, and online streaming platforms have permitted the “presence” of a remote audience in theatres, seminars and sports events. One could easily take pride in the deeds of technology that made 2 or 3 lockdowns bearable, and pandemics in the early 1900’s unfathomable.

But wait.

Wouldn't it be wiser to wonder not just what was gained, but also what was lost, especially considering the profound effects of social distancing on every human being? The lack of face-to-face conversations that enclose body language hints, minimal touch between humans that builds primeval trust between people of the same group and a missed chance encounter for conversations around the watercooler that can so easily offer an unprecedented, laser-sharp perspective boosting team productivity, have all fallen prey to remote collaboration¹³. Till today, we have only started to experiment with their digital substitutes ranging from superficial tips on how to recreate them on teleconference platforms, to concepts of how an entire office replica can be setup online¹⁴ - a kind of “Second Life” for the office.

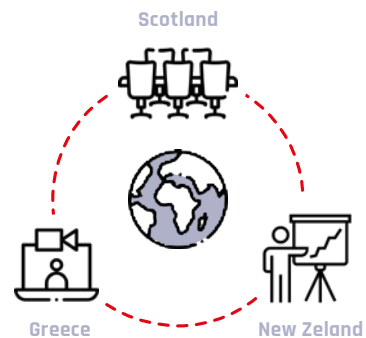
However, it should be noted that such concepts may miss out on the humanity of humans - they fail to acknowledge the majority of our basic senses functioning naturally with no technological intermediary, as humans have done for thousands of years based on their biological sensors.

Perhaps, it is valid to consider the silver lining of the pandemic’s experience, which undoubtedly has moved Digital Transformation forward. For instance, numerous conferences and symposia have taken place online and have managed to reach a global audience benefitting speakers, attendees and new discussions.

Conference in Scotland, presenter in New Zealand, attendant in a chair in Greece - it can be a mentally invigorating experience given a good facilitator, a good teleconference setup and a well-prepared

session. As we consider the best way to use the technology at hand and develop a future in its presence, it is worth thinking this limbo in a dream-state, where we could envision technology as a pause - a moment in time when, unobstructed by day-to-day use, we may clearly describe a vision for technology to let us reflect on our relationship with it before we rush into designing it. And perhaps, beneficial tech-driven habits from within the pandemic can form the “new offline”¹⁵.

REMOTE CONFERENCE



3. LOOKING INTO FUTURES

Looking into the future can be an interesting thought experiment. It is an innate activity done by human-gatherers, provisioning for the rainy days ahead once settled down geographically, collaborating with and trusting strangers, not just family¹⁶.

Thus, being Future-Ready can be considered a basic human activity in order to ensure social safety and a sense of security in spite of what the tide brings in. This human need has long been answered by druid sorcery, ancient oracles, witchcraft, star-sign reading or astrological prognostics.

Today though, in the form of foresight, it is instead a carefully crafted process considering consequences of current actions and mapping out a number of potential possibilities and outcomes - preparing for rainy or sunny days. Which is why it makes sense to think of Futures (plural) as the anticipation of a number of scenarios that may potentially become reality, for which one can be prepared to respond to whether they materialize or not. Just as emergency services run readiness

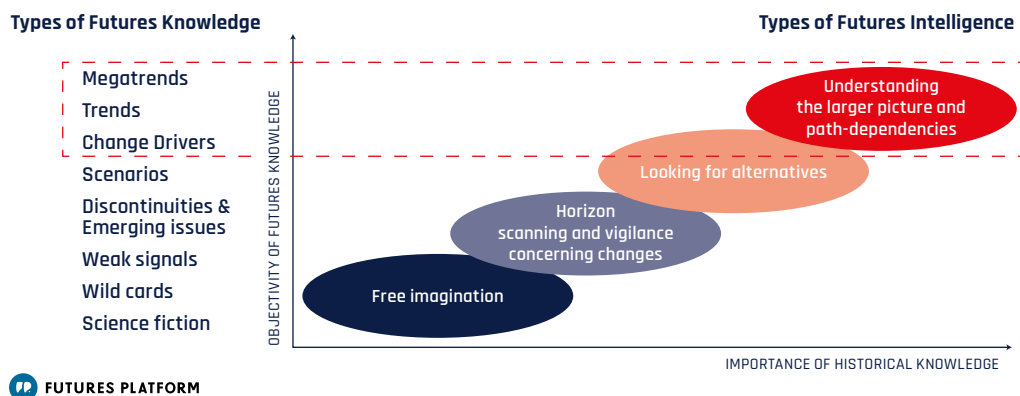
12. Hobsbawm, J, The Nowhere Office, Demos, March 2021

13. Hunter, M, The Surprising Benefits of Water Cooler Talks, 2018, <https://www.orginc.com/blog/the-surprising-benefits-of-water-cooler-talks>

14. Chiu, E, The metaverse workforce, Wunderman Thompson, 2021, <https://www.wundermanthompson.com/insight/the-metaverse-workforce>

15. Coetzee, M, Ancestors of the Future: The Poetry and Potency of Language, The Journal of Futures Studies, 2021

16. Seabright, P., Company of Strangers : A Natural History of Economic Life - Revised Edition, 2010, Princeton University Press



exercises to train personnel, based on specific scenarios. In the end, everyone lives one future at a time, but the benefit of the exercise of creating multiple futures is a flexible mindset for decision making, team readiness and a roadmap to action should any part of a scenario actually plays out.

Looking into the future, one must be equipped with strengths in order to uncover and anticipate events. It would be helpful to look and develop a futures-mindset by

- understanding implications of current actions
- identifying and navigating signals and trends
- developing futures-based insights and communicating opportunities for action
- crafting possible scenarios of the future
- developing actionable roadmaps to realize these scenarios

Making sense of what is currently at play in the business stage is an important part of Futuring and Foresight. Identifying signals of smaller or bigger changemaking waves that are on the way can be a challenging, tiring but nevertheless very useful endeavor. In a way, signals turn our attention to possible innovations before they become obvious, being the forerunners of trends¹⁷. And trends -not to be confused with fashion or social media trends- are changes appearing in areas of interest with a sufficient volume. Their existence lasts a year or more and they tend to address the new "changed" normal, fluctuating in intensity. Thus, time and traction are what one is looking for so as to consider trend repercussions. Drivers, on the other hand, are social, political, economic, environmental and technological forces which shape societal, organizational and market realities¹⁸, allowing trends to flourish or not and little can individual businesses do to affect them.

4. WHAT COULD WE ANTICIPATE IN AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF WORK?

Flexible working is here to stay

As the year behind us proved, Digital Transformation has been sped up due to the pandemic. New digital tools have been embedded in the way we carry out our daily work, and one may wonder whether we will ever be going back, or even if there is any point in doing so. Companies that have developed solutions to help cooperation and productivity among remote team members have seen their paying customer base and market value increase between the years 2020 and 2021^{19,20}. "Remote-first" companies, even before the pandemic, pay testament to the different mindset required in making "remote work" work, pointing out the importance of people, tools and processes²¹.

Now, it seems that "remote work" or "working from anywhere" can be a functional reality for more mainstream businesses, as the digital tool uptake allows for business outputs to be orchestrated, carried out, monitored and delivered even when teams are not co-located. This newly acquired freedom from the workplace, comes with great responsibility. Employees have to be more attuned to business goals, must develop a greater sense of ownership in their work output, and inevitably will be making more decisions along the way, from managing their time to delivering the daily, weekly or monthly output while planning their imminent future focus.

17. Signals, Institute for the Future, <https://www.iftf.org/what-we-do/foresight-tools/signals/>

18. Stucki, M, Understanding the Larger Picture and Path-dependencies: Megatrends, Trends and Change Drivers, Future Proof, 2021, <https://www.futuresplatform.com/blog/megatrends-trends-and-change-drivers-the-larger-picture-and-path-dependencies>

19. Liu, S, Price of Zoom's shares 2020-2021, Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1106104/stock-price-zoom/>

20. Curry, D, Slack Revenue and Usage Statistics (2021), Business of Apps, 2021, <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/slack-statistics/>

21. Zapier, The Ultimate Guide to Remote Work, Lessons from a team of over 200 remote workers, 2019, https://cdn.zapier.com/storage/learn_ebooks/b8a9bc98ff52fda88db96f92225c126c.pdf

Liberating as flexibility in work may be, it comes with a set of challenges when it arrives in an organization with a strong legacy in office culture. Most areas ought to be rethought, procedures may need to change, and the structure will follow. Yet, of equal or more importance is to address the challenges faced by people who will be carrying this shift ahead.

Employees delivering work remotely, means managers need to focus even more on evaluating performance based on outcome, a major shift from the old presentism work valuation model in many organizations. Additionally, managers now, leading teams of highly motivated, trustworthy, highly skilled and responsible team members may have to attain a different role. Traditionally, a first-line manager would have to split the same type of workload into smaller chunks, assign it to their team, and supervise the produced work, while monitoring quality and identifying gaps. Now, they may need to act more as the leaders of a hand-picked, highly qualified group of talented musicians, each of which is a virtuoso in their musical instrument. They will be required to coordinate them as a group, propose instrument dynamics (some to play louder or lower than others) and imbue a sense of security and peace among the group in that every note by each musician will be played timely and appropriately. In other words, the manager has to act as a conductor.

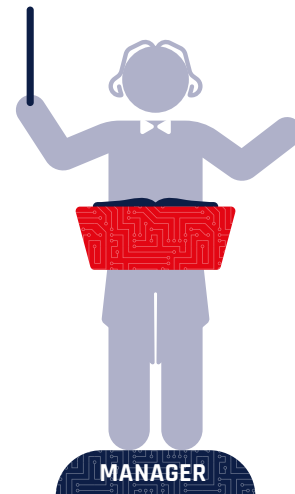
Developing this schematic in teams is most likely in need of a different team structure. An organizational redesign based on smaller teams, with more autonomy and decision-making freedom, and more responsibility in regard to business output. In a sense, there will be a need for more agile all-around teams, working as something more similar to micro-enterprises within the context of the greater organization²².

People Centric Organizations

Understanding the needs of employees has been in the interest of organizations for a while. In a convulsion of the events of Generation Z coming into the workforce and the challenges brought by the pandemic, organizations have had an ever-greater set of challenges in their plate. On the one hand, a group of employees that can be considered digital natives, and on the other the difficulties faced by all employees to strike work-life balance while working from home, organizations have had to pay closer attention to the needs of their people.

From developing strategies to grow employees during lockdowns, to develop team spirit and help

THE MANAGER AS A CONDUCTOR



evolve individuals' skills, HR departments have had a great volume of work to carry out during the pandemic, mostly as repercussions of government policies for the pandemic, rather than immediate organization policies. And to be honest, this new unknown field has been a new frontier for all, which is why mistakes ought to be forgiven at this stage. Most importantly, HR departments have had the chance to seek the advice of the employees themselves, developing inward-looking strategies to identify what is more and what is less necessary organization-wide. This can empower and develop a habit of listening to employees and caring for their wellbeing, in what seems to be becoming a much sought-after trait for new age high-quality talent when choosing employer.

Additionally, this openness to understand the employee experience, can be helpful in the relations and spirit between different employee levels. A culture of openly and safely sharing thoughts even between c-level and other level employees can lay the grounds for a strong coherent team, with a high tendency for innovation, able to take on the most pressing challenges. Furthermore, including more employees in the decision-making process, is proof of the trust organizations put on their people, can be motivational for employees and help them find their spot in the workplace and develop a sense of purpose within the organization.

As important as employee engagement might be, there is an equilibrium to strike, mostly regarding time and availability. The pandemic has been a wakeup call for thinking work-life balance, managing multiple calls, work documents and home errands while working from home and keeping a clear frame of mind in the meantime. This overload has been acknowledged and the

22. CNA, Haier: From failing fridge manufacturer to global electronic giant, Inside The Storm, 18:20min, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WK7mxBy1fNw>

'right to disconnect' is now on the table²³; the right for an employee to not be responsive for work matters outside working hours, even if digital technologies permit this. In a way, employees connecting to other employees ought to show some restraint to thoughtless communications and would benefit from explicit boundaries set by individuals or ideally put forward in the form of processes.

Tech that wants to be a human substitute. Should it?

Technology has always been the holy grail of evolution by those believing in its power; and luddites concurrently developed their counter arguments. Today, when AI and Machine Learning take the frontstage, it is inevitable for one to consider whether technology is here to substitute people. Many fear it will make some jobs redundant, and others are skeptical of the great power it possesses as the bearer of their data²⁴. Thinking of data as the new oil, it is imperative not to fall into the same follies as oil. Is data renewable, clean, sustainable or efficient? Is it ethically mined and distributed? Regardless of the answers, such questions have been the reason for which the Data Ethics Canvas has been created by seminal technologists such as Tim Berners Lee, bringing the use of Data and ethical practices in the public's attention²⁵. If people are now online, and their digital data is what follows them, it is only normal to consider the fair use and equal rights of their digital selves.

As technology progresses more and more, substituting human cognition and perception can hold merits and dangers alike. Used wisely, technology can help and liberate humans, but what if tech is mistaken? Where would a folly on a GPS device lead your next delivery? What if AI is taught using humanly biased datasets? How can we confidently claim that tech is the holy grail? Most probably, we will not be making this claim any time soon, and it becomes imperative that we persist in working towards monitoring and critically considering tech and AI outputs, more so as poor performance, errors and deepfakes remind us not to be naive in its use. Just imagine what it actually means to one's life when a technological system looks down upon us and decides on our good or bad behavior. How will AI be perceived when it is widely applied for law enforcement, medical diagnoses or political decision-making? What will the internet look like when deepfakes are cheap

and accessible for anyone to make convincingly²⁶? How might customers perceive a virtual reality AI customer service? Humans should have extremely well-developed soft skills to be in a position to critically consider and judge any odd tech output, when "seeing will not be believing". Even more importantly, employees of companies that use new age capabilities should be on top of their technology, its potential complications and ethical entanglements. And as for those developing the technology, the more pressing question need not be if we can make this technological solution, but instead: "how can we use this technological solution beneficially for our customers and society in general?"

Building towards the above mature use and understanding of technology will require the upskilling and reskilling of organization's employees. The focus on learning new technological skills, though important for developing hard skills that will increase productivity in the new work environment, can only partially help. Instead, for the development of critical thinking on the aforementioned tech related questions and others alike, a deep understanding of each technology's capabilities, limits, ethics and repercussions on business and social life is mandatory, before any attempt to harness it is made. Just think of the coming of Fake News before it was branded as such and consider the amount of effort that went in educating the public on how to trust newsbytes, or not, how to conduct basic back research on claims and how to eventually believe or dismiss news.

This reality check needed for applying any new tech appropriately and with the least malignant consequences, can be aided by mindsets and methodologies that stay focused on humans. When proposing, designing, developing or applying new products and services one ought to holistically consider repercussions of a "solution to be" for the users, their lives and the environment they occupy. Developing the necessary perspectives helps robust decisions to be made, opportunities to be identified and evils to be avoided, propagating an appropriate, reasonable and ethical response to the challenge at hand, making technology what it was dreamed of being: a useful tool and trustworthy serving collaborator to humans.

23. EurWork, European Observatory for Working Life, Right to disconnect, October 2019, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/right-to-disconnect>

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25. Open Data Institute, Data Ethics Canvas, 2021, <https://theodi.org/article/the-data-ethics-canvas-2021/>

26. Loukides, M., DeepCheapFakes: What happens when deepfakes become cheap? O'reilly, 2021, <https://www.oreilly.com/radar/deepcheapfakes/>

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FUTURING

Futuring is the act of looking ahead in time through the lens of present signals, trends and drivers, in order to create, plan for and test views of alternative futures.

It is interesting for organizations since it is uncertain what the actual future will be. Whoever said that in order to predict the future, one has to invent it, profoundly implies that one must be proactive when it comes to planning operations so no matter if a day is rainy or sunny, a viable survival possibility is somewhat secured. Provisioning supplies for anticipated scenarios, but also analyzing the past retrospectively, can create a rich set of data in regard to how things might consequentially develop and provoke thoughts of how one could be relatively prepared.

The sacred act of invention which can produce artefacts or processes, requires a first step of free and unconstrained imagination, but with a lookout in concurrent events - signals, emerging issues etc. Some scientific discoveries and innovations have had some sort of science fiction predecessor²⁷, making us think that their tangible inception would have been difficult without an initial immaterial vision explained or assumed. The creation of this vision can be considered a dreamy yet pragmatic call on higher instincts and should feel within reach to make real - an artfully created provocation, upon which organizations can locate themselves in the future scenario. Once this mindset is in place, teams can develop scenarios of potential decisions and be vigilant of how reality plays out, understanding tendencies, and being more prepared to respond with relevant actions.

Futures are provocations for the imagination, today. A tool in the arsenal of any business that needs to free itself from business-as-usual, and step fearlessly into the unknown, while being able to envision the necessary steps to take in order to attain a brand-new, shiny and beautiful position in its market and society. Futures are a safe-space for teams to creatively develop alternatives that pose questions about today which, once beginning to be answered, are the basis of any change within an organization. Therefore, the "hows" and "whys" need to follow the "what ifs".

FUTURING BY FOUNDATION

WORK IN GREECE IN 2027

Considering how the next few years might affect our workplace, at Found.ation we ran a thought experiment. Nine members of our team worked together on a Futuring exercise, setting our eyes in the future of work in our country, posing the question: "How will work in Greece look like in 2027?". We set out following a structured process, that helped diverge our thinking, discussing on arising signals and trends and ideating possibilities before we converged our thinking as a group, developing the topics that may affect "Work in Greece in 2027". We collaboratively created three scenarios for work in 2027 and concluded in three possible futures to everyday life at work.

The scenarios most probably will not materialize as conceptualized, especially as the future will only turn into one present. Still, the three scenarios form a useful tool for us to imagine the work environment and the life of employees in the near future, ponder their challenges, and try to uncover the consequences of our actions today.

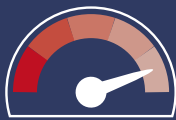


SCENARIO 01

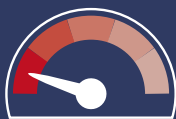
GREECE AS A GLOBAL TECH LEADER

TOPICS	TOPIC OUTCOME	POTENTIAL IMPACT
1 Greek companies change their internal processes	Digital Transformation is already here	Greek companies have realized the quick need to change structure and processes. They not only manage to adapt but even find themselves ready to lead with new ideas, working models and agile structures, having the capacity to attract global clientele and operate abroad.
2 Workforce investing in personal development	Yes, employees are proactive	Employees understand that upskilling and reskilling themselves is the only way to stay competitive and resourceful. They are willing to invest time and effort in their training, with companies themselves providing plenty of opportunities and support.
3 Employees' interaction with companies	Employees will be eager to work for "companies"	Talent is piling up to work on new tech-companies and established corporations, since they are offered many incentives, new flexible ways of working and life changing benefits. Mental wellness practices are adopted by companies and have a positive impact.
4 New tech uptake by Greek companies	Yes, companies have adopted new tech	Companies adopt modern digital tools, selecting employees based on their new tech age skills. Cloud, AI, big data and more are used by many companies with real business success. Blue collar jobs may become more popular among people who resist change, leading to greater social polarization.
5 Social reactions in Greece to the new work reality	Greece becoming an open minded and accepting society	Greek society is more open minded and accepting of novelties and anything innovative, finding opportunities in combining physical beauty with new flexible and remote work models. The country becomes a welcoming global destination for a modern type of work immigrants.
6 Government policies that support work	Yes	Individual and corporate tax rates are lower, especially for new type of work models. Government promotes tax incentives for companies investing in Greece, creates local R&D centers and mental health is included in public insurance plans.

SCENARIO REFLECTIONS > KEY LEARNINGS



DESIRABILITY



PROBABILITY

In order for Greece to be a global positive example, many favorable winds must blow concurrently. Governmental legislation must be more attuned with the business world and generation, offering simpler frameworks, modern incentives and agile policies.

People will need to get hungry for knowledge, constantly looking to learn skills and be part of the new age tech talent pool. In this way they can look global competition straight in the eye, fearlessly and with confidence. Additionally, their antennas to the world should be wide open, with a cosmopolitan culture, identifying opportunities that will help them change their habits to the best, and collectively help the country to become an innovator and leader, regionally, and even globally.

If companies act early in order to not miss out on tech developments and innovative business models, giving a wide berth to experimentation and adaptability, the benefits will be many, both on a business and societal level.

SCENARIO 02

CHANGES IN MOMENTUM

	TOPICS	TOPIC OUTCOME	POTENTIAL IMPACT
1	Greek companies change their internal processes	Currently on the way to changing	Companies recognize the need to transform but they lack resources. They are working towards change, but it takes longer than expected.
2	Workforce investing in personal development	Yes, employees are proactive	Employees are taking initiatives building their skills via online and offline courses and stay informed about industry trends worldwide. In addition, they are keen to extend their network, being overall proactive with their personal development.
3	Employees' interaction with companies	Employees will NOT be eager to work for "companies"	Workforce, especially younger one, is not inspired by the still "traditional" corporate culture of Greek companies, turning elsewhere to look for new ways of working such as starting their own ventures or becoming freelancers.
4	New tech uptake by Greek companies	Companies are in the process of adopting new tech	Companies are eager to invest in new technologies but are not strongly supported by, the still weak, surrounding technological ecosystem. In addition, scarcity of new age talent is further hindering this transition.
5	Social reactions in Greece to the new work reality	Greeks become skeptical to new work lifestyles (eg. digital nomading, remote work, etc)	Despite Greeks seeing some positive effects on real estate rentals and the boost of the economy from foreign workers, they are worried about a broader negative outcome on society and are sceptical towards digital nomads.
6	Government policies that support work	Average supporting policies	Government has laid the legal groundwork and is reducing bureaucratic procedures to build ecosystems that attract tech companies and digital nomads. In addition, it is now offering some tax incentives for modern flexible work models.

SCENARIO REFLECTIONS > KEY LEARNINGS



DESIRABILITY



PROBABILITY

Corporate culture should realize that it has to adapt swiftly in regard to their processes if they are to avoid many of the self-motivated employees to seek opportunities within side businesses and alternative work models, taking personal advantage of their skills. But there will still be many steps to be taken. On the other hand, individuals taking decisions towards flexible work models may face skepticism by the mainstream social fabric: "Why would 'X' leave a secure corporate well-paid job to become an independent professional?".

As businesses will be ramping up their efforts on Digital Transformation, with still plenty of ground to cover, they will have to figure out how they will sustain their DT efforts in an environment with high talent scarcity.

Regardless of the local momentum, work will be in the process of changing, and many individuals will focus on upskilling themselves and joining the global new age talent pool. This will also produce some benefits for the traditional economy, boosted, as a ripple effect, by those highly motivated and incessantly opportunity seeking new age workers.

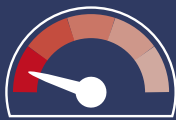
SCENARIO

03

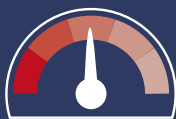
GREECE 0.2

	TOPICS	TOPIC OUTCOME	POTENTIAL IMPACT
1	Greek companies change their internal processes	Still struggling to understand why they need to change	Companies maintain their traditional mindset and can't cope with the rapid changes. They are left behind from the global competition and they lack skilled human capital as new talent avoids them.
2	Workforce investing in personal development	Yes, but employees are passive and expect to be upskilled by employer	There is a scarcity of new age talent and employees are at a state of skills' stagnation. They feel inferior but they don't pursue personal development activities. As a result, companies have to compel them with incentives for upskilling.
3	Employees' interaction with companies	Employees will NOT be eager to work for "companies"	Companies are struggling to hire. New types of working are emerging. Employees are becoming freelancers, entrepreneurs or are engaged in various side hustles to sustain themselves. They value money earnings over corporate culture and security.
4	New tech uptake by Greek companies	Companies are in the process of adopting new tech	Companies are now activating mechanisms of new technology adoption and exploring new business models which will support the transition, but are having low expectations of this endeavour. Hiring technologists is difficult, yet a high priority task for them.
5	Social reactions in Greece to the new work reality	Greeks become skeptical to new work lifestyles (eg. digital nomading, remote work, etc)	Greeks are curious about new work lifestyles but distrust prevails. They are sceptical of the feasibility and efficiency of remote working models, but envy others that have adopted it. Focus is still on hours of work and not on tangible outcomes.
6	Government policies that support work	Average supporting policies	Public sector's support is basically absent, and only some organizations are taking new initiatives - though in an antiquated policy framework. Some governmental micro-financing options are offering hope, but local businesses' competitiveness has decreased at European level.

SCENARIO REFLECTIONS > KEY LEARNINGS



DESIRABILITY



PROBABILITY

It can be easy and conformable to resist any change and do as you would in the past. A generation who grew up listening to promises of a prosperous living that could materialize with minimum effort might not be in the position to mature, act as responsible adults and move ahead. Instead, the population's tendency to act as a spoiled teenager can hinder and even jeopardize a better positioning of Greece in the post pandemic world.

Business will inevitably progress, but doing so at a far slower rate than other countries around the globe, will seem like they are standing still. Incoherent and unconnected initiatives by the private sector and the government can cause too much energy and effort to go in vain, demoralizing overworked employees as they witness their motivation levels diminish day by day.

With a severe stagnation of new ideas and little real progress, Greece may be headed towards new uncertainties, which may prove to be the root for another recession and widespread social unrest.

CONCLUSION

The way we will be working in 2027 will be different from today, and will depend among others, on how fast we understand the advantages and disadvantages of remote or hybrid working, how fast we train ourselves in new technological tools for working together, remotely, and how curious we are to apply these in our daily business and personal life.

Our "old self", be it personal habits, our thinking in business and social systems, as well as public policy making, will be put to the test if we are to evolve.

The above futuring work highlights positive as well as negative consequences aiming to provoke beneficial developments and actions today. For instance, if as a Greek business ecosystem, we aimed to thrive in the years to come, we ought to

- Give reasons and develop the appetite for employee upskilling and self-development
- Create policies for hybrid working, allowing for its comfortable and safe implementation
- Advocate the benefits of the new work paradigm and build consensus in favor of the new workplace vision
- Be vigilant, report and inform of potential positive and negative consequences of the new work paradigm, in order to prompt actions ahead of time and steer away from undesirable effects.





**DIGITAL
TRANS
FORMATION** **2022**

GLOBAL TRENDS

Knowing the emerging trends in the key sector of digital transformation is something crucial for a company to be able to adapt its operation to the current situation and to make the right moves for the future. We are ready to live one more spirited year, with changes running at the pace we have become accustomed to in recent years, as a consequence of the pandemic and technological developments.

So what is it that will concern us most in 2022? 5G is now ubiquitous and comes at a time when remote work has become the norm, demanding seamless connectivity always and everywhere. With unprecedented speeds, but also technology that has the capacity to enhance connectivity without gaps and losses, services such as telemedicine, that were possible but not widely adopted, can now become a reality.

As more and more companies utilize the capabilities of the cloud, more and more solutions based on hybrid and multiple clouds are emerging. The use of cloud solutions for storage, networking and processing is no longer so costly, as hybrid solutions have matured to the point where they can be a viable option. Finding a universal way to integrate and manage these software-as-a-service solutions will become essential to a successful digital transformation.

In addition, the revolution of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) algorithms can affect us in innovative ways. How about smart cars, for example, that will watch if we are focused on the road and will alert us if they see that we are losing attention? Or how about smartphones that, with the help of artificial intelligence algorithms, will improve the quality of calls or even translate voice real-time? And when it comes straight to the workplace, an artificial intelligence solution can provide business insights at an instant, that would otherwise require many human hours to collect and analyze. The most important thing is, of course, that a company does not need to have its own infrastructure, as it can utilize ready-made artificial intelligence solutions that now exist for everything from marketing to human resources and from project management to design, and can solve complex business challenges. Also, Robotic Process Automation (RPA) will be another technology that will create new jobs while at the same time altering existing ones.

Moreover, two more acronyms, AR and VR, are gaining ground, playing an important role to entertainment and other areas. For example, AR and VR have the potential to make learning a more enjoyable and rewarding experience by changing what you have in mind as a typical classroom of the past. Also, these technologies can transform things like online shopping, as vendors can create realistic 3D models of products for the potential buyers.

Blockchain is another word of the present and certainly of the future too. As several industries are implementing blockchain technology, new jobs are being created. Also, as blockchain has allowed the rise of cryptocurrencies and more recently transactions involving unique digital objects called NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens), in 2022 and beyond we will see even more cases where this technology will be applied - for example in case proof of ownership needs to be verified.

In 2022, we will also become more and more familiar with the concept of "Metaverse", a digital world that will coexist with the physical world, in which we will perform many of the functions we are accustomed to in the real world, such as work, play and socialization. Depicted as a "network of networks", the metaverse will take business meetings and remote collaboration to a whole new level. Still not fully clear to most, but certainly engaging early adopters, it became a buzzword in 2021, when Facebook presented their vision and also changed the company's name to "Meta".

Furthermore, 2022 will be a year with more actions about sustainability. A trend of reusing older devices or having new ones that are reducing negative impact on the environment is constantly growing. What about our prioritization to climate change and efforts to achieve carbon neutrality? Renewable energy forms will gain ever more ground, as the only form of energy that saw an increase in use even during the COVID-19 era.

Finally, as the world is still trying to recover from the global pandemic crisis, the business world is turning its focus on physical and mental health, exploring ways to promote wellness and to counterbalance the sudden and excessive use of technology in every aspect of the human life.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN EUROPE

For a number of years, digital transformation had been penetrating our daily lives at a relatively slow pace. And then came COVID-19. 2020 was a year in which the emergence of the pandemic accelerated growth, as well as technology penetration, into most areas of our lives - a trend that continued in 2021. Lockdowns and restrictions have now diminished, but COVID-19 and its effects are still active. Digital transformation continues to be one of the European Union's priorities, with the European Parliament taking more initiatives towards this direction. Having in mind ways to support the EU's green transition, but also the effort to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, European Union adopted actions to empower people on new digital technologies, to support the training of employees in digital skills, and also to digitise public services in every member state. The future of Europe is digital, with a lot of challenges open to anyone who wants to seize the new opportunities.

The EU Economic Recovery Plan calls on Member States to allocate at least 20% of the €672.5 billion Recovery and Resilience Facility package to the digital transition. Investment projects such as research and innovation-centred Horizon Europe and the Connecting Europe Facility infrastructure are moving towards this direction.

In April 2021, the European Parliament adopted the Digital Europe programme¹, the first EU funding program focusing on making technology as accessible to businesses and people as possible. It aims to invest in digital infrastructure, so that key technologies can help boost competitiveness and green transition in Europe. It will invest €7.6 billion in five areas: supercomputers (€2.2 billion), artificial intelligence (€2.1 billion), cyber security (€1.6 billion), advanced digital skills (€0.6 billion) and ensuring the widespread use of digital technologies in the economy and society (€1.1 billion).

As 42% of EU citizens lack basic digital skills, MEPs use the European Skills Agenda to take initiatives to close the digital skills gap and increase digital education. This is a continued effort to ensure that people and businesses can take full advantage of technological advancements.

At the same time, Europe is paying close attention to the security sector, as the European Union is working on a new digital services legislation², aimed at foster competitiveness, innovation and growth, while boosting online security, tackling illegal content, and ensuring the protection of free speech, press freedom and democracy. In April 2021, the Parliament adopted new rules to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online. One month later, Members of the European Parliament backed a new European cybersecurity centre³ and network that will increase Europe's capacity against cyber threats.

The European Union also recognised the potential of AI, as it can bring numerous benefits, such as better healthcare, safer and cleaner transport, more efficient manufacturing, and cheaper and more sustainable energy. In April 2021, the Commission presented its proposal for AI regulation⁴ that will give people the confidence to embrace these technologies while encouraging businesses to develop them.

They also accentuated the potential of a successful European data strategy, as the parliament has stressed the potential of industrial and public data for EU companies and researchers and called for European data spaces, big data infrastructure and legislation that will contribute to trustworthiness.

1. Digital Europe Programme [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2018/0227\(COD\)&l=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2018/0227(COD)&l=en)
2. Digital Services Legislation <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package>
3. European cybersecurity centre [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2018/0328\(COD\)&l=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2018/0328(COD)&l=en)
4. EU's approach to AI https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/excellence-trust-artificial-intelligence_en#latest

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN GREECE: THE COUNTRY'S DIGITAL PROFILE

According to the Global Innovation Index (GII)¹, concerning the most innovative countries in the world for 2021, Greece ranks 47th among 132 countries. The best performance for our country in this ranking was in 2020, when it was ranked 43rd among 131 economies, while in 2019 it was ranked 41st among 129 countries.

The findings of the Global Innovation Index (GII) concern an assessment conducted by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). According to them, Greece is ranked 39th among 51 high-income group economies and 30th among the 39 economies in Europe.

One strong point of our country is the “Human Capital and research” indicator, where we are in the 16th place among 132 countries, while our performance is quite good in the “Infrastructure” indicator, where we have won the 45th place, but also in the “Institutions” rank where we are in the 51st place. The performance of the country in the indicator “Ease of starting a new business” is excellent as we ranked 11th in the world, while our position is also very good in the indicator “Software spending as a percentage of GDP” (10th) but also in access to ICT access (21st).

As far as Greece's lagging points, our performance

is not so satisfactory in the indicator of “Market sophistication” where we are in the 70th place, but also in the University-industry R&D collaboration, where we ranked 110th.

It is worth noting that the most innovative country in the world for 2021, according to this ranking, is Switzerland, followed by Sweden, the United States of America, United Kingdom and the Republic of Korea.

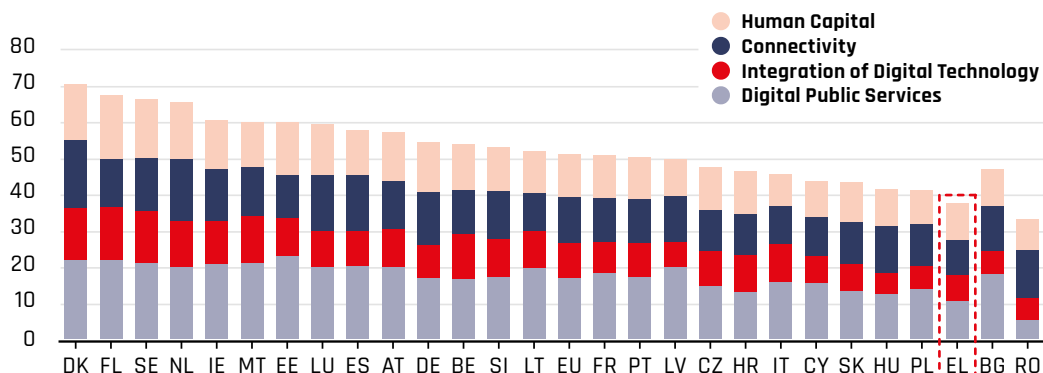
However, Greece have seen their digital competitiveness gain ground over the last year, according to the Digital Riser Report 2021. Our country (+93 ranks) managed to improve their position and be more competitive and prosperous.

The Digital Riser Report 2021² ranks and analyses the changes that countries around the globe have seen in their digital competitiveness over the past three years, showing that the leading industrial countries in the G20 have lost out in terms of their digital competitiveness and face new and dynamic competitors, most notably China. The last was the top digital riser within the G20 (+211 ranks) followed by Saudi Arabia (+169 ranks). Meanwhile, the United States (-72 ranks), Germany (-176 ranks) and Japan (-190 ranks) lost significant ground between 2018 and 2020.

DESI 2021

Greece has improved its position also on the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) for 2021³, compared to the previous year and the EU average. For 2021, the country ranks in the 25th position out of the 27 EU Member States, with Romania ranking last and Bulgaria second to last. The overall score for Greece has remained the same as in 2020 (37.3).

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021 Ranking

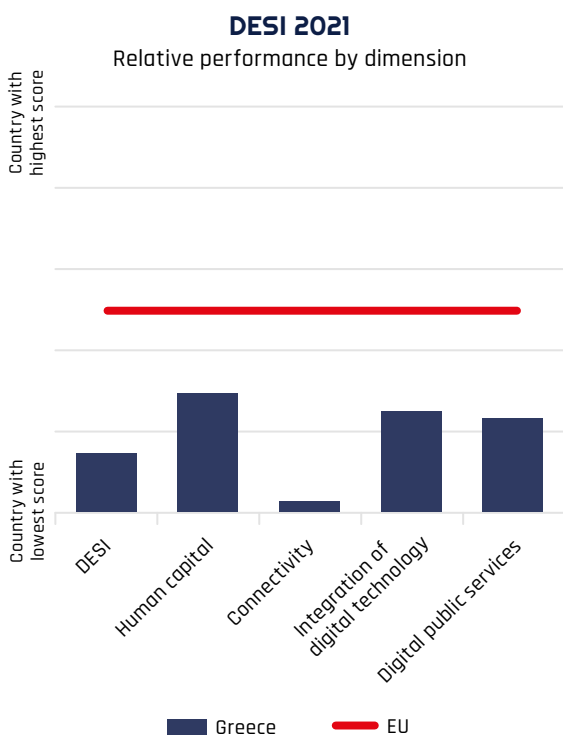
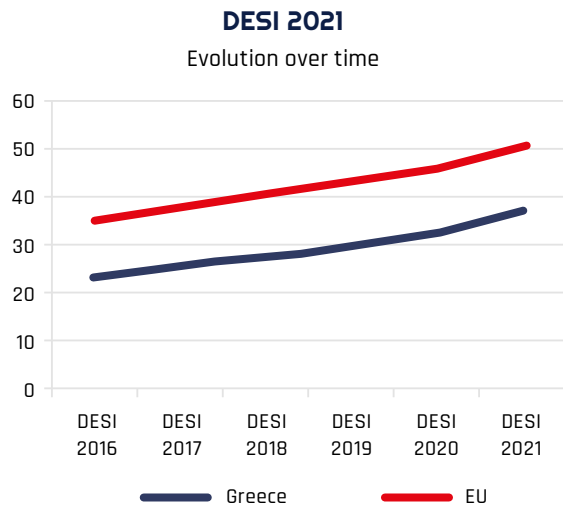


Source: European Commission, DESI 2021

1. Global Innovation Index 2021 https://www.wipo.int/global_innovation_index/en/2021/
 2. Digital Riser Report 2021 https://digital-competitiveness.eu/wp-content/uploads/Digital_Riser_Report-2021.pdf
 3. DESI 2021 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi>

Greece			EU avg.
	rank	score	score
DESI 2021	25	37.3	50.7

Source: European Commission, DESI 2021



This year, Greece succeeds in improving in almost all dimensions, nevertheless, in most cases, its score remains below the EU average. Our country has an impressive performance in the field of digital skills, having remarkable statistics about women in ICT roles. Specifically, the proportion of employed female ICT specialists as a share of all ICT specialists employed in Greece has been rising rapidly. Greece also improved its scores on connectivity, starting to deploy very high-capacity networks, though it still remains far below the EU average in very high-capacity networks coverage and in fixed broadband take up of speeds of at least 100Mbps. However, the development of future networks is likely to accelerate with the expected investment in fiber optics (such as the Ultra-fast Broadband Project) and the development of the 5G network. Greece scores 99% on the 5G readiness indicator, which means that almost the total 5G pioneer spectrum at EU level has been assigned. In terms of the integration of digital technologies in business activities, Greece is well below the EU average. In the digitization of public services, in 2020 Greece scores above the EU average in the number of e-government users, while it far exceeds the EU average in open data readiness, having already implemented relevant legislation and policies.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Greece ranks 21st out of 27 EU countries in terms of human capital, remaining below the EU average. The percentage of people with at least basic digital skills is low (51%), while the share of employed professionals in ICT (2.1% in 2019) remains low in 2020 (2%) compared to the EU average (4.3%). However, among the country's ICT specialists, the percentage of women ICT specialists is growing extremely fast (from 20% in 2019 to 27% in 2020) and is well above the EU average (19%), making Greece a frontrunner. Finally, only 12% of companies provide ICT training to their employees in 2020, compared to the EU average of 20%. Greece has put the development of digital skills for all at the core of its new digital transformation strategy to facilitate the use of public services and to ensure retraining and upgrading the skills of the workforce.

The pandemic also accelerated the digitization process on the education system. The Ministry of Education and Religions introduced in 2020 a remote education strategy for all levels of education based on three pillars: (1) synchronous education, such as live lessons on online platforms for all levels of education. (2) asynchronous education, such as educational materials on websites and platforms for teachers and students of all levels of education; and (3) educational

television programs for primary school students. In 2020, Greece was once again very active in EU Code Week, with 68,000 people participating in 1,179 activities - ranking Greece among the six most active countries. Also, in the Panhellenic Robotics Training Competition almost 6,000 students and over 1,600 school teams participated from all over Greece.

CONNECTIVITY

Greece ranks 27th in the EU in Connectivity, with an overall score of 37.7 (compared to the EU average of 50.2). Greece is making very quick progress in fast broadband (NGA) coverage, having grown by 6 percentage points in 2020 to 87% - the EU average. The country has finally started to develop very high capacity (VHCN) networks, with fixed VHCN coverage reaching 10%, up from 7% a year earlier, although it is still well below the EU average of 59%. However, the take-up of at least 100 Mbps fixed broadband remains very low (reaching 3%, from 1% in 2019) compared to the EU average (34%). Overall adoption of fixed broadband is still slow, reaching 77% in 2020, up from 76% in 2019 (according to the EU average). Greece has advanced in the broadband price index with a score of 53 in 2020 compared to 49 in 2019. The take-up of mobile broadband (60% in 2019) remains below the EU average (71% in 2019), while the 4G performance is better, with 99.2% coverage. The General Secretariat of Telecommunications and Posts of the Ministry of Digital Government is currently updating the National Broadband Plan (expected in the 4th quarter of 2021), which will include the country roadmap for achieving the Gigabit Society's goals for 2025 and will include the roadmap for the development of the 5G networks.

INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Greece ranks 22nd in the EU on the field of integration of digital technology in business activities. Greek companies are slowly adopting digital technologies, with only 19% using social media compared to the EU average of 23%. However, 38% of businesses use electronic information sharing (above the EU average of 36%). Also impressive is the fact that Greek companies are among the frontrunners for the use of artificial intelligence (34%), well above the EU average (25%). In terms of ICT for environmental sustainability, at 65%, Greece is approaching the EU average of 66%. The same applies for big data analytics, where at 13% Greece is close to the EU average of 14%. In the coming years, we expect even more impressive performance, thanks to the Digital Transformation Bible, whose projects are in progress, including strategic measures to make enterprises in Greece even more digital.

DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Greece ranks 26th in the EU on the field of digital public services. According to the open data maturity indicator, Greece has exceeded the EU average of 78%, with a performance of 85%. Moreover, Greece is above the EU average in terms of active users of public services (at 67 % vs. 64%). However, with 36/100 pre-completed forms, Greece is well below the EU average (63/100), while the availability of digital public services for both citizens and businesses remains low (54) compared to an EU average of 75 for citizens and 84 for businesses. Public administration modernization and access to e-government services for all are high on the government agenda, with the aim of making digital public services more accessible and useful for citizens and businesses and to simplify and digitize government and public services. The goal for Greece is to be "digital by default" by 2023.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN GREECE: THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The progression of the digital transformation in Greece has been advancing at a dizzying pace lately, as a consequence of the pandemic, but also of the stormy initiatives of the Ministry of Digital Government. In the first half of 2021, 150 million electronic transactions were made (with a prediction that the total will be higher than 300 million by the end of 2021), while 1,300 services are now provided digitally through the digital portal gov.gr.

Following the vision, philosophy and goals of the Digital Transformation Bible, published in December 2020 by the Ministry of Digital Governance, it is noted that 155 of the 455 Bible projects are already underway, while major works have been auctioned by the organizations of the ministry. In fact, according to the European 5G Observatory, Greece is among the first countries to complete the procedures for the transition to the era of fifth generation networks.

The Ministry announced also a program of digital actions for the municipal units of the country, in order to make the municipalities of Greece "smart". The program has a total budget of 320 million euros, 90 million euros of which will come from the Recovery Fund and will be allocated to 16 municipalities in the country with more than 100,000 inhabitants and the Municipality of Trikala, while an additional 230 million euros will come through from the new National Strategic Reference Network (NSRF) and will be distributed in the remaining 315 municipalities of the country, depending on their population size.

In addition, an investment of more than 174 million euros concerns smart environmental and cultural infrastructure, including digital action for measuring and monitoring air and marine pollution, smart infrastructure for public buildings and the development of interactive digital services and content.

A 161 million euros project involves the development of a microsatellite network related to the provision of support to telecommunications services, mapping, spatial planning in shipping, agriculture and other sectors of the economy.

81 million euros goes for the Smart Bridges project, that will help strengthen the level of security and

reliability of infrastructure, through a framework for the dissemination and utilization of information with special measurement systems for the preventive maintenance of bridges.

In addition, the 5G wireless networks in the National Motorway Network is a 130 million euros project that will cover 2,011 km of the country covered by 5G antennas as a necessary infrastructure to be able to have autonomous vehicles such as trucks. A research conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Digital Government, showed that 5G may contribute up to 12 billion Euros to the GDP and yield up to 69000 new jobs.


Finally, to assist the digital transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises, more than 300 million euros will be channelled through specific programs covering topics from cybersecurity to the cloud.

Despite the fast progress the public sector is making on digitally transforming itself, it is expected that it will take at least one more year until the first phase of digital state building is complete. Its completion will upgrade the current infrastructure and will drive the public sector full throttle into the 4th industrial revolution.

In the last 12 months, a series of digital changes have already happened. MyHealth app is already giving citizens access to their own digital medical file with all the medical operations of the insured, which is linked to the electronic prescription. The citizen is having access to his personal file in the electronic prescription with what has been prescribed to him over time.

One of the highlights of the year for Greece was the development of a digital-first vaccination platform, that supports the overall vaccination strategy of its inhabitants. It is a platform that speeds up the vaccination process, ensures accuracy, saves time and shows how digitization can improve people's quality of life. It includes a central data warehouse that stores all data on vaccination shipments, the supply chain, appointments and vaccination centers, while also having a website aimed at the public, as well as an online booking platform where people can make a reservation, modify or cancel their appointments, an SMS notification service and a booking platform for pharmacists.

The Covid Free Gr Wallet app and the edupass.gov.gr platform are two more recent assets aiming to protect public health. Drivers can renew their license digitally. Transfers of cars and boats will be digital. Transfer of real estate will be simplified (the notary will draw the documents from a platform on his computer). Greeks abroad will declare births at a Special Registry. The way the public sector



worked for the organization of vaccination will be followed for the issuance of new pensions. The state is becoming digital and the citizen avoids the hassle.

The above changes and many more that will follow are closely associated to the unique 12-digit personal number that each citizen will obtain for his transactions in the public sector. When its technical application takes place (the number has already been passed in law 4727/20), citizens will no longer need to remember ID and TIN and AMKA numbers for their transactions.

For the time being, Taxisnet codes act as the “key” for citizens. In 2021, 57 additional public entities acquired the ability to use Taxisnet codes in order to provide citizens access to their electronic services. The total number of entities that identify citizens through Taxisnet now stands at 209. The corresponding number last year was 152.

The use of Taxisnet codes for citizens' access to e-services is a central strategy of the Ministry of Digital Government. In this way, the daily life of the citizens is significantly facilitated and the quality of the provided services is upgraded. The aim is for this feature to be expanded to as many services as possible. The 38 electronic services of Municipalities for information, service of citizens, management of requests, scheduling appointments, payments, management of debts and fees, welfare and babysitting, serve as great examples of the new online services that were given the ability to use Taxisnet codes as credentials in 2021.

Adding to the above, there were also 5 electronic services of the Land Registry launched for forest posting, submission of objections, user training, 4 electronic services of the Ministry of Education for enrollment in kindergartens, recruitment of deputies, digital care, apprenticeship, 3 electronic services of the Ministry of Justice for the management of court cases, distribution of decisions and certificates, intangible consensual divorce and 3 electronic services of the Ministry of Digital Government for the freedom pass voucher, KEP visit platform, training portal at gov.gr.

Taxisnet credentials are used in a unified and simple way in a wide range of services by a variety of public bodies. The identification service provides access to all electronic services in a uniform way, relieving citizens of the need for physical presence in the processes of institutions, reducing time-consuming commuting, waiting and unnecessary hassle for receiving services (e.g. issuance of certificates and attestations, submission of applications or statements, etc.).

The “citizen at the center” philosophy has been the basis for the design of the new digital services. This is probably the reason that the transition has been so well received by the community. It is also obvious that the services themselves are also built according to current trends: the new services are designed with an “agile” methodology. In other words, they are built and offered to citizens fully functional, but are still worked on in order to add features in the future.



THE STATE CAN -AND DOES- CHANGE

Kyriakos Pierrakakis
Minister of
Digital Governance

The cost of unnecessary bureaucracy preoccupied Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis when he started designing the new Ministry of Digital Governance in order to improve and simplify the services the state offers to the citizens via digital technologies. This was a perennial problem in Greece, reflecting a decades-long issue, sometimes reaching unbearable levels.

Our digital transformation strategy includes a series of actions in order to simplify processes and at the same time digitize them with the key aim being to improve the everyday quality of life of citizens and businesses. The pandemic accelerated our planning, making the digital services of the government readily accessible to the citizens, who embraced them from the first moment. The data speak for themselves. In 2018, digital transactions in Greece amounted to 8,800,000. They reached 150,000,000 in 2020, while this year we expect to exceed 300,000,000 digital transactions. It is an exponential increase, which highlights the fact that Greek citizens really welcomed this transformation.

In designing digital services, we are guided by two core principles which form the underlying basis. The first principle is that the planning is done from the point of view of the citizen. Contrary to what traditionally happened - not only in Greece, but also internationally - we focused on the citizen and not the state. The second principle is that our services are designed with an agile methodology - it means that you build the system iteratively and constantly improve it. Here, too, our philosophy runs counter to the traditional notion of times past, that is, ending up with a large, perhaps byzantine, products and systems that took years to complete and by the time you shipped them they were obsolete. We believe this is the new face of the state. Modern, reliable, flexible, with open horizons and respect for the citizens, their time and their quality of life.

Gov.gr is our central platform where everything happens. It launched with a collection of 501 already existing end-to-end digital services, which were scattered between different government portals often completely unknown to citizens.

In gov.gr, the services were categorized in proper taxonomies based on key life events, took a unified form and were presented to the citizens as the single face of the state. In essence, with gov.gr the state is re-established to the citizens as a user-friendly platform which is fast to use and simple to operate.

This is all just the beginning. In Greece there has been a digital leap and it's evident in the exponential growth in the use of digital services. However, we are still at the beginning of the exponential curve. We have had international successes, such as the vaccination system, which is a benchmark for many countries. We were also one of the first countries at European level to complete the 5G spectrum auction in a highly innovative way which now is, according to EU institutions, a "best practice." Part of the proceeds of the auction went to the establishment of the "Phaistos" Fund in order to, through the leverage of public and private resources, create an ecosystem for 5G. Research conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Digital Governance shows that 5G can contribute up to €12 billion to our national GDP and create up to 69,000 well-paying jobs.

Lastly, looking ahead, by using RRF funds, Greece will scale the entire digital policy, as already set out in the Digital Transformation Bible. Greece is changing, it is evident, and this is reflected in the potential to lead in key future sectors such as digital transformation, where by using the right policies and investing in human resources of both the private and public sector, it can make leaps and further grow the economy.



**DIGITAL
TRANSFORMATION
IN GREECE:**

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

For the fourth consecutive year, Foundation has shared a questionnaire with leading organizations in Greece, in order to map out how Digital Transformation is developing in our local ecosystem. This is an important survey which indicates strengths, weaknesses and opportunities worth pursuing. This year, the results have been indicative of the shifts taking place in the workplace due to the pandemic, the extent of digital acceleration that came as a result, as well as the challenges imposed by the new world of work and hybrid models.

A total of 89 executives responded to our call, predominantly from the 45-54 demographic (41.86%), with an average of 25 years of working experience, mostly in a managerial role (69%). The most represented industry was ICT, Banking and Consulting, with 57.14% of the respondents accumulating for Directorial & C-level posts. This profile offers an added value to the answers received, as we believe it reflects a good part of industry experts.

DIGITAL ACCELERATION AND THE ROLE OF THE PANDEMIC

Over the last two years and due to the pandemic outbreak, Digital Transformation has evolved from a trendy buzzword in corporate circles to a life jacket during the pandemic and to a new imperative for the following post-covid period. Data shows that Digital Transformation has been an integral part

in Greek businesses strategy since, for the fourth consecutive year, a significant percent (78%) of the businesses taking part in our survey claim that they run projects that include a DT scope or are part of a broader DT roadmap, and more than 70% of the respondents are actively involved into these projects. The pandemic had a major contribution to these outstanding statistics regarding DT uptake, as 97.7% highlighted that the pandemic accelerated their digital switchover efforts to some extent, while 93.8% reported the same in last year's survey.

Furthermore, the pandemic has triggered a cultural along with an operational shift in organizations in terms of digital transition. Resistance to change was the main factor slowing DT uptake in 2020 while this year they believe that this barrier was overcome due to the pandemic along with integrating new technologies. Digital acceleration and Operations are the most popular responses relating to the post-pandemic priorities of companies. Finally, participants correlate fast forward digital transformation with the positive outcome of a full pandemic fiscal year, reinforcing the fact that due to physical distancing and lockdowns, technology unfolded as the Holy Grail of modern businesses.

RESHAPING THE HUMAN CAPITAL

In the turbulence of volatility and disruption that organizations encountered this year, a mandatory

and inevitable need came to the surface: an innovative and tech-oriented workforce. One of the most notable transitions from last year's results is that more companies are creating a department dedicated to Digital Transformation and Innovation: whereas 54.17% claimed they have such a pertinent department today, in 2020, 58% responded they don't. Furthermore, the IT department along with a DT/Innovation Department have equally taken the role of implementing the digital transformation efforts of organizations, in contrast to last year when it was mainly the responsibility of C-level executives and upper management. This could mean that the upper management gave the directions in the beginning, but the respective departments are now more empowered to execute the needed strategy.

53% of the organizations in our survey hired new employees in roles related to innovation and/or Digital Transformation in 2021, which increased by 11% from 2020. In terms of personnel skillset, analytical and innovative thinking is the most important skill employees need to have in order to support an organization's Digital Transformation journey. The same answer prevailed in 2020's report. Nevertheless, only 50% of the respondents stated that they have taken part in an upskilling program in 2021.

All the above indicate a transition towards the development of technology and innovation specialized departments establishing an effort of proactiveness, but sometimes also reacting with random and general means available at the time, in order to survive and succeed in the modern business world.

ORGANIZATIONS AND WORKFORCE HAVE EMBRACED DT - MYTH OR TRUTH?

As mentioned, organizations and employees highlight that they have embraced DT and they are willing to take advantage of its benefits. But, is the meaning of DT entirely and correctly understood? At the question "What are the terms you mostly think of when you read Digital Transformation" a significant percentage of respondents correlated it with "Work from anywhere" while terms of emerging technologies (Blockchain, AR/VR) and innovation methodologies (agile, scrum) scored lower. This indicates the fact that new technologies and frameworks associated with DT and innovation are still not familiar, or even confusing, complex and sophisticated in people's minds. Consequently, it is of crucial importance for businesses to prepare for the next step: Adopt an innovation-driven operating model and culture and upskill and reskill the workforce, so companies and people can be acquainted with the preeminent purpose of DT

which expands way further than remote working and has more valuable applications.

On the question of what would mostly indicate the DT success of a company, most answers were related to productivity, fast decision making and lower costs. This implies that DT is often seen as a tool to optimize productivity, to respond to rapid changes and to increase profitability, not by revenue growth but by diminishing operational costs. Yet, organizations are still far from understanding the value of a concrete data-centered approach, since on the same question the efficient collection of data gathered only 14% of the responses.

THE ROLE OF DATA

Today, businesses have begun to make small steps towards the direction to fully integrate data into their processes and operations. The respondents believe that Big Data will be the most useful technology for 2022 and also the most advantageous along with cloud services. In other words, well-known technologies that can be implemented complementarily with current operational processes are more likely to be leveraged by companies, indicating once more that new, tangible and product-driven technologies like robotics and AR/VR haven't found a fertile ground yet. But how organizations use their data now, if at all? Usage of data for customer-centric purposes like improving the understanding of them and enhancing the customer experience ranked first, but also strategic and operational scope responses, like updating or designing company strategies and optimizing internal processes and operations scored high as well. Therefore, customer-centricity and operations are the main categories companies collect and use data for.

FINAL THOUGHTS - WHAT'S NEXT?

Digital acceleration is not a panacea nor an opportunistic aspect of the Covid-19 era but an established priority of corporations for the year to come, focusing mainly to operations optimization and equipping for rapid changes. The pandemic in combination with uncertainty and volatility in the business and economic environment have brought in the frontline two additional key variables: the opportunity for innovation and people transformation. Well-prepared individuals have demonstrated their value during the period of the health crisis but most importantly have become an imperative of the modern digital businesses. The first can act as an antidote to linear, passive and obsolete corporate strategies and cultures, while employee upskilling can be used as a vaccine to shield the immune system of businesses from unexpected and invasive disruptions.



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR THE GREEK SMB ECONOMY



Harris Tasiogiannopoulos

Business Development & Cloud Unit Director of Info Quest Technologies

In recent years (since 2014), European Commission has been monitoring the digital progress of Member States and even reflecting its results in its annual reports. These reports aim to record and measure the initiatives taken on (a) connectivity, (b) digital skills, (c) internet use, (d) digitization of businesses and (e) digitization of public services.

But what is the purpose of the above measurements?

Digital progress and the uptake of digital technologies are key economic factors that contribute to markets and economic development.

How Greece approaches Digital Transformation?

An indication of the importance, that Greece attaches to the digital economy as a means of economic recovery, is the fact that Digital Transformation is listed high in the recovery and resilience plan that was recently published in the context of Greece 2.0 report*.

Digital Transformation for SMEs. An opportunity not to be missed.

SMEs are the backbone of the Greek Economy and it is of critical importance for them to proceed towards digitalization and adoption of innovative technologies, thus becoming aligned with the demands of the 21st century united market, digital customers, and sustainability priorities.

Info Quest Technologies, member of Quest Group is leading the Greek ICT market for 40 years, playing a critical role in the dissemination of new technologies and the digital transformation of companies, enterprises and organizations. Together with its subsidiary Team Candi, Info Quest Technologies, today, considers mainly two areas for the Digital Transformation: a) Work Transformation and b) Cloud Transformation. **Work transformation** focuses on Process Automation,

worker enablement, digital upskilling of the workforce and Modern Workplace solutions while **Cloud Transformation** focuses on IT modernization, through the utilization of cloud resources and services. The combination of those two perspectives provides solutions in the full spectrum of any digital transformation journey. A journey that always starts with Questioning the As-Is and envisioning the To-Be.

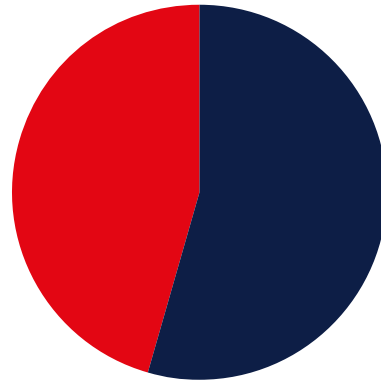
A series of solutions are built up to replace well-established legacy (As-Is) processes with digital, yet mature, solutions. A typical example of Work Transformation solution would be the **automation of internal approvals**. Those workflows, combined with e-Signatures, provide an end-to-end digital experience to the users. Info Quest Technologies has a turn key solution for the above cases. A typical example of Cloud Transformation project would be the accessibility of all organization's applications and files, outside the organization (from home) in a secure and uninterrupted way. Cloud migration is where the Transformation journey would begin for such cases; combined with PC Virtualization solutions, users may have the experience of Digital Office.

But the real challenge of any organization, is to minimize back office operations, that require data entry to multiple applications and user interfaces. Typical pain points for Accounting departments that employ full time resources to fulfill data entry tasks. In this area, work transformation can be really beneficial, through the robotics process automation solutions. Our highly skilled engineering team can support any organization on any of the above initiatives, envisioning and designing future's working environments.

* <https://government.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Greece-2.0-EL-31032021.pdf>

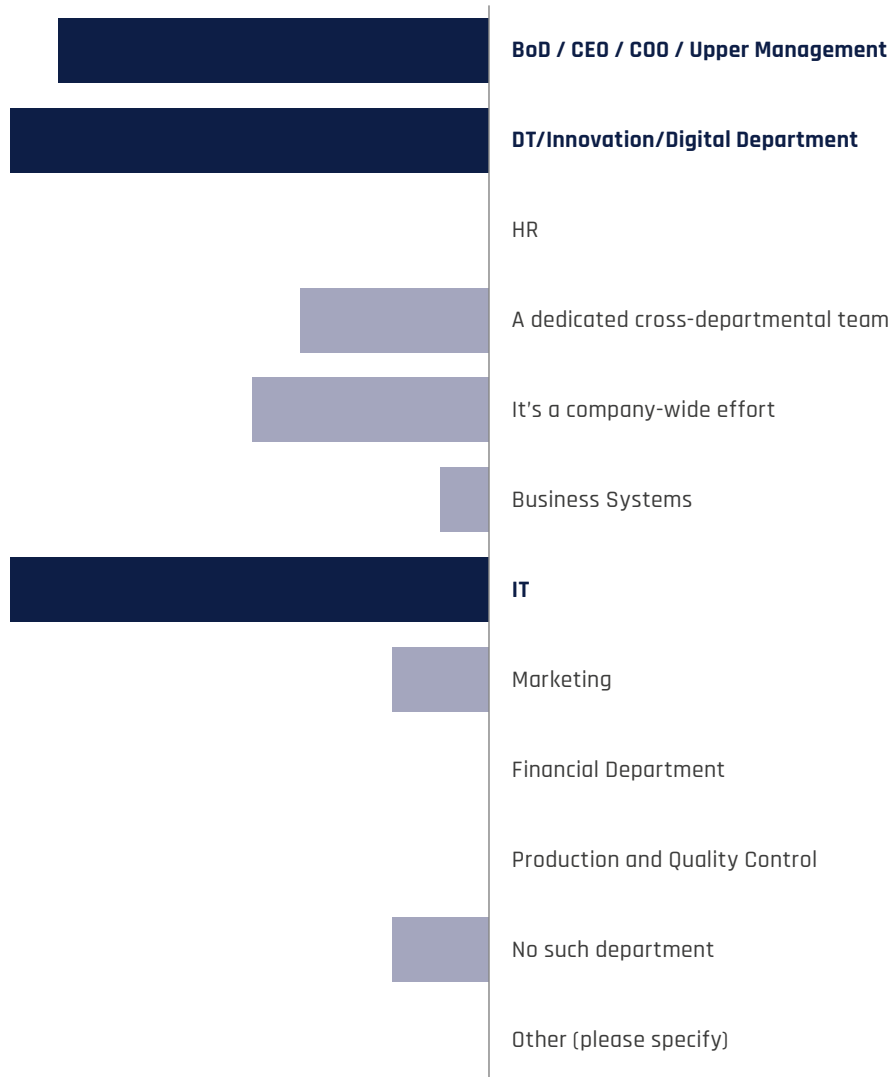
Q: Does your organisation have a department with its main role around Digital Transformation and/or Innovation?

45.83%
No

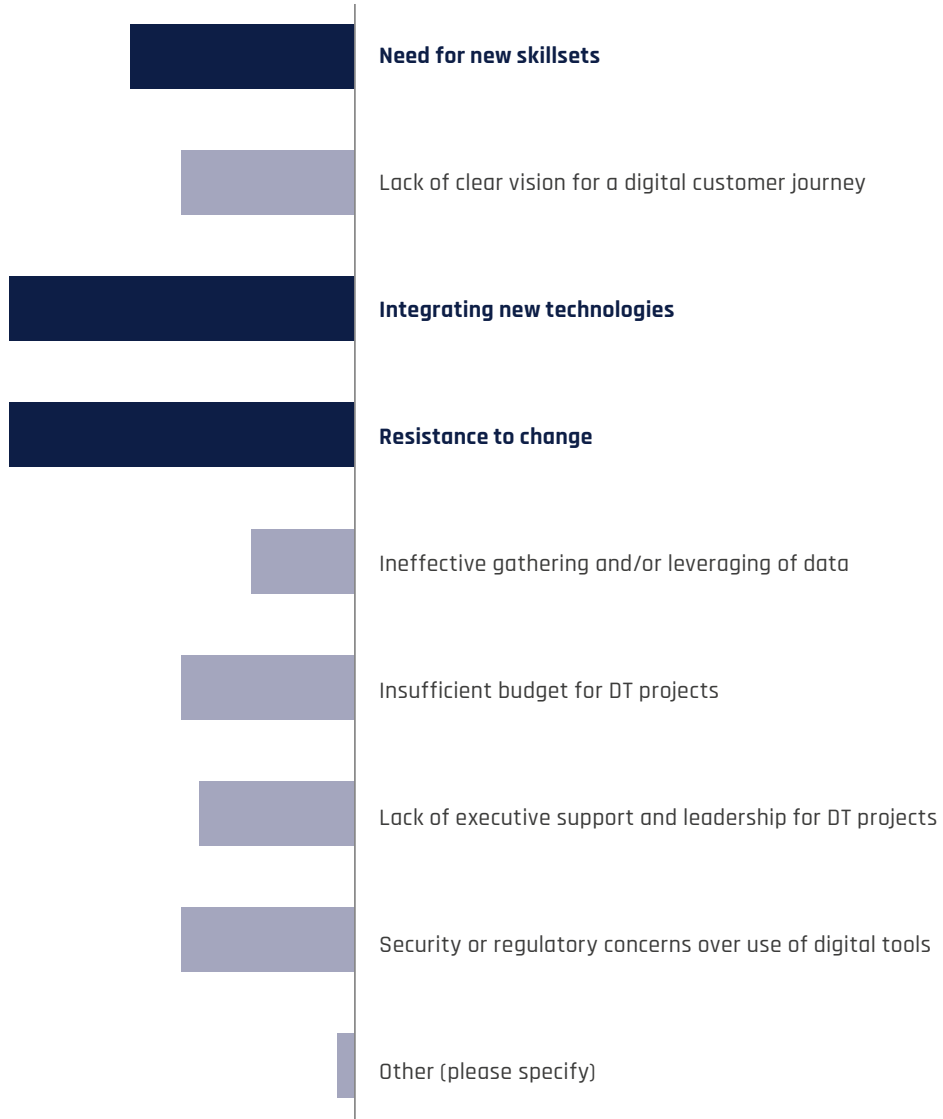


54.17%
Yes

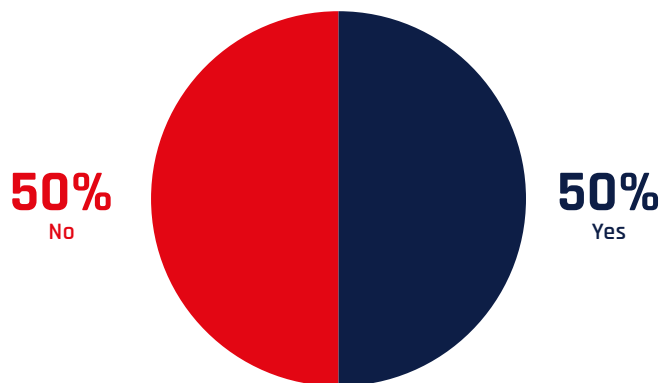
Q: Which department is mainly responsible for running and monitoring Digital Transformation projects?



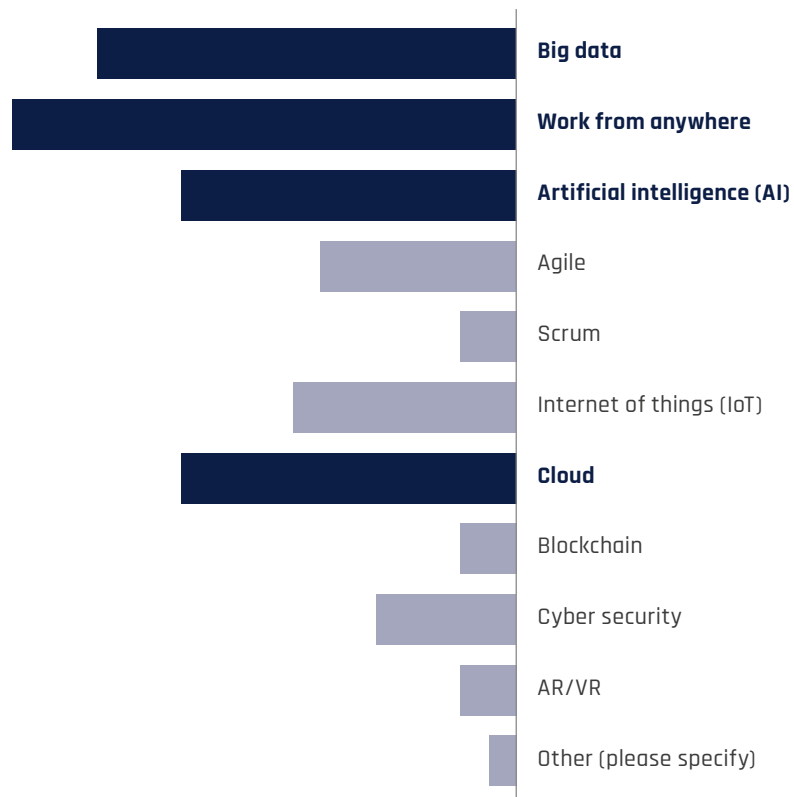
Q: In your opinion what are the most effective tactics to drive your organization's digital transformation journey?



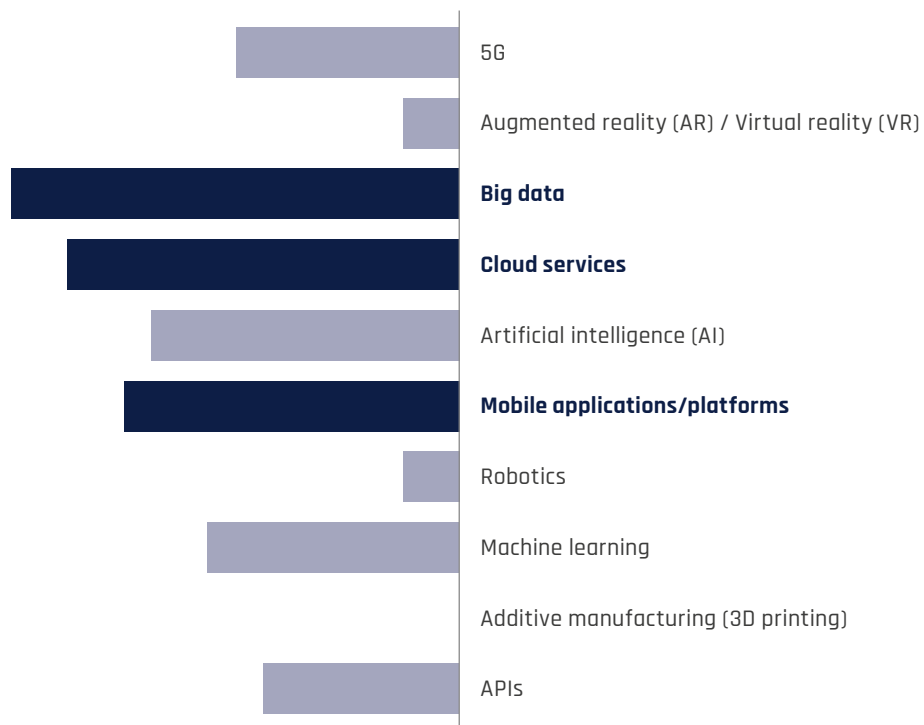
Q: Did you participate in any upskilling/training programs in 2021?



Q: What are the terms you mostly think of when you read "Digital Transformation"?



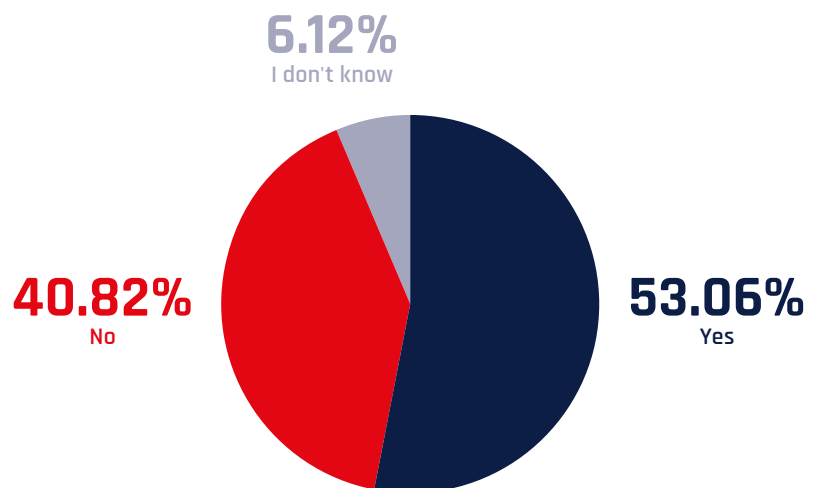
Q: What type of Digital Transformation technologies do you believe would be more useful to your company (or you would like to leverage in 2022)?



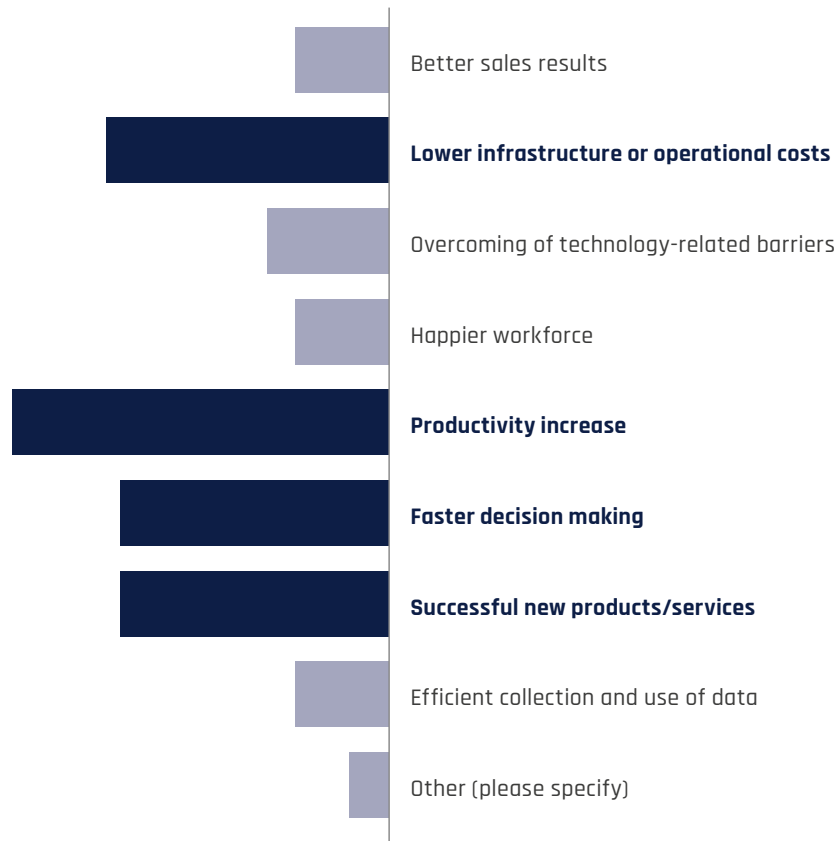
Q: Which of the following skills do employees need to have in order to support an organization's Digital Transformation journey?



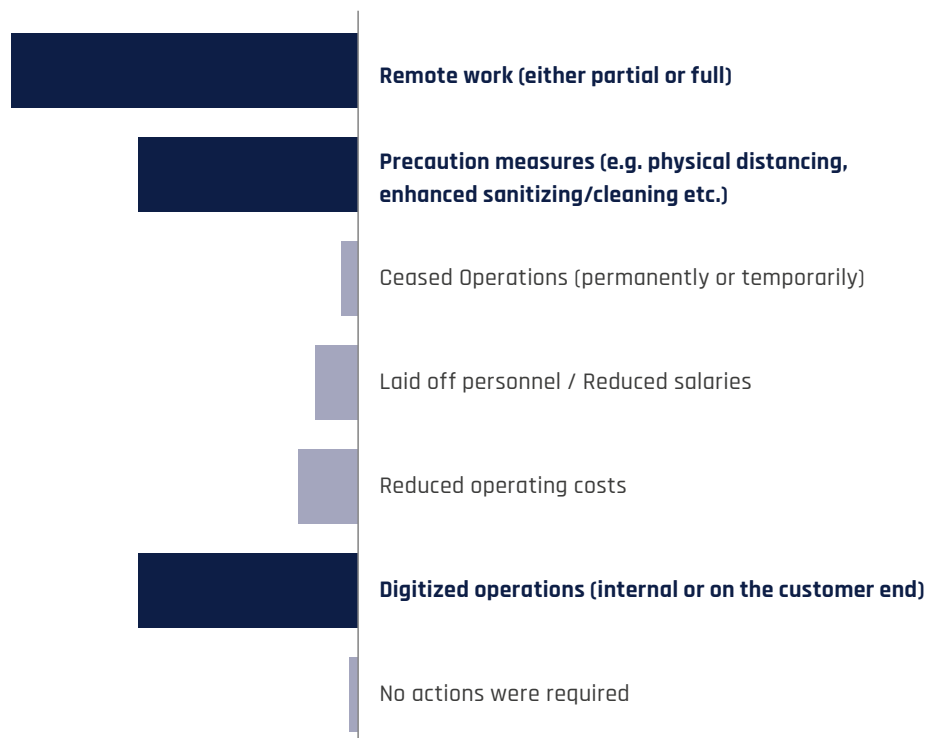
Q: Has the company hired new employees in roles related to innovation and/or Digital Transformation?



Q: What would mostly indicate the Digital Transformation success of your company?



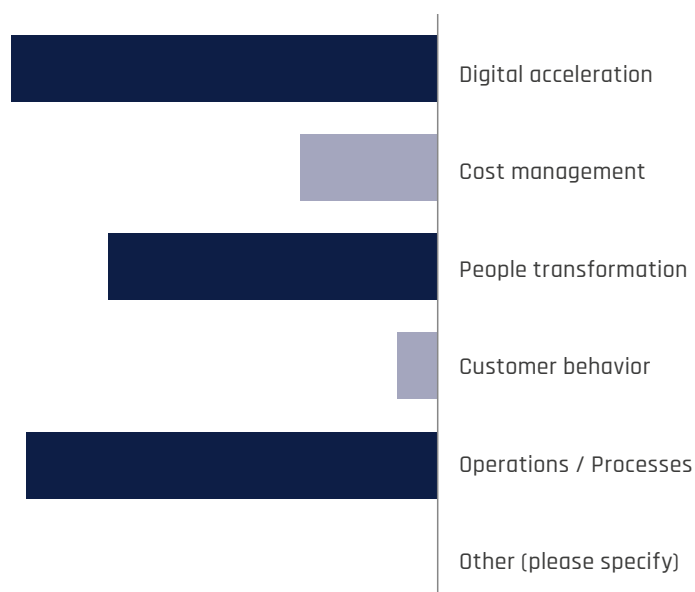
Q: What actions did your business take in response to COVID-19?



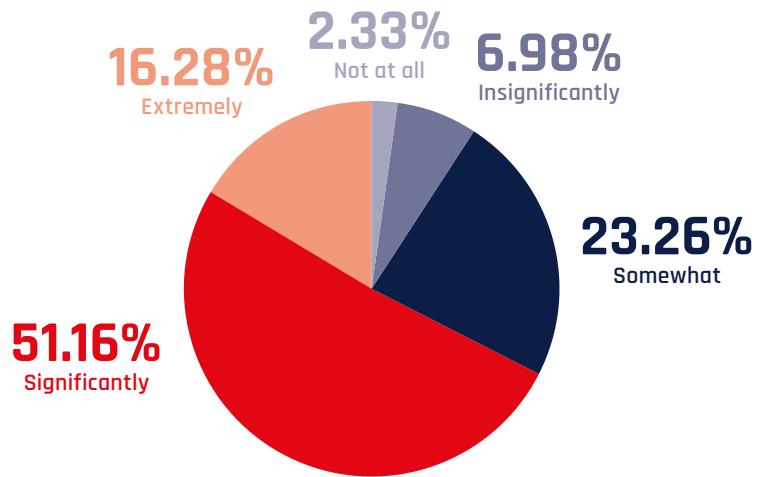
Q: How does your company use the collected data?



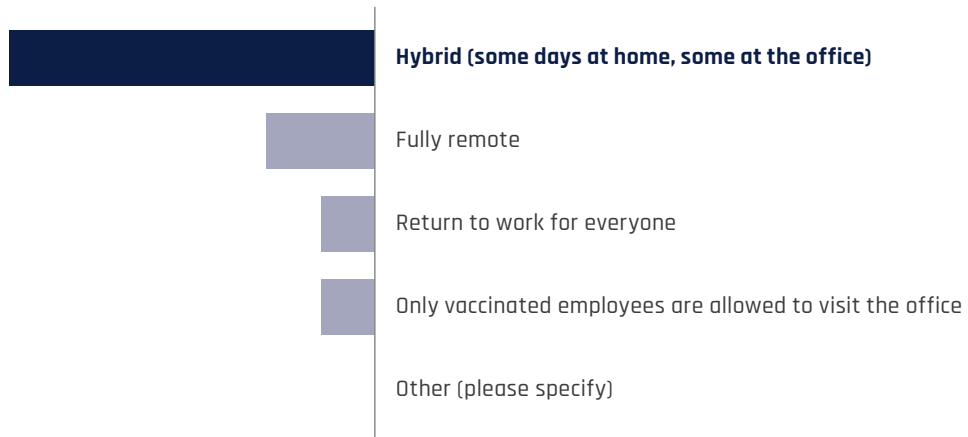
Q: Which do you believe should be the post-pandemic priorities of your company?



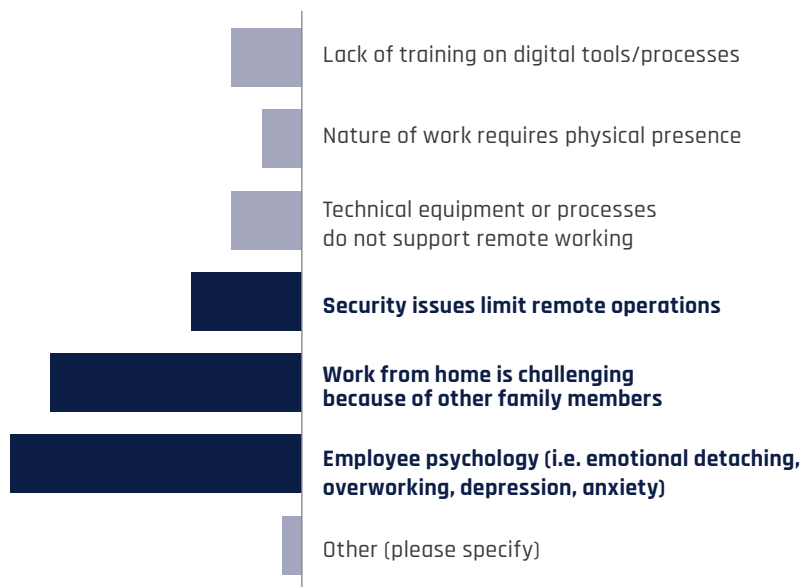
Q: To what extent did the pandemic accelerate the digital transformation efforts of your company?



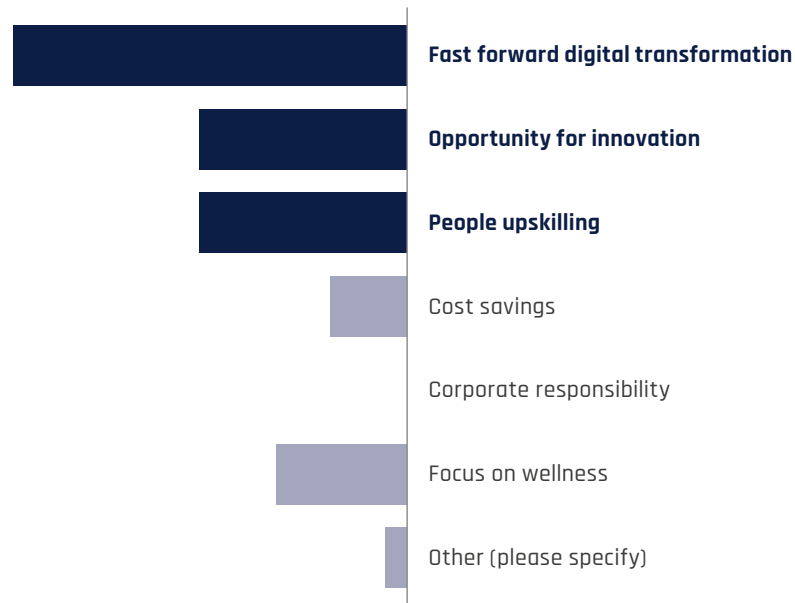
Q: What are the options provided by your organization for working?



Q: In your opinion, what are the most significant challenges in a remote-work environment?



Q: What are the positive outcomes of a full “pandemic” fiscal year?



Q: Has your motivation for work been affected? Why?





>70%
of the respondents are actively involved in DT projects of their organizations



But only
1 in 2 businesses
has a department with its main role around Digital Transformation and/or Innovation



Work from anywhere
is the most popular term when people think of Digital Transformation



Integrating new technologies and resistance to change
barriers were overcome due to the pandemic



Analytical & innovative thinking
is the most-needed skill



53% hired new employees in roles related to Innovation and/or Digital Transformation



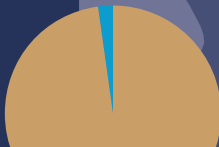
1 in 2 employees participated in an **upskilling** program in 2021.



Productivity increase
is considered the main indicator of Digital Transformation success inside companies.



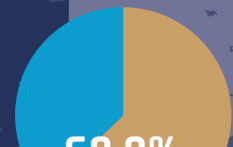
Big Data
is the most useful and promising technology to leverage in 2022



97.7%
claimed the pandemic accelerated the DT efforts



95.6% switched to remote working as in response to covid-19



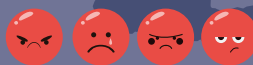
62.2%
of businesses provided hybrid working model as an option



Fast forward digital transformation, people upskilling and opportunity for innovation are the positive outcomes of a full "pandemic" year



Digital acceleration and people transformation are among the post-pandemic priorities



Negative effects on employee psychology

is the most significant challenge in a remote-working environment



Video call fatigue (46.7%) and stretched or irregular work hours (42.2%) affected employee's motivation for work while **22.2%** highlighted that their motivation hadn't been affected.

IN DISCUSSION WITH

Harry Tsavdaris
National Technology Officer
at Microsoft Greece, Cyprus & Malta



Q: How did Microsoft help companies, independent users (incl. students) and governments navigate the Covid reality?

Despite scientists' warnings and historical data that predicted the pandemic, the world was unprepared to tackle the situation. Although, we were unprepared, we were not unarmed. The lightning fast development of vaccines verifies this statement. The world was armed not only on the medical field but also equipped with the proper tools and infrastructures to deal with the economic, societal and entertainment disturbance caused by COVID-19. In this unfortunate setting, it was crystal clear that the public sector organisations were the least prepared, in terms of digital tools, culture and skills in order to cope with the pandemic. Especially unprepared was the Greek public sector after a decade of austerity and budget cuts. To everyone's surprise they were able to overcome the common obstacles, such as the lengthy procurement processes, lack of funds and triumph over the pandemic. The example of myAADELive.gov.gr, which allows taxpayers to arrange a meeting and conduct a video conference with a Tax Officer to examine their case, is indicative of the potential of the public sector when leadership and vision are matched with the delivery demand imposed by the pandemic.

Microsoft's tools and cloud infrastructure were and still are, at the forefront of this battle. During the first months of the pandemic, Microsoft onboarded thousands of companies, families, professionals to the Azure and Office365 platform. Public sector organisations are also migrate to Office365. Throughout, this on boarding which is a transformation journey, Microsoft had to adjust its delivery mechanism to the particularities of public sector organisations being more flexible and agile, while prioritizing public health. For example, to assist students, workers, professionals to access the digital opportunities Microsoft launched a Global Skilling Initiative aiming to skill and upskill 10 million people across the globe. For Greece, this program will be implemented through the #GRForGrowth -Azure Data Center in Greece project, and aims to skill and upskill 100.000 individuals.

Q: How easy is it for Public Sector to catch up with technological advancements on time, even if it has been sufficiently digitally transformed?

The question is whether the digital transformation momentum that was built in the Greek public administration during the pandemic will be maintained, and what are the future challenges. By reason of COVID-19, the exceptions on the procurement processes have been removed, so the systematic adoption of fast and agile procurement methods, focusing on large framework agreements is the answer. However, staffing will also be a significant impediment. The salary gap between public sector and private sector is substantial and it continues to widen. Finding the appropriate human resources in the areas of Cloud Architects, Data Engineers and Data scientists will be a bridge too far mission. Moreover, owing to the financial crisis, there have not been any hirings of IT Staff for the last ten years and the new cloud and artificial intelligence technologies have a steep learning curve. The transformative disruption that COVID-19 caused, might provide an opportunity to address these challenges. Offering remote working to individuals who do not aspire to a high caliber career but instead focus on family, may attract talented individuals.

Q: What is Microsoft planning for the future?

As the world slowly recovers from the pandemic, governments are re-evaluating the status-quo and rethinking about the future and what comes next. Hybrid work is here to stay, disruption of certain industries will be long geopolitics rapidly change. In this environment, Microsoft in Greece envisions its future through #GRForGrowth and the local data center. This is primarily, an investment on the brand of Greece as a future technology hub in the region. This opportunity should not be missed by the Greek public sector which must follow and lead the region as a paradigm of citizen oriented service delivery, cutting edge technology adoption and growth mindset.

IN DISCUSSION WITH

George Moschetas
Director of Product - Account & Services,
Kaizen Gaming (Stoiximan/Betano)



Q: What were the challenges imposed by the pandemic and how did you overcome them?

Where do I start? Tools? Infrastructure? Equipment? These are just some of the countless challenges we had to tackle. The biggest one though was not on the material side. The greatest challenge was to create the right conditions so that our people could continue performing and excelling as before, while also keeping the vibrant company culture alive and kicking.

How could we maintain our team spirit when we had to restrict access across all six offices (Athens, Thessaloniki, Lisbon, Bucharest, Berlin, Sofia) and our people had to work from literally 1000 different locations? At the same time, how could we remotely onboard more than 400 new employees since the start of the pandemic and still maintain our corporate culture?

For the first part, we had a bit of a jump start as we already had quite a few people working remotely even before the pandemic, so when we had to close our offices, we ramped up our procurement processes to equip each and every single employee with the necessary hardware that would allow them to work from anywhere equally effective as from an office. At the same time, we accelerated and strengthened remote ways of collaborating/communicating across teams and worked tirelessly to upgrade our tools.

For the second part, the not so tangible one, we established a Kaizen-wide initiative through which we committed to working as one team wherever we are. We revamped how we onboard people, how teams get to have fun and let some steam off, how we communicate our values via dedicated initiatives, and how we keep everyone informed through regular company-wide updates and open Q&A sessions. All this and much more, allowed our people to feel a sense of belonging and stick together as a team, same as we had when we were physically in the office before the pandemic.

And finally, let's not fool ourselves - the power of human adaptability came into play and we all got used to the new way of working (and living) that would have sounded unthinkable a couple of years ago. The fact that Kaizen has always been fast-paced and ever-changing, definitely helped us adapt a lot quicker.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

One of the things that has changed dramatically during this period is the way we work together.

First and foremost, we all found out that we can do much more than what was previously believed, from the comfort of our homes without having to commute to the office every day.

At the same time, we also found out that no matter how good Meet, Teams, Zoom, Jira, Slack etc. all are, nothing can replace human interaction. Holding physical meetings, face to face coffee breaks or casual discussions with colleagues, helps us connect better, increase collaboration and spread company culture. Coming to the office allows us to put boundaries, separate our work and personal lives and even helps some people fight anxiety and isolation.

So now that the world is gradually changing back and working hard to regain some of the pre-pandemic normality, we are faced with the challenge of keeping the best of both worlds - working remotely and working from the office - a hybrid model.

In this context, we are working to find the perfect hybrid recipe, the right tools and the right balance that will enable our people to retain a much needed flexibility, and at the same time have the necessary physical interaction and collaboration. It will not be an easy path - most organisations have a long-established tradition of working from the office and have only experienced remote working recently. Kaizen is a young organisation both in terms of history as well as average age; adaptability comes easy to us and we work quickly to adapt to the new reality and find the right balance that best fits our organisation.

To spearhead this effort, in 2020 and with the pandemic well underway, we committed that the hybrid model would be the basis for the construction of our new Athens Headquarters, expected to be completed in H2 2022. We are investing in building a state-of-the-art workplace with LEED Gold certification, a place with an energising atmosphere where Kaizeners will be able to thrive together!



KEY SUGGESTIONS

Our survey shows that Digital Transformation has been an integral part in Greek businesses strategy, growing steadily in the last four years. 97.7% highlighted that the pandemic accelerated their digital switchover efforts to some extent, with 65% of the answers ranging from “significantly” to “extremely”. People correlate fast forward digital transformation with the most positive outcome of a full pandemic fiscal year, but they feel exhausted by the side effects of WFH or hybrid work models. They recognize the need to acquire new soft skills, yet only 50% of them took part in an upskilling program in 2021.

Our survey also brings to light the fact that not every business understands the scope or value of Digital Transformation. DT is often seen as a tool to optimize productivity, to respond to rapid changes and to increase profitability, not by revenue growth but by diminishing operational costs. When asked what comes to their mind mostly when they read “Digital Transformation” a significant percentage of respondents correlated it with “Work from anywhere”, while terms of emerging technologies (Blockchain, AR/VR) and innovation methodologies (agile, scrum) scored lower. This indicates the fact that new technologies and frameworks associated with DT and innovation are still not familiar, or even confusing, complex and sophisticated in people’s minds.

It is of crucial importance for businesses to prepare for the next step: Adopt an innovation-driven operating model and culture and upskill and reskill the workforce, so companies and people can be acquainted with the preeminent purpose of DT which expands further than remote working and has more valuable applications.

People need to be given priority. Fresh talent, with up-to-date knowledge and new ideas needs to be brought into our organizations and integrate with the existing team. It is equally important to help the existing workforce acquire new skills but, first and foremost, to understand the possibilities, nuances and threats that digital technologies bring.

Skills such as creative thinking, adaptability, communication skills, entrepreneurial mindset and more are crucial, though one of the most important of them is maybe something that sits between the spectrum of hard and soft skills: The need to acquire an understanding of what changes technology can bring to our lives and our businesses. We have to put ourselves and people around us in the place of a constant learner.

Major shifts are brewing on the way we work. Managers will have to consider new realities. Being in touch with business and employee needs possibly requires a different skillset in order for a team to carry on functioning. Spaces should be designed for inclusivity, health, wellbeing and collaboration, employees’ work should be appreciated by result rather than office presence and public policy should find more appropriate ways to tax and provide incentives for work.

In all opportunities and changes we have witnessed during the pandemic, technology has been the enabler for allowing the world to carry on somewhat undisturbed. It can help us humans face this era as any other great catastrophe in our history: a catalyst for new mindsets, new ideas and innovation.

Colophon

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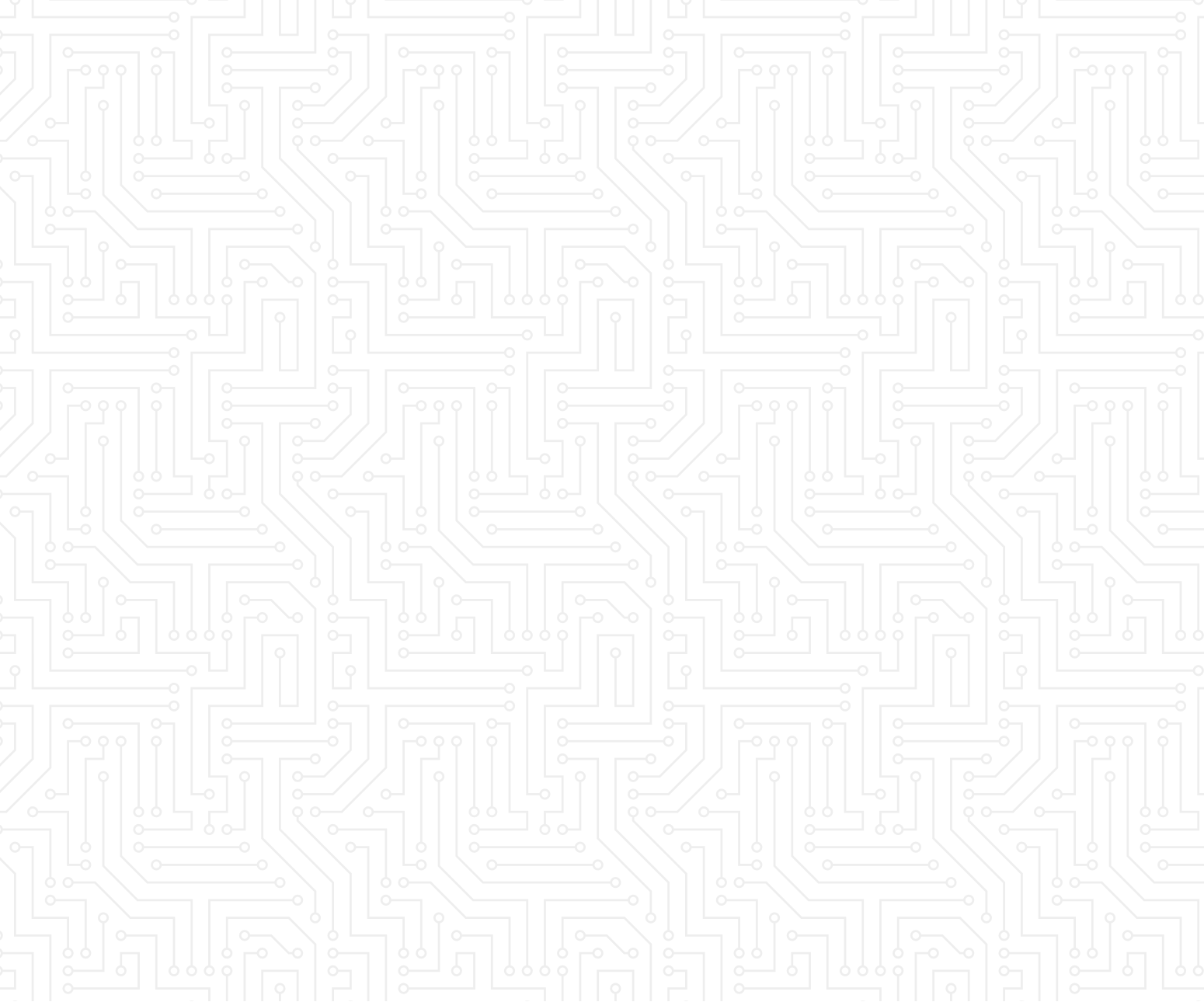
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