



## **Welcoming Speech by the President of the Catalan Government on the eve of the Mobile World Congress**

*Barcelona, 26 February 2017*

It is a pleasure to welcome you again to this edition of the Mobile World Congress. On behalf of the Government of Catalonia, I would like to thank and congratulate GSMA for continuous success and to Fira de Barcelona for making it possible.

Mobile technology has become one of the most disruptive technologies. The numbers are clear: there are 7.9 billion mobile telephones in the world; that is, more mobile phones than people, and the numbers keep growing worldwide.

Catalonia is no different: Today, 97% of its population has access to a mobile phone, and smartphone sales grew by 13% in the last year.

The economic multiplying effect, due to the applications and related technologies, translates into an ICT industry that creates more than 120,000 jobs in Europe each year.

Despite the good employment perspectives, there is a shortage of workers and it is estimated that by 2020 the European economy will be in need of 900,000 qualified professionals.

Essentially, we don't have enough students pursuing studies in science, technology, and engineering and math. We know this and we are facing this challenge head on. That's why next Tuesday my Government will launch STEMcat; a program to encourage school-age boys and girls in this direction. Catalonia is and will be an active actor in this sector.

The Catalan program is in line with the actions of other nations and the MWC organization itself, which this year has added the Youth Mobile Festival. 20.000 students between the ages of 10 and 16 will have a unique opportunity to get closer to the newest technologies.

What's encouraging is that half of the participants are girls. All countries keep facing the challenge of more women entering jobs in this sector. Last year only 21% of MWC's attendees were women.

GSMA is also attentive to this fact and has introduced the Women4Tech, a summit focused on reducing the gender gap and the ways to empower women in the mobile industry.

Catalonia and Barcelona, the mobile world capital, enjoys a healthy ICT sector with a very strong tech industry consisting of 13,000 companies and a turnover of 14 billion euros.

Many global companies keep choosing Catalonia to expand their digital business, from 3D printing to intelligent logistics management systems, or augmented reality, robotics and cloud computing.

The European Commission is fully committed to new technologies and so is Catalonia. The Mobile World Congress is fundamental for our nation to position ourselves as an international reference in the use of digital technology. For example, being one of the 5G global testing hubs.

All the benefits of actively taking part in this technological revolution go beyond the ICT sector as innovation, competitiveness and internationalization reinforce each other: nearly 60% of Catalan innovative companies export internationally, the number jumps to 90% for the industrial sector.

We have the assets, the talent and the capability to successfully face the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly connected society.

I would like to welcome you to a Smart Country at the forefront of the current digital revolution.

Let's continue making Catalonia an excellent host to the more than 100,000 people who will be visiting us this week.

Let's continue working together in connecting the world.

Thank you very much.

**Carles Puigdemont Casamajó**  
President of the Government of Catalonia