

Press release

Carlos Grau: “We are facing a digital emergency that could help us mitigate the effects of the climate emergency”

The CEO of Mobile World Capital Barcelona has given a lecture to students at the UIC Barcelona Faculty of Business Administration and Management

In his talk, Carlos Grau informed his audience that, in recent years, the speed of implementation of new technologies and their impact on society has been underestimated

“Digitisation has become a crucial phenomenon in terms of education and in accessing many basic services, and we run the risk of leaving many people behind”, he said

Barcelona, 10 February 2022. Carlos Grau, CEO of Mobile World Capital Barcelona, co-organisers, alongside the GSMA, of the Mobile World Congress, points towards the need to anticipate the social impact of new technologies as the most important challenge facing the digitisation of our society. He made this statement during a lecture given to students from Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at UIC Barcelona, as part of the Corporate Governance Entrepreneurship subject, which is directed by lecturer Juanjo Marín.

In his talk, Carlos Grau highlighted the importance of addressing digital transformation without ignoring past mistakes regarding issues of governance, privacy, data protection and inclusion. “In the past, the speed of implementation of new technologies and their impact on society has been underestimated. Digital inclusion is one of the biggest challenges we are facing today. We are facing a digital emergency that could help mitigate the effects of the climate emergency”, he stated.

He explained how in Europe, around 15% of the urban population lacks knowledge, technological devices or an internet connection, which rises to around 30% in rural settings. “Matters that were previously optional are now crucial. For example, digitisation has become a crucial phenomenon in education and in access to many basic services, and we run the risk of leaving many people behind”, he stressed.

In this regard, Grau called for the necessary collaboration between the public and private sectors to tackle the social impact of digitalisation and mentioned the Digital Future Society initiative as an example, a global programme promoted by the Mobile World Capital Barcelona to promote technological humanism, and the Mobile Week programme to train vulnerable people how to use new digital technologies, which, as he explained, has already benefited more than 70,000 individuals in Spain.

“Ultra-fast transformation” of the job market

As part of his talk, Carlos Grau also analysed the “ultra-fast transformation” that the job market is undergoing due to the progressive digitisation of society. As he explained, in Spain alone, 13% of employees already work for digital platforms. “The demand for digital talent continues to grow and Barcelona alone already has more than 15,000 jobs in the digital sector and around 1,500 start-ups, making us one of the most important digital hubs in Europe”, he said.

According to him, this transformation of the job market also means anticipating future risks related to the social impact of new technologies and the desirable and sustainable model in key issues such as data governance, artificial intelligence ethics, the digital divide, etc.

To illustrate this, he spoke about Silicon Valley, the world's largest technology centre that houses some of the world's most important digital companies. “The Silicon Valley model is

Press release

now being questioned due to its huge impact on society. Currently, 30% of children attending public school in the city of Palo Alto live in caravans. This is because, as start-ups and digital unicorns mushroomed, unskilled jobs were destroyed. Middle-class families were forced to leave the city due to the drastic rise in living costs, widening the economic gap between higher and lower-income households. We have to ask ourselves whether this is the model we want for the future”, he said.

As a counterpoint, he cited the European model as an example, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. “Empowering people on issues related to digital transformation is the future model. The debate on sustainability and social impact is a necessary part of the discussion on digitisation”, he concluded. In this sense, legislative initiatives developed by the EU or the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can set a precedent for establishing the legal bases in accordance with the new reality.

About UIC Barcelona

The Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC Barcelona) opened its doors in 1997 with the objective of offering quality university education and promoting research that benefits society. Linked to the business world and with a strong international outlook, it offers 16 bachelor’s degrees, 8 double degrees, around thirty international double degrees and a broad range of postgraduate programmes across two campuses, located in Barcelona and Sant Cugat del Vallés.

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