



Press release

ESSEC Business School publishes the 2nd edition of its Digital Disruption Matrix

Key takeaways: US dominance in AI, Chinese advance in robotics, and European quantum advantage

Cergy, sept. 7, 2026 - [The Digital Disruption Chair](#) at ESSEC Business School has published the 2026 edition of its Digital Disruption Matrix. This annual barometer analyzes the impact of emerging technologies from generative AI to quantum computing across ten key sectors of the economy.

The study compares industry expectations across each sector, measured through a survey of 1,000 experts in 41 countries. It relies on scientific research, through patents and publications released between 2020 and 2025, as well as market realities, as reflected by funding and company creations.

The goal is not to predict which technology will “win”, but to help leaders distinguish conviction, scientific progress and commercialization, by measuring the gaps between these signals industry by industry.

"The most useful signals often appear within contradictions: research that accelerates without conviction from the market, or a universal expectation in the face of a geographically concentrated supply. The Matrix makes these discrepancies visible," explains **Jan Ondrus, Professor of Information Systems at ESSEC**, Chairholder of the Digital Disruption Chair.

Five key findings of the study :

- **AI is universally accepted, but its sectoral impact is not:** Between 98% and 100% of professionals surveyed, depending on the sector, believe that generative and agentic AI will impact their business. However, the proportion of those who believe this impact is already occurring varies from 83% in the media industry to 45% in the materials industry. Meanwhile, the United States accounts for 77.8% of the field's unicorns and 94% of their funding. *"AI is no longer a matter of conviction. The advantage now lies in the ability to place it where it can truly create value. The Matrix allows us to compare this issue, sector by sector, without conflating opinion, science, and capital,"* notes J  r  my Beaufile, Executive Director of the ESSEC Digital Disruption Chair.
- **China is transforming its research into robotics companies:** China accounts for 38.3% of the world's robotics unicorns, compared to 48.9% for the United States. It also publishes nearly twice



as much robotics research as the United States and conducts extensive research in descriptive AI, the layer of intelligence needed to interpret the physical world.

- **Europe maintains a unique position in quantum computing:** Europe, including the European Union, United Kingdom and Switzerland, accounts for approximately 30% of quantum publications among the top fifteen research countries, ahead of the United States and China. It also holds 28.6% of quantum unicorns and their funding. Yet, nine out of ten professionals postpone the impact of quantum computing for several years, or believe it will never happen.
- **Blockchain is being absorbed by finance:** The creation of blockchain companies has declined by 38.5% in two years. Of those created in 2025, 72% will be labeled as financial services-related. Major US banks are now among the leading patent holders. The technology designed to bypass banks is becoming a central settlement infrastructure for financial institutions.
- **French professionals are particularly skeptical:** In France, 22.1% of respondents believe that quantum computing will never impact their sector, compared to 14.1% in the rest of the world. For robotics, the proportions are 18.4% and 11.2%, respectively. However, regarding generative AI, French professionals are just as convinced as others.

A methodology open for exploration: The Digital Disruption Matrix 2026 is based on a survey commissioned and analyzed by the Chair with 1,000 professionals in 41 countries, on data relating to unicorns, emerging companies, financing and business creation, as well as on scientific publications and patents published from 2020 to 2025. The report, the fifty intersections and the detailed data are accessible interactively on digitaldisruptionmatrix.com.

About ESSEC Business School

ESSEC Business School has been a prestigious institution for higher learning since its foundation in 1907, set apart by its humanist approach. In light of current and future economic, environmental, social and geopolitical challenges, ESSEC is committed to transforming its teaching, research, and campuses to train inclusive, influential and multicultural leaders.

With 8 534 students in pre-experience programs and 5000 participants in executive education across four campuses in Cergy, La Défense, Rabat and Singapore, ESSEC offers programs recognized as some of the best in the world. ESSEC's exceptional faculty, composed of 171 professors and 26 emeritus professors, 240 partnerships with prestigious international universities and an alumni network of over 79 000 members, showcases ESSEC's commitment to excellence and academic innovation.

For more information, please visit www.essec.edu

About the Digital Disruption Chair

The ESSEC Digital Disruption Chair supports today's leaders and prepares those of tomorrow. It helps organizations understand the stakes of emerging technologies and respond to them strategically. Its work



is based on academic and applied research, contributions to the exchange of ideas, and close collaboration with both those developing these technologies and the leaders who deploy them.

<https://digital-disruption-chair.essec.edu/>