



Riga Declaration

eSkills for Jobs



The Riga Declaration on e-Skills

A call to action on digital skills and job creation in Europe

Riga, 13 March 2015: Representatives from governments, industry, academia, NGOs, and other key stakeholders across Europe have joined forces with the European Commission to push for further action to stimulate investment, the acquisition of digital skills and the creation of jobs to kick start Europe's anaemic rate of economic growth.

Despite the high levels of unemployment, Europe is faced with a significant and growing shortage of the people capable of leading innovation to capitalise on advances in digital technologies. Thousands of job openings remain unfilled.

Few data illustrate better the sense of urgency required to tackle a problem of generational proportions than the unprecedented high rates of unemployment among Europe's youth (15-24 year olds): close to 24% at the end of 2013. Equivalent data in the US and Japan were far lower; 8% and 5% respectively.

It is widely accepted that economic growth relies on research, innovation and successful transformation of businesses. That's why it is of critical macroeconomic importance for Europe to boost the number of people with the appropriate skills. This is especially true today, as digital technologies are transforming every area of economic life.

The importance of harnessing the benefits of the digital revolution has been identified by the Juncker Commission, which took office last year. The task of equipping Europe's workforce and citizens with the relevant digital skills, has taken on an even greater urgency now that the creation of a digitally powered single European market has been pushed to the top of Europe's economic agenda.

Launched today in Riga by the European Commission and the Latvian Presidency of the EU, the "eSkills for Jobs" campaign (2015-2016) is designed to address the digital skills gap and will continue to build awareness of the problem in EU member states.

e-skills are of fundamental importance to Europe's medium to long-term economic future. *They enable economies to take advantage of the productivity gains from adopting digital solutions; meet the growing industry demand for skilled staff, and increase opportunities for individuals in today's difficult job market. The "e-Skills Manifesto" written by leading figures in government, education, policy, research and industry reinforces these ideas.*

*Europe must unlock the potential of digital technologies to fuel growth and jobs. Key players involved in the "e-Skills for Jobs" campaign are committed to **ten essential principles**:*

1. Commitment to more and better investment in digital technologies and skills.

Digital technology opens the world to European business and Europe to global markets, enabling Europe to compete more effectively on the world stage. For the EU28, eliminating barriers to the expansion of the digital economy based on the free flow of information and knowledge could deliver 4% additional GDP growth over the next ten years, a gain of €500bn and similar in scale to the growth dividend achieved as a result of the EU's historic Single Market programme of 1992.

2. Address youth unemployment in Europe through digital skills.

With a shockingly high jobless rate among the 15-24-year olds, Europe fares less well than other regions of the world, including the US and Asia-Pacific. Youth unemployment will fall if young people are equipped with the digital skills needed for jobs, in turn enhancing the competitiveness of industries across the board. Job creation can be stimulated through digital technology. An estimated 2.6 new jobs are created for each low skilled job made obsolete by digital technologies.

3. Prioritise "e-Skills for the 21st Century" policy and scale-up implementation.

The EU e-Skills strategy, multi-stakeholder partnerships, solutions, benchmarking and research activities, communication, as well as awareness raising campaigns have generated important, high-value impacts across the EU. We call on the Commission and Member States to build on these achievements and to prioritise "e-Skills for the 21st Century" in the framework of Europe 2020 and the Digital Single Market (DSM) package and ensure that full scale implementation is achieved.

4. Endorsement of the continued work of the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobsⁱⁱ and the implementation of National Coalitions, and public funding investment.

We urge the Commission to ensure that the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs will feature prominently in the EU e-Skills strategy and the DSM package. We urge Member States to create National Coalitions to tackle the digital skills gap through immediate short term actions. Focus should be on developing partnerships from the private and public sectors and ensuring that funds from the European Social Fund are allocated to innovative ICT training initiatives and IT training vouchers for unemployed talents.

5. Promotion of European e-leadership.

Innovation in the management and use of digital technologies will optimise business value in Europe. They must be aligned with business goals – affording business leaders more digital savviness. ICT professionals with greater business knowledge will be able to leap the gap between ICT practice and board room goals. SMEs form more than 95 % of EU economy and provide two out of three jobs. Thus, sector specific education and training programmes for e-leadership skills development for SMEs need to be supported by Member States.

6. Fostering digital transformation and entrepreneurship.

We support the harnessing of advanced digital technologies such as mobile communications, social media, cloud computing, big data analytics and the connection of a wide range of devices and objects to the internet (the Internet of Things). The adoption of these technologies will have massive transformative power, adding genuine social value and providing the tools for the next generation of entrepreneurs across Europe.

7. Commitment to life-long education and training.

From basic digital competence to e-Skills; education and training systems must be designed in a holistic manner, combining formal, non-formal and informal learning and linking academic theory to practical skills required for employment and life in the digital world. Improvement of curricula for computer science and programming and scaling up of ICT infrastructure and pedagogy in schools is an urgent necessity.

Long term cooperation between employers and education is fundamental in ensuring skills acquired in education and training remains relevant for life as is the continuing professional development of teachers.

8. European leadership of global standards.

Developing high level e-competences standards is helping Europe to deliver education reforms, initiated by Ministries of Education and strongly supported by industry and digital learning providers. Effective cross-platform integration relies on the development of common standards for interoperability, as well as European standards to define and develop skill sets among citizens, the workforce and ICT professionals, such as the European e-Competence Frameworkⁱⁱⁱ released by the European Standardisation Committee (CEN). Driving the development of ICT professionalism in Europe can position Europe as centre-stage for increase competitiveness and delivering business value.

9. Fostering ICT professionalism and maturing the ICT profession in Europe.

We support the further development and the implementation of a European Framework for the ICT profession based on four building blocks: 1) European e-Competence Framework and related ICT jobs profiles 2); European ICT foundational body of knowledge and curriculum development guidelines; 3) European recognition of ICT certifications and qualifications across countries based on high quality standards; and 4) shared European professional ethics.

10. Commitment to cooperate, pool expertise and efforts.

The internet has evolved into an interactive Web 2.0. Mass-collaboration has been made instantly possible, emphasising the importance of e-Skills for jobs and digital technologies awareness. Whether for experts working on research, game creators developing new software, architects designing a new project or designers shaping a new model, having the skills to use the internet facilitates teamwork, anytime, anywhere, in every business sector.

ⁱ The European Commission adopted in September 2007 a Communication on “e-Skills for the 21st Century: Fostering Competitiveness, Growth and Jobs” which includes a long term EU e-skills agenda for Europe. Two evaluations of its implementation for the period 2007-2010 and for the period 2010-2013 have been performed. They concluded that good progress has been made and that efforts should be intensified.

See: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/digital-economy/e-skills/index_en.htm

ⁱⁱ The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, together with four Commissioners (Antonio Tajani, Neelie Kroes, László Andor and Androulla Vassiliou) launched the “Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs” at the conference on “e-Skills and Education for Digital Jobs” on 4th March 2013 in Brussels.

See: <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/grand-coalition-digital-jobs>

ⁱⁱⁱ See: <http://www.ecompetences.eu/>