



POLICY DECLARATION 2008

**e-SKILLS COMPETENCES
ACTIONS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY**

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS,
GOVERNMENTS, INDUSTRY, AND OTHER
STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNED**

submitted to the
European Council of Ministers
Brussels, 13-14 March 2008

“POLICY DECLARATION 2008”

BACKGROUND: THE COST OF IGNORANCE

Over 40 percent of Europeans have no basic ICT skills¹. The serious consequences of this alarming skills-shortage present not only an economic problem but, even more importantly, a social one too. This lack of digital literacy as well as professional e-skills represents a serious obstacle to EU competitiveness, and could act as a restrictive factor leading to diminished opportunities and social exclusion.

Digital literacy and **media literacy** as well as **professional e-skills** are crucial enablers that allow EU citizens to exploit the full potential of the information society. As the global economy becomes increasingly ICT-embedded, digital illiteracy as well as lack of professional e-skills substantially reduces productivity and the possibilities of the European citizens and workforce to actively participate in the labour market².

With nearly 17 million people unemployed in the European Union in 2007, combined with a rapidly ageing population and rising competitiveness pressures, strengthening investment in “*skills for employability*” is a cornerstone of the EU-wide strategy for employment and growth. The rising challenge relating to e-skills capacity development has been acknowledged by the EC and Member States in the 7 Sept. 2007 **European Commission e-Skills Communication** endorsed by the EU Council of Ministers on 23 Nov. 2007³. Similarly, the **e-Inclusion Communication** of 8 Nov. 2007⁴ reaffirms the need to promote digital literacy training, notably for vulnerable social groups. These commitments need to be implemented through concrete measures for required sustainability in significant e-skills uptake.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS IN e-SKILLS CAPACITY-BUILDING

The e-skills capacity-building requires a strong engagement from all European citizens and stakeholders involved in the training value chain. A coordinated approach represents a viable solution to combine and leverage the specific strengths and resources of various players operating at different levels. A sustainable multi-stakeholder partnership for skills and training enables the development of long-term strategies that can assure a close alignment between the provision of education and training for real market needs.

In response to the e-skills gap and the urgent need to adopt a practical and comprehensive approach to employability, industry partners had launched in January 2006 the **European Alliance on Skills for Employability**: a European approach of e-skills provision through local multi-stakeholder partnerships and networking.

The tested experiences of the Alliance partnerships is built upon by drawing from the pool of strengths of its members throughout the entire “*Training-employment Value Chain*”, from access to technology, access to training and content, curricula and certifications, access to public funding, and finally access to labour placements. This multi-stakeholder partnership represents a European model that can be followed.

¹ See the speech by Ms Viviane Reding, member of the European Commission (Information Society and Media), 4 December 2007, p. 3, at: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/reding/docs/speeches/brussels_20071204.pdf

² See the November 2007 ITIF study on ICT and EU productivity: “Boosting European Prosperity Through the Widespread Use of ICT”, at: www.itif.org/index.php?id=34; on “Media Literacy” see the EC Communication, “A European Approach to Media Literacy in the Digital Environment”, COM (2007) 833, of 20 Dec. 2007, at: http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/docs/com20070833final.pdf

³ EC’s Communication on “e-Skills for the 21st Century : Fostering Competitiveness, Growth and Jobs”, COM (2007) 496, of 7 Sept. 2007, ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm, approved by Council Conclusions on e-Skills Strategy of 23 Nov. 2007, www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/97225.pdf

⁴ EC Communication of 8 Nov. 2007 on the i2010 initiative on e-Inclusion, “To be part of the information society”, COM(2007) 694 final, at: www.e-skills-ilb.org/docs/eInclusion%20EC%20Communication%208%20Nov.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS

The e-skills ILB and its members call upon policy-makers, European citizens and relevant stakeholders to build on tested best practices and to highlight the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships to provide sustainable ICT training and qualification schemes.

Key priority actions include:

- **Support the development of digital literacy training schemes** across Europe through the utilisation of Member State and European funding, involving organisations at all levels and in close corporation with local and regional authorities;
- **Enhance public support and recognition or endorsement** of high quality industry-based and other non-formal e-skills curricula and validations;
- **Support studies and surveys** providing evidence of the “*cost of ignorance*” of e-skills competences both at European and Member State level;
- **Ensure that any European e-Competence Framework or Career Portal** under preparation be built in close cooperation between institutional players, industry e-skills providers, NGOs, citizens and other stakeholders concerned to bridge formal and non-formal ICT education and training;
- **Provide a multitude of easily accessible fiscal and financial incentives**, ranging from training vouchers, tax breaks and basic income guarantees to programmed funds, enabling cross border industry led initiatives, supporting notably individuals and small and medium sized enterprises to invest in e-skills using a strategic and long-term outlook;
- **Support and endorse European multi-stakeholder networking** that promotes e-skills capacity-building and partnerships throughout the learning value chain so as to ensure a range of choice for stakeholder participation, according to different needs from various groups of undertakings and individuals;
- **Facilitate Evolution of the Work Force.** Governments in partnership with industry and academia, NGOs and other stakeholders concerned should actively promote the evolution of the work force:
 - *First, by considering continued investments in innovations in primary and secondary education that help ensure that the next generation has the ICT skills necessary to perform in a knowledge economy.*
 - *Second, and perhaps more important, there is a need to install a stronger orientation toward lifelong learning that will allow continued success for workers in an information-centered economy.*
 - *Finally, Europe’s success depends on maximizing the potential contribution of every worker. Investments in digital inclusion can extend the benefits of high-value jobs to underserved communities, including ethnic and linguistic minorities.*
- **Encourage EU Member States** as well as other countries to remove any barriers in their arrangements for funding education and training that stand in the way of schools, universities and commercial trainers to offer vendor specific and/or vendor neutral curricula and certifications in direct connection to market’s demand and to increase the competitiveness of people standing outside the workforce.

e-SKILLS STAKEHOLDERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO JOIN THE e-SKILLS ILB AND/OR TO GET INVOLVED IN ONE OR THE OTHER OF ITS STAND-ALONE INITIATIVES TO BRING IN NEW EXPERTISE, KNOW HOW AND SUPPORT AND TO TAKE A LEAD IN THE SKILLS ACTIVITIES AT EUROPEAN OR MEMBER STATE LEVEL

ABOUT THE E-SKILLS INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP BOARD (e-SKILLS ILB)

Founded on 7 June 2007 in the presence of Vice-President Guenther Verheugen of the European Commission, with the vision of “Fostering 21st century e-skills and digital literacy of Europe’s workforce and citizens for a competitive, innovative and inclusive Europe”, the e-Skills ILB is set to lead the ICT sector’s contribution to the development and implementation of a long term e-skills and digital literacy agenda in Europe.

The e-Skills ILB will work in partnership with public authorities across Europe, other industry sectors, SMEs and all relevant stakeholders, building upon the European Commission recommendations and other reference initiatives on e-skills. Current e-skills ILB members include: **CEPIS, Cisco Systems, CompTIA, Econet, EITO, ECDL Foundation, EXIN, Global Knowledge Network, HP, INLEA Foundation, Microsoft, Oracle, Prometric, and Siemens Enterprise Communications.**

ABOUT THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE ON SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

The “[European Alliance on Skills for Employability](#)”, set up in 2006 (together with other industry partners incl. Randstad and State Street), operates as an independent stand-alone initiative under the umbrella of the e-skills ILB. The main goal of the Alliance is to implement the e-skills ILB multi-stakeholder approach to the e-skills access value chain through practical and concrete training programmes and related actions at EU Member State level.

ABOUT THE ICT CAREER PORTAL

In collaboration with other stakeholders and with the support from public authorities, the “[European e-Skills and Career Portal](#)” under preparation, will set out ICT job profiles, map formal and non-formal ICT training, learning opportunities and certifications to specific job roles, and integrate with existing Member State ICT skills and career portals, and through the Portal to provide input to deliberations on a “[EU e-Competence Framework](#)”.

(For other **E-SKILLS ILB AUTONOMOUS INITIATIVES**, see at: www.e-skills-ilb.org, main menu).

*For more information see www.e-skills-ilb.org
or contact the e-skills ILB Secretariat at: info@e-skills-ilb.org, tel: +32-2/234.78.23*

MEMBERS AND PARTNERS OF THE E-SKILLS ILB AND RELATED STAND-ALONE INITIATIVES, SUCH AS THE EMPLOYABILITY ALLIANCE AND THE ICT CAREER PORTAL INCLUDE:



ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

