

The challenge of digitization



Carlos Valdez, former Communications Minister of the MTC, argues that new technologies should contribute to achieving a country with greater social welfare, more competitive and that ensures equal opportunities.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are an essential pillar of the development of any country. Unfortunately, Peru is lagging behind the region in the ICT development index. However, progress has been made in the process of digitizing the economy and society, both in the public and private sectors.

The discussion table on this subject was in charge of the then Vice Minister

of Communications of the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC), Carlos Valdez Velásquez-López, who spoke about the country's challenges in this area. The discussion table "Challenges of digitization towards 2021" allowed a fruitful exchange of ideas, focusing on the pending agenda for digitalization in Peruvian society. Former Vice Minister Valdez began his dissertation by noting that Peru has a pending agenda in the use of ICT. In comparison with other countries in the region, our country has

a low level in the ICT development index. This indicator takes into account the progress in three areas: access, capacities and use, the latter being the one that explains our greatest comparative disadvantage. According to Valdez, this happens due to the existing gaps in education - especially higher specialized education - and the low level of innovation, which profoundly affects the competitiveness of the Peruvian economy in an increasingly digitalized world.

1/ The main presentation of this event was given by the ex-Communications Minister of the MTC, Carlos Valdez Velásquez-López. Panelists: Alejandra Sierralta, former commercial director at Chazki; Dennis Fernández, Vice President of Strategy, Regulation, Wholesale Business and Digital Transformation of Telefónica; and Sergio Pancorbo, director of Digital Transformation in the Ministry of Production (Produce). The event was moderated by Angélica Matsuda, manager of the initiative for the digital economy Peru D.

To reduce this gap, Valdez stressed the need to have both institutions with greater skills in promoting the use of ICT, and to improve our telecommunications infrastructure. These goals have already been assumed as a State policy in the National Agreement, and goals such as the promotion of universal access to ICTs and the use of ICTs to strengthen governance and democracy are recorded. In this regard, the creation of the Vice Ministry of ICT has been proposed as an evolution of the current Vice Ministry of Communications.

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The former vice-minister recalled that digitalization and progress in the use of ICT should not be seen as an end in itself, but that new technologies should contribute to achieve a country with greater social welfare, which is more competitive and ensures equality of opportunities. Hence the importance of having a space such as the Permanent Multisectoral Commission (Codesi) for the Information Society, which carries out a coordination and collection of initiatives from the public sector, the private sector, academia and civil society, through different Work tables.

One of the main tasks of the Codesi, explained Valdez, is to follow up the work of the Development Plan of the Information Society in Peru-Digital Agenda Peruana 2.0, the public policy plan of information and communication technologies (TIC), and generate a new and updated digital agenda. Among the advances in infrastructure that have been developed for the digital sector, as one of the objectives of said commission, he

mentioned the National Fiber Optic Backbone Network, in addition to 21 regional infrastructure projects with broadband technology, which will gradually benefit to millions of Peruvians. The former vice-minister explained that there is also progress in the field of emergency communications, such as the Early Warning Messaging System (Sismate) and the Emergency Communications Network (Recse), among authorities. He also mentioned the National Broadband Policy, a strategy that aims to improve both the supply -especially in infrastructure and the provision of services- and the demand - promoting the use and development of digital content - of the digital ecosystem.

DIGITIZATION AND CITIZEN VOICE

Angelica Matsuda, manager of the initiative for the digital economy Peru D, recalled that it is the man in the street, the ordinary citizen, who has become the protagonist of the digital world. The emergence of new digital technologies



Promoting access to information technologies is essential to strengthen governance and democracy.

is giving citizens different platforms to be heard and receive feedback, encouraging the participation of the population and generating a "citizen awakening", as has been seen in several initiatives that have spread rapidly through of the networks -as in the case of # NiUnaMenos-. According to Matsuda, the increase in access to information has allowed an important transfer of power to the citizen to influence public policies. The Peru D initiative, led by Matsuda, seeks to coordinate efforts so that citizens acquire grea-

"It is the man of the street, the ordinary citizen, who has become the protagonist of the digital world. The emergence of new digital technologies is providing the public with diverse platforms to be heard and receive feedback, encouraging the participation of the population and generating a citizen awakening".

ter awareness and responsibility for this leading role. In a first version, Peru D has been involving citizens with proposals for the creation of digital solutions to social problems of high priority.

Alejandra Sierralta, at that time commercial director in Chazki, parcel company that incorporates the tracking service and started as a digital start-up, highlighted that for a country like Peru, where the labor market is still incipient in this sector, human resources can be a challenge in the development of ICT. For her, developing in-house talent is a more effective option than bringing the talent already formed from other parts of the private sector. "It is important to train new generations, both in corporations and in start-ups. It is essential to learn and get the best out of both," he said. Sierralta shared the experience of Chazki in the training of workers in the digital sector, which was done through the Chazki Academy. In his opinion, the know-how required to get involved in these types of companies is easier to acquire in the day-to-day experience.

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION

Dennis Fernandez, Vice President of Strategy, Regulation, Wholesale and Digital Transformation of Telefónica, said that the massive information management is a challenge that, if exceeded, could bring highly profitable results. These would not be limited to greater benefits for the private sector, but would also reach users and the State. "The management of big data could allow us a huge evolution in the way we have been managing information, especially in its application for public policies," he said. He also spoke about the security and value of information, about which, he said, he expects an increase in citizen awareness of its importance. "My vision is that in the very short term we are going to start, citizens, State and companies, to think better what we are doing with our personal information". In addition, he indicated that this would happen to the extent that users are realizing the amount of data they provide in exchange for the use of certain popular applications, and how valuable this information is for digital companies.



An essential point of the discussion was the role and challenges of the citizen as the axis of the digital world. From left to right: Dennis Fernández, Alejandra Sierralta and Sergio Pancorbo

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DIGITAL STATE

Sergio Pancorbo, director of Digital Transformation in the Ministry of Production (Produce), said that while the digital approach is a recent issue and the ground to be explored in public policies is still quite broad, there is a commitment in the Government to promote the use of these new technologies. Pancorbo announced the policies that the State is taking, from Produce, to favor the transition to digital schemes in large and small companies. These policies, he said, are mainly oriented towards training and the

provision of tools for entrepreneurs. In this sense, Produce has launched Kit Digital, a platform to help entrepreneurs who want to start the process of digitalization, and which connects potential users with existing resources in the market, mainly thanks to their digital allies in the private sector.

Regarding digital transformation in Peru, Pancorbo explained that this process varies greatly from sector to sector. The advance in digitalization has been greater in areas that are more used by the public. This happens, for example, in entertainment, tourism and personal banking, sectors in which there is a strong appearance of mobile applications and web platforms, among other digital tools. However, not all sectors have had the same facility to get involved in a digital transformation. Pancorbo assured that for Produce it is key to understand that the transition will be different in each sector and this will depend largely on the needs of its users. Based on this understanding, Pancorbo said, the ministry offers training opportunities and connections for companies of all types and from all sectors.