

Brussels, 26 July 2022

SUBJECT: Structured dialogue on digital education and skills between the Commission and Member States

Dear Executive Vice-President Vestager, Vice-President Schinas, Commissioner Breton, Commissioner Gabriel and Commissioner Schmit,

We praise your leadership in elevating the discussion on digital skills and education to the highest level of government in the EU. We can't afford anymore to have a piecemeal approach to skills development in Europe. Your Structured Dialogue with Member States can change that for good.

As Executive Vice-President Vestager said recently in the exchange with the IMCO Committee in March, digital skills are so important today that they require a whole-of-government approach. Never before have they been so instrumental in the sustainability, public health, prosperity and integrity of our economy and society.

As we have pointed out ever since we launched our Manifesto for a Stronger Digital Europe back in 2019,¹ Europe's goals for new investments and measures on digital will fail to materialise unless society has proper digital competencies. The EU Recovery Fund aims to offer new digital infrastructure and solutions to our SMEs, yet 55% of EU businesses still struggle with filling ICT vacancies.² NIS2 aims to bolster EU cyber-resilience, yet Europe lacks almost 200,000³ cybersecurity specialists, all at a time of looming cyber threats from the war in Ukraine.

This is why we ask you to prioritise in the Structured Dialogue the three important areas below:

- 1. Cybersecurity upskilling:** the Dialogue should urgently launch a multi-Country Project building on the commitments in the Digital Decade and the Pact for Skills for the Digital Ecosystem. It should map capabilities across EU countries, identify common gaps in areas like penetration testing, security awareness, compliance, and launch a public-private, EU-wide partnership making training resources available to the public. As a start, the partnership should first upskill SMEs in critical sectors for the EU's resilience. These goals are within our reach if we scale up existing best practices. Just in six months, DIGITALEUROPE offered cybersecurity training to 4800 individual users across Europe.⁴
- 2. Recognition of industry certifications:** the Dialogue should ensure public employment agencies better integrate industry certificates into their formal qualification systems. This would place ICT talents into digital jobs faster, while allowing industry certification to help offer a "common currency" on EU job markets. Industry-certified digital skills are informally acquired, yet in the right circumstances, they are as relevant as a university or vocational

¹ Available [here](#)

² Eurostat, [ICT specialists - statistics on hard-to-fill vacancies in enterprises](#), 2021

³ (ISC)², [Cybersecurity Workforce Study 2021](#)

⁴ More info on our EU-funded Digital SkillUp initiative [here](#).

training degree. Many citizens need short-term, targeted training to digitally upskill themselves on particular applications, which industry can help certify.

- 3. Compulsory computer sciences in education curricula:** Member States should ensure coding and computational thinking get enough compulsory curricular time in secondary schools, as Denmark has just done, and algorithmic thinking is a compulsory subject in primary schools. The Dialogue should explore monetary reward and incentive schemes for those EU countries that make their curricula digital-proof. It should formalise, as part of the European Semester, a permanent review of Member States' progress on the topic, with calls for action to take where needed. There cannot be any long-term, sustainable expansion of our digital talent pool without proper attention to foundational knowledge of computer science in all primary and secondary education curricula of all Member States.

Industry's formal involvement in this Dialogue will be essential in delivering on each of these three priorities. No single actor can solve the reskilling and upskilling challenge alone.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl', written in a cursive style.

Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl

About DIGITALEUROPE

DIGITALEUROPE represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members include some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe. DIGITALEUROPE wants European businesses and citizens to benefit fully from digital technologies and for Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital technology companies. DIGITALEUROPE ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies.

DIGITALEUROPE Membership

Corporate Members

Accenture, Airbus, Amazon, AMD, Apple, Arçelik, Assent, Atos, Autodesk, Banco Santander, Bayer, Bidao, Bosch, Bose, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Brother, Canon, Cisco, CyberArk, Danfoss, Dassault Systèmes, DATEV, Dell, Eli Lilly and Company, Epson, Ericsson, ESET, EY, Fujitsu, GlaxoSmithKline, Global Knowledge, Google, Graphcore, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Hitachi, HP Inc., HSBC, Huawei, Intel, Johnson & Johnson, Johnson Controls International, JVC Kenwood Group, Konica Minolta, Kry, Kyocera, Lenovo, Lexmark, LG Electronics, Mastercard, Meta, Microsoft, Mitsubishi Electric Europe, Motorola Solutions, MSD Europe Inc., NEC, Nemetschek, NetApp, Nokia, Nvidia Ltd., Oki, OPPO, Oracle, Palo Alto Networks, Panasonic Europe, Philips, Pioneer, Qualcomm, Red Hat, RELX, ResMed, Ricoh, Roche, Rockwell Automation, Samsung, SAP, SAS, Schneider Electric, Sharp Electronics, Siemens, Siemens Healthineers, Sky CP, Sopra Steria, Sony, Swatch Group, Technicolor, Texas Instruments, TikTok, Toshiba, TP Vision, UnitedHealth Group, Visa, Vivo, VMware, Waymo, Workday, Xerox, Xiaomi, Zoom.

National Trade Associations

Austria: IOÖ

Belgium: AGORIA

Croatia: Croatian Chamber of Economy

Cyprus: CITEA

Czech Republic: AAVIT

Denmark: DI Digital, IT BRANCHEN, Dansk Erhverv

Estonia: ITL

Finland: TIF

France: AFNUM, SECIMAVI, numeum

Germany: bitkom, ZVEI

Greece: SEPE

Hungary: IVSZ

Ireland: Technology Ireland

Italy: Anitec-Assinform

Lithuania: Infobalt

Luxembourg: APSI

Moldova: ATIC

Netherlands: NLdigital, FIAR

Norway: Abelia

Poland: KIGEIT, PIIT, ZIPSEE

Portugal: AGEFE

Romania: ANIS

Slovakia: ITAS

Slovenia: ICT Association of Slovenia at CCIS

Spain: Adigital, AMETIC

Sweden: TechSverige, Teknikföretagen

Switzerland: SWICO

Turkey: Digital Turkey Platform, ECID

Ukraine: IT Ukraine

United Kingdom: techUK