

Real impact for a better Europe

Microsoft YouthSpark



Young people have the economic and innovative potential to drive Europe forward. Their engagement and success in the labor market provide the catalyst for boosting Europe's economies and fostering competitiveness. But we are currently failing to equip Europe's youth with the skills to succeed.

Many young people are leaving education without having acquired the specific skills that employers really need. This includes ICT skills such as coding, which have applications across all professions. In its 2015 Work Programme, the new European Commission has highlighted as a priority its commitment to boosting digital skills and learning, as part of a broader investment in fostering a truly digital single market in Europe.

Empowering Europe's young people by providing them with high-level digital skills is part of Microsoft's commitment to helping youth build the future they want.

"My role is to show young people all the opportunities they have to be able to program and use their talents. I don't think I'm saving the world but I'm trying to empower people to do it."

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YouthSpark beneficiary, Junior developer and co-founder of Simplon

YouthSpark is Microsoft's global initiative which aims to create opportunities for 300 million youth worldwide, through a palette of education, job-readiness and entrepreneurship programs. If treated as a foundational subject like reading, writing or mathematics, computer science education in particular can unlock a world of opportunities.

YouthSpark's partnerships with key European youth organizations, government, industry and academic partners aim to provide training in advanced digital skills, to transform education with digital tools and learning platforms, and to support the EU's efforts to bridge the skills gap in the school-to-work transition – as outlined in the EU Youth Employment Package and the European Youth Guarantee.

Only by making digital skills accessible to all can we create more opportunities for young people to flourish and help them to reap the benefits of the digital economy.

Europe's Youth

1 in 5 young Europeans cannot find a job.
13% of young Europeans are not in employment, education or training.
In 2013, the estimated cost of youth unemployment was €153 billion.
The EU faces a shortage of 900,000 ICT professionals by 2020.

In the last two years, Microsoft YouthSpark has created 45 million opportunities for young people across Europe.



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Microsoft YouthSpark Programs

Microsoft YouthSpark brings together over 30 global programs that empower young people in Europe with access to technology resources and education, inspire them to create their own opportunities for success, and help them find a job or start their own business. A sampling of these is listed below:

Education

Microsoft Educator Network

This long-standing program provides professional development to government officials, school leaders, and educators to help them with new approaches to teaching and learning, using technology to help students develop 21st century skills. To date, more than 4.5 million teachers and students have been trained through the network.

Office 365 for Education

Office 365 is free for all students and teachers around the world and provides ready access to technology tools that power learning and collaboration: email, instant messaging, group video and voice chat, and online document viewing and editing. Over 19 million academic licenses have been assigned across European educational institutions.

Kodu Game Lab

Kodu lets people with no coding background create games on the PC and Xbox via a simple visual programming language. Kodu can be used to teach creativity, problem-solving and storytelling, as well as programming.

Kodu Game Lab has been used by 2.5 million European students, teachers and young people.

Skype in the Classroom

Skype in the Classroom is a free, global community connecting more than half a million teachers and students across Europe, to create shared learning experiences and bring a world of new ideas into classrooms everywhere.

Employability

YouthSpark Grants

Microsoft contributes to nonprofit organizations which serve young people in Europe by providing basic digital literacy skills training through advanced computer science education, and which help youth apply those skills to improve their lives and pursue tangible employment opportunities.

Over 6 million youth have accessed digital literacy training and support through YouthSpark Grants.

Microsoft IT Academy

Moving beyond school, this university and career-ready education program provides students with the 21st century technology skills necessary to acquire technical certification for today's rapidly evolving workplace. More than half a million students have been impacted by the program so far.

Microsoft Innovation Centers

This initiative provides state-of-the-art technology facilities to students, software developers, IT pros, entrepreneurs and academic researchers for collaboration and skills development. Over 56,000 students have already taken part in a range of Innovation Center activities, from training sessions, to workshops and lectures.

DigiGirlz

Addressing the need to keep young women excited about tech, more than 3,000 female secondary school students across Europe have taken part in DigiGirlz camps providing them with a chance to learn about careers in technology, to connect with Microsoft employees, and to participate in hands-on computer and technology workshops.

Entrepreneurship

Microsoft DreamSpark

This program provides free access to Microsoft designer and developer tools for students and educators around the world and helps advance the learning and teaching of key technical skills at a critical time in a student's development during secondary school and university. More than 5.5 million Europeans are using these expert tools to scale-up their tech skills.

Imagine Cup and Imagine Cup Grants

The world's premier youth technology competition provides an opportunity for secondary-level and university students to learn new skills and apply their knowledge and passion to develop technical solutions for some of the world's toughest problems. Imagine Cup Grants help the finalists bring their solutions to life. So far, over 13,000 competitors have taken part.

European AppCup

The European AppCup is a competition dedicated to start-ups and individuals who develop apps. The AppCup gives European students and youth an opportunity to compete with their own Windows apps in consumer, business or Microsoft CityNext categories. In 2014, over 250 SMEs and start-ups joined in to create their own business apps.

Microsoft BizSpark

BizSpark provides software startups with access to Microsoft software development tools and connections with key industry players, including investors, to help young entrepreneurs start a business.

Almost 7000 young people have benefited from BizSpark tools and resources in the last 2 years.



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