

Releasing the Global Innovation Index 2014: Nurturing the Essential Human Factor in Innovation



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We are pleased to present the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2014. This year, the theme of the report is the ‘Human Factor in Innovation’. The GII 2014, in its 7th edition, is again co-published by Cornell University, INSEAD, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO, a specialized agency of the United Nations).

The GII recognizes the key role of innovation as a driver of economic growth and well-being. It aims to capture the multi-dimensional facets of innovation and to be applicable to developed and emerging economies alike. In doing so, it helps policy makers and business leaders move beyond one-dimensional innovation metrics towards a more holistic analysis of innovation drivers and outcomes.

Over the last seven years, the GII has established itself as a leading reference on innovation. When launching this same report last year, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed that the GII is a ‘unique tool for refining innovation policies ... for providing an accurate picture on the role of science, technology and innovation in sustainable development’, and for assessing where more efforts are urgently needed.

We like to think of the GII as a ‘tool for action’ for decision makers with the goal of improving countries’ innovation performances. Numerous workshops in different countries have brought innovation actors together around the GII results with the aim of improving data availability, boosting the country’s innovation performance, and designing fresh policy actions that are targeted for effective impact. These exchanges on the ground also generate feedback that, in turn, improves the GII.

The theme of this year’s GII, the ‘Human Factor in Innovation’, explores the role of the individuals and teams behind the innovation process. Statistically capturing this human contribution to innovation is a daunting challenge. Even more complex are the challenges faced by all those who try to properly nurture the human factor in innovation.

Great efforts have been made to foster the availability of scientists and engineers in the developed and the developing world alike. But important gaps remain between rich and poor countries. Top talents continue to be scarce, and they cluster and grow around top infrastructure and institutions. Still, the availability and mobility of human capital worldwide has changed for the better in the past two decades, and with it the geography of innovation.

Workers with advanced degrees are an essential starting point for innovation. Yet their existence does not guarantee scientific or technological breakthroughs or other forms of non-technological or social innovations. Creative and critical thinking, and the appetite for taking risks and thinking entrepreneurially, often matter at least as much as technical qualifications. In addition, innovation is spurred by having favourable conditions in which actors and society are open to new approaches.

Putting the right environment in place that will nurture, promote, and enable the human factor behind business and social innovation is a complex task, but a critical one. There are many strands of action in the field of education, training, and skill formation; in collaboration; in the diffusion of knowledge; and in other areas, as described in this report. A particularly interesting issue concerns implementing new policies to help developing and developed countries retain, involve, or attract talent, sometimes by involving their skilled diaspora abroad in national innovation activities. A few developing countries have put these approaches into practice, generating lessons that can be refined and applied elsewhere.

This year the changes to the GII innovation framework are less numerous than in recent years. This is a sign of the increased stability of the measurement framework. At the same time, the journey to more effective innovation measurement is far from over. The GII team continually tests the model for relevance to better reflect an improved understanding of innovation. Thus the GII is both a user of novel innovation metrics and an effective ‘demandeur’ for further measurement exercises.

We hope that the collective efforts of all members and users of the GII project will continue to pave the way for better innovation policies around the world. We thank our Knowledge Partners in 2014, the Confederation of Indian Industry, du, and Huawei as well as our Advisory Board Members for their support.

Soumitra Dutta

Dean, Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University

Francis Gurry

Director General, World Intellectual Property Organization

Bruno Lanvin

Executive Director, European Competitiveness Initiative, INSEAD