ENHANCING
DIGITAL SKILLS
ACROSS EUROPE

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ALL DIGITAL Reaction to the European Commission's work Programme for 2023

With the publication of its Work Programme for 2023 on 18 October 2022, the European Commission has set out its activities and priorities for the upcoming year, which has been named the European Year of Skills. The announcement of the European Year of Skills by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during the 2022 State of the European Union Address gives an important boost to the delivery on and implementation of the ambitious, but sorely needed, targets set out in the Digital Decade, Skills Agenda and Social Pillar Action Plan, particularly in terms of digital skills and competences. While the Digital Economy and Society Index for 2021, published 28 July, shows some improvements in the share of European residents having at least basic digital skills, the rate of increases won't suffice to meet the targets.

As a consequence, the Commission's considerable progress on the delivery on the actions set out in the Digital Education Action Plan in the past years is most welcome, including the anticipated Council Recommendations on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training and on enabling factors for digital education, originally planned for Q3 2022, and pushed to Q1 2023, allowing for a thorough consultation process. The recognition of digital competences as a cornerstone for a successful digital transition is essential, yet this recognition alone does not reach far enough if it stops short or including the importance of treating digital competence development as a lifelong learning need, and subsequently the vital role of informal and non-formal forms of education and training provision.

Despite 2023 having been declared the European Year of Skills, the Commission's Work Programme for the upcoming year shows little in the way of new policy initiatives being undertaken. Nevertheless, the two initiatives included in the Work Programme are most welcome. A Cybersecurity Skills Academy addresses the significant competence deficit in that competence area among European residents. Likewise, an update of the learning mobility framework, aimed at improving the recognition of skills certificates of migrants acquired outside of Europe, has been long due. In addition, there are four items listed as priorities among still pending proposals with relevance to digital competences, covering digital identity, artificial intelligence, the protection of personal data in electronic communications, and a European Health Data Space, all of which contain scarce direct references to the role of digital competences related to them, despite the clear relevance. Furthermore, both new initiatives, however, appear to have a narrow focus on employers' needs, and, as the two flagship initiatives announced at this stage, frame the European Year of Skills through a labour market focussed lens.

Digital competences are a key success factor and investment area for the digital transition and reach far beyond employability concerns. They are essential for inclusivity and societal participation, in promoting democratic values and a European Way of Life, and in fighting exclusion and discrimination. A broad level of basic digital competences among European residents forms the basis for efficient and targeted training programmes for IT professionals, for the uptake and continued expansion of e-government services, and for European businesses to find both qualified employees as well as informed customers. They are as

important for youth learners to engage in an increasingly digitalised world as they are for members of society. Digital competences are key to create accessible offers for persons with disabilities, as well as to combat disinformation, increase cultural exchange and reduce discrimination and hate speech. Digital competences are first and foremost life competences, while job qualifications are only a slice of the whole.

The ALL DIGITAL Manifesto for Enhancing digital competences in Europe sets out key principle for a successful approach in digital competence development. Read and endorse the Manifesto here.

ALL DIGITAL is a leading pan-European association based in Brussels, representing member organisations across Europe that work with 20,000 digital competence centres.

We focus to support Europeans that have an insufficient level of digital skills. That means that they're having less chances to find work, to use online services, to have a better quality of life, to be included in today's society.

We believe that every European should be able to exploit the benefits and opportunities created by digital transformation.

For further questions, please get in touch with Norman Röhner, ALL DIGITAL Policy Officer, at

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