

Riga Declaration kicks off eSkills for Jobs campaign in Europe

BRUSSELS/ RIGA (March 13th 2015) – Governments, industry, NGOs, academia and other key stakeholders from across Europe have joined forces with the European Commission to push for further action to stimulate the creation of the jobs needed to build a digital single market in Europe.

Together they have drawn up the Riga Declaration - 10 principles that should guide efforts this year to unlock the potential of eSkills to fuel growth and job creation.

Harnessing the benefits of the digital revolution has been identified by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker as a top priority and an essential means to ending Europe's prolonged economic downturn.

Unemployment remains stubbornly high in many EU member states. But at the same time there is a parallel shortage of people with the digital skills needed to fill positions both in the public and private sectors. This is what is referred to as the skills gap.

The skills gap offers a big opportunity especially for young people entering the workforce. Unemployment among 15-24 year olds in Europe averaged 24% at the end of 2013.

Over the last decade, the number of ICT jobs in Europe has continued to grow, despite the unfavourable economic context and the alarming rise in unemployment, especially among young job seekers.

The highest job growth has been in highly skilled jobs where there is increasing excess of demand over supply. The trend in ICT management jobs has been growth of almost 14% p.a. from 2011 to 2013. Even with cautious forecasting, demand is expected to increase at 4.6% p.a. up to 2020, largely due to a stagnation in the number of qualified graduates from universities. As a result, Europe will be faced with bottlenecks, especially in highest skilled ICT jobs, according to the research organisations, Empirica and IDC).

They expect 660,000 ICT jobs to be added to the existing pool of ICT workers by 2020. *“On top of that, a potential 820,000 jobs could be filled by 2020, if talent would become available to an extent beyond our extrapolation of current trends”* says Tobias Hüsing, Senior Research Consultant at Empirica.

The task of equipping Europe’s workforce with the relevant eSkills, which began in earnest eight years ago, is taking on ever greater urgency today, as digital technologies are starting to transform every area of economic life.

“As the digital revolution begins to impact all corners of the economy, people are going to need eSkills to qualify for a wide array of jobs, not just positions inside tech companies,” said John Higgins, Director General of DIGITALEUROPE. *“Within a decade plumbers, farmers, small shop owners, even bakers and shoemakers will be turning to digital technologies such as data analytics in their day-to-day lives to improve their efficiency.”*

“European Schoolnet welcomes the Riga Declaration. We are looking forward to continuing working with our members, the Ministries of Education across Europe and other partners, to support changes in education through teacher training and pilot projects,” said Marc Durando, Executive Director of European Schoolnet.

“The priorities of the Declaration match with the goals of our association – the leading e-skills NGO stakeholder in Latvia. E-leadership skills, especially for SMEs, and fostering of the Digital economy is a high priority in Latvia,” said Signe Bāliņa, president of the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association (LIKTA).

For more information please visit the [eSkills for Jobs 2015 campaign website](#). The Riga Declaration can be found [here](#). Join our debate on Twitter using #eskillsriga and #eskills.

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About the eSkills for Jobs campaign

eSkills for Jobs 2015, part of the [EU eSkills strategyⁱ](#), is a major cross sector, multi-stakeholder campaign from the European Commission, involving more than 650 organisations across Europe including companies, associations, education and training bodies and NGOs. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of the need for citizens to improve their command of information and communication technology (ICT) skills for work. The campaign is a response to the growing demand for ICT-skilled professionals which is currently not met, despite high levels of unemployment in Europe.

At the same time that many Europeans are struggling to find work, technology companies face a critical shortfall in ICT workers. Europe may experience a shortage of up to 900,000 ICT professionals by 2015, risking growth and competitiveness. Women are also significantly under-represented in ICT related jobs – less than 30% of the ICT workforce is female.

Furthermore, a growing percentage of all jobs today require an understanding of ICT. Yet, half of all citizens in the European Union have no or low computer skills.

eSkills for Jobs encourages citizens to develop their digital skills and access today's job market. The campaign has been launched under the European Commission's [Grand Coalition for Digital Jobsⁱⁱ](#), a multi-stakeholder partnership to address the shortfall in eSkills among Europeans and encourage people to fully exploit the potential employment opportunities that ICT provides.

eSkills for Jobs 2015 comprises hundreds of national and European level events as well as skills competitions, social media marketing and lobbying. Key targets groups are young people, unemployed people, ICT practitioners, enterprises (in particular SMEs) as well as business leaders and policy makers.

eSkills for Jobs 2015 is coordinated on behalf of the European Commission by



With the support of pan-European partners



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

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