

Giga, the UN initiative to connect every school in the world to the internet, expands to 34 countries and ramps up activity at its Technology Centre in Barcelona

- A partnership between UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Giga's mission is to help achieve universal school connectivity by 2030, improving education for all and preparing young people for a digital future.
- The Giga team in Barcelona will climb to nearly 20 this year, establishing its position as a hub of expertise in developing cutting-edge open-source technology solutions for school connectivity.
- The Giga Technology Centre in Barcelona is gaining momentum thanks to the generous support of the Government of Spain, Regional Government of Catalonia and the City of Barcelona.



Group photograph with the experts and representatives of institutions who participated in the session organized today by Mobile World Capital Barcelona, at MWC, with the title 'Giga: recent milestones towards universal school connectivity'

Barcelona, February 27, 2024. Roughly half of the schools in the world are still without internet connection, a digital divide that puts disadvantaged communities at risk of falling further behind and hinders progress on the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Through public and private partnerships, and combining UNICEF's expertise in education and procurement and ITU's in policy and regulation, Giga is narrowing that divide. Since 2019, the initiative has supported increased access to connectivity for 13,400 schools, benefiting approximately 6.74 million students. Giga's impact and next steps were presented today at the MWC Barcelona in an event organized by Mobile World Capital Barcelona.

Barcelona's Growing Role

The Giga Technology Centre in Barcelona opened in the summer of 2022 with the support of the three tiers of government — Spain, Catalonia and Barcelona — and a shared commitment to the Giga mission. Located in the city's burgeoning tech district, the centre is home to data scientists and engineers who have developed open-source technology solutions to help governments connect schools to the internet efficiently, affordably and sustainably. This year the Giga Technology Centre will intensify activity on new technological products and co-creation projects together with local universities, research centres and hi-tech companies. The centre will serve as a springboard for innovation for both Giga and the local tech ecosystem.

High-Level Panel and Giga Day

Representatives of the institutions behind the Giga Technology Centre took part in the session organized by Mobile World Capital Barcelona on the 27th of February, titled "Giga: Recent Milestones Towards Universal School Connectivity." The attendees were (in order of speaking) **Eduard Martín**, CIO of Mobile World Capital Barcelona; **Doreen Bogdan-Martin**, Secretary-General at ITU; **Kitty van der Heijden**, Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships at UNICEF; **Alex Wong** Giga Co-Lead ITU; **Chris Fabian**, Giga Co-Lead UNICEF; **Antón Leis García**, Director, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), Government of Spain; **Liliana Arroyo Moliner**, Director General for Digital Society, Department of Business and Labour, Generalitat de Catalunya; **Michael Donaldson**, Director General, Fundació Barcelona Institute of Technology for the Habitat, Barcelona City Council, and **José María Vera**, UNICEF Spain Executive Director

In her remarks at the session, **Doreen Bogdan-Martin** emphasized the role of multistakeholder cooperation, and the unique position of Giga within the UN: "The cooperation Giga fosters between governments and industry, and among ITU and UNICEF, is what makes things possible in the communities we are targeting. Giga stands out, not just as an initiative, but as a lasting commitment to closing the education gap and digital divide."

Kitty van der Heijden, Deputy Executive Director of Partnerships at UNICEF said: "The digital divide is a significant barrier to equality in education, and initiatives like Giga are crucial in bridging this divide. Providing internet connectivity to every school, particularly in underserved regions, is not just about access to information; it is a testament to the power of collaboration and innovation in order to level the playing field in giving every child, regardless of their background, the opportunity, tools and resources to thrive and succeed in a rapidly evolving world."

According to **Eduard Martín**, CIO of Mobile World Capital Barcelona: "Mobile World Capital Barcelona and Giga share a common challenge: To tackle the digital divide and use technology to ensure digital inclusion." He added that "today a majority of professional roles require a basic level of digital skills and we cannot leave anyone behind."

On the 1st of March, the Giga Technology Centre will host **Giga Day** at Ca l'Alíer in Barcelona, an event that will gather over 70 participants from the Spanish tech and innovation ecosystem, along with representatives from countries where Giga is working to promote their school connectivity targets.

About Mobile World Capital Barcelona

Mobile World Capital Barcelona is a public-private foundation that promotes the digital development of society to build a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable future through the humanistic use of technology. MWCcapital contributes to the positioning of Barcelona as a global benchmark in the digital field and consolidating MWC's legacy throughout the year by promoting initiatives in the field of technology transfer, the promotion of digital talent, the development of innovative technological projects with social impact and the generation of knowledge. MWCcapital hosts MWC in Barcelona, is the founder of 4YFN and connects citizens with the latest digital trends through Jump2Digital and Tech&Play.

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