

## Powerful Trends

# THE CHANGING SOCIETY: HOW TODAY IMPACTS TOMORROW

As a responsible company, we keep a close eye on key societal trends that influence how we live and work, today and tomorrow.

### Environmental trends



#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Global warming has serious consequences for humans and the environment. The Paris Climate Agreement (2015) recognizes the **significant impact of corporates on the health of our planet**.

There is an urgent plea to limit harmful emissions, reduce our ecological footprint and to take bold steps in developing environmentally sound technologies, in order to reach the COP 21 target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level by 2030.

### Demographic trends



#### GLOBALIZATION

The steady progress of transport, telecommunications and international trade leads to a strong **globalization** and to a shift in the global power balance. The economic dominance of the West is being challenged by the East and South, with major implications for the position of Europe where **economic growth and job creation are under pressure**.

Yet Europe continues to attract migrants who for humanitarian, economic and geopolitical reasons are leaving their home country.

This leads in several European countries to political tensions and public debates on the **cultural and economic integration of the migrant population in the local community**.



#### BEING LOCAL

Despite the globalization, there is a **newfound appreciation for 'being local'**. Local communities flourish, grassroots organizations and citizens unite around common causes, close to home. These networks often grow into powerful voices in the public debate, thus having the power to influence governments and corporations bottom-up.

In this world, stakeholder engagement is no longer 'a nice to have'.

Localization also leads to new business models like the **sharing economy**, facilitated by technology platforms and digital applications.



## URBANIZATION

Today already over half of the world population resides in cities. In the next decades, the **growing urbanization** is expected to increase to 80 percent, creating new challenges in terms of livability, energy supply and mobility. Digital innovations play a crucial role in creating **smart cities** that offer a better quality of life. In Belgium too, regional and local governments, companies and research institutes are joining forces to shape the smart cities of the future. This is based on the constant connection of people, devices and objects, requiring high-performing networks and advances in big data technologies.



## AGING POPULATION

Our **society is aging**: the life expectancy increases while the proportion of elderly people in the total population is growing. This causes a strain on our health care and social security systems. **Digital applications** can offer a sustainable solution, both preventive and curative.

## Economic trends



## DIGITIZATION

Digitalization fuels **job creation and sustainable economic growth**. To exploit to a maximum the opportunities offered by the digital economy, **Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) competencies, creativity and entrepreneurship** are of vital importance. Governments and corporates need to partner up to strengthen these skills through **education and lifelong learning** initiatives.



## YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

**Youth unemployment** is a key issue in the digital economy and remains hard to tackle. Low education levels increase the risk of long-term unemployment. The potential to **train and activate Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) youngsters** and to guide them to jobs, particularly in the digital space, is tremendous. Governments, corporates and non-for profit organizations should join forces investing in scholar and extra-curricular training initiatives for youngsters and young adults that build a digital-savvy workforce.

## Technology trends



### FLUID LIVES

In a digital world, people adopt an **'always on' lifestyle**: they are connected at any time, any place and on multiple devices. People live **fluid lives** and have a **growing demand for speed and data**. The rise of data consumption requires telecom operators to invest continuously in the upgrade and modernization of their fixed and mobile network infrastructure.



### DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES INNOVATION

Underpinned by high-performant converged fixed and mobile networks, the digitization spurs the **emergence of new innovative, smart technology solutions** for both the consumer and business markets.

Today, many **technological applications** are leaving the realm of science fiction and are becoming reality in our day-to-day lives. Think about the **Internet of Things, augmented reality, virtual reality, self-driving cars and autonomous vehicles**.



### DIGITAL LIFESTYLE RISKS

While people live increasingly fluid lives, the risks related to digital, in particular in terms of **privacy, the protection of personal data and the prevention of data fraud** is also growing. Telecommunications and digital technology providers should take their responsibility and take appropriate actions to protect those who are vulnerable in the digital age.

Enabling and promoting a digital lifestyle should not jeopardize personal, human interactions, nor present a risk to people's well-being or health. It is the responsibility of the telecommunications and digital technologies industry to help people **find the right balance**.

Finally, digital technologies should also be **inclusive**, hence the need to invest in lifelong learning initiatives that sharpen the digital skills and competencies of all.