

Brussels, 7th September 2007

Commission proposes actions to foster 21st Century e-Skills

Recent reports and surveys indicate that Europe may face severe e-skills shortages and mismatches in the coming years. At the same time, e-skills are becoming central to boost innovation, productivity and employability and to respond to global challenges. To this end, the European Commission proposes today a long-term e-skills agenda and a set of action lines at EU level following extensive expert group and stakeholder consultations. These actions will complement and enrich significant efforts already under way in Europe.

Vice-President Günter Verheugen, responsible for Enterprise and Industry Policy, said: *"The availability of e-skills is a key condition for successful innovation and for the competitiveness of European enterprises. We cannot afford to delay and we will only succeed if all partners join their forces. In this context, I warmly welcome the initiative of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry to create an e-Skills Industry Leadership Board "*.

Ján Figel, Commissioner for Education and Culture, said: *"A learning society for all is the most valid guarantee against exclusion. Knowledge, skills and competences are the main capital of European citizens and e-skills are a key competence in the context of lifelong learning. But only 10% of the European population participate in lifelong learning. ICT has the potential to enable innovation and lifelong learning for all. We must ensure that this becomes a reality"*.

Viviane Reding, Commissioner for the Information Society and Media, added: *"Shortfalls of qualified ICT practitioners slow down new ICT applications in the economy and draw away billions of euros of investment funds to dynamic emerging economies, where hundreds of thousands of new engineers are qualifying each year. Digital illiteracy, still standing at nearly 40%, is also a persistent feature of Europe's digital divide. We can no longer afford to waste the talents of millions of Europeans by leaving them out of the information society. Member States and industry must commit to a substantial e-skills strategy"*

Most actions contributing to the implementation of a long term e-skills agenda are within the responsibility of Member States, industry, academia, trade unions, etc. The Commission encourages them to further develop their policies and initiatives, and facilitate the exchange of good practice, and will focus its own efforts on actions bringing added value at EU level:

- **Raising Awareness:** exchanging information and good practice for the promotion of science, maths, ICT, teacher training and gender issues; encouraging awareness campaigns to provide parents, teachers and pupils with an accurate understanding of opportunities arising from ICT education and careers and reinforcing the links between ICT, learning and innovation.
- **Developing supporting actions and tools:** supporting the development of a European e-competence framework, of a European e-skills and career portal, and the Europass initiative; promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships, quality criteria for industry-based training, new curriculum guidelines including services sciences, and appropriate incentives, especially for SMEs.
- **Fostering employability and social inclusion:** launching an initiative on e-Inclusion in 2008 with a view to halve the digital divide by 2010; encouraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives such as the European Alliance on Skills for Employability under the umbrella of the Business CSR Alliance; and promoting how public and private funding instruments can support such initiatives.
- **Promoting better and greater use of e-learning:** promoting the development of courses and mechanisms facilitating the exchange of e-skills training resources; supporting the networking of e-learning and training centres with the European Network of Living Labs and promoting successful e-learning strategies.
- **Promoting long-term cooperation and monitoring progress:** maintaining a regular dialogue with Member States and stakeholders; releasing an annual report presenting a synthesis of supply and demand and assessing the impact of global sourcing on ICT jobs and occupations.

The way forward to the widening and deepening of e-skills within the EU is through multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnerships for action. The Commission will organise a major conference in co-operation with stakeholders at the end of 2008 to report on progress, present the results of the actions and discuss the way forward.

More information

[E-Skills for competitiveness, growth and employability](#)

[European e-Skills 2006 Conference](#)

[ICT Task Force report](#)

[Europass](#)