

**2472nd SESSION OF THE “TRANSPORTS, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY” COUNCIL
BRUSSELS, 5TH AND 6TH DECEMBER 2002
TELECOMMUNICATIONS ITEMS**

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON ICT AND E-BUSINESS SKILLS IN EUROPE

The Council of the European Union

Recalling

1. The Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council on 24 March 2000, which in particular noted that the shift to a digital, knowledge-based economy will be a powerful engine for growth, competitiveness and jobs;
2. The Commission's Action Plan for skills and mobility welcomed by the Barcelona European Council on 15 and 16 March 2002, in which it is stressed that the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) and e-business skills profiles is needed to help ease shortages in ICT occupations and sectors;
3. The eEurope 2002 Action Plan endorsed by the Feira European Council on 19 and 20 June 2000;
4. The eEurope 2005 Action Plan as endorsed by the Seville European Council on 21 and 22 June 2002 which stressed the need to foster public-private partnerships and the co-operation of stakeholders with a view to developing European-wide e-skills definitions;
5. The work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe adopted by the Council of 14 February 2002;
6. The Council Resolution of 3 June 2002 on skills and mobility;
7. The Council Conclusions of 6 and 7 June 2002 on the impact of the e-Economy on the competitiveness of European enterprises.

Taking into account

1. The importance of the diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICT) for growth, productivity and employment;
2. The risks posed by a digital divide;
3. The existence of gaps and mismatches between potential and reaped benefits of ICT and e-business skills in Europe; and the current demographic trends in Europe suggesting that increasing labour bottlenecks might be faced;
4. The Declaration of the European eSkills Summit in Copenhagen on 17-18 October 2002, which calls for an increase, at all levels, of efforts to match the content and delivery of education and training with the needs of employers of ICT professionals.

Recognising

1. That the demand for ICT and e-business skills is largely coming from user industries;
2. That e-skills encompass personal skills, most importantly including professional skills, users skills and digital literacy;
3. The need for further investment in training in industry and particularly SMEs.

Underlines

1. The need to sustain the efforts to close the e-skills gaps and to address mismatches despite the economic downturn and structural changes affecting the ICT sector;
2. The need to supply in a timely manner professionals with the technical and other skills relevant to the market and needed to ensure employees mobility;
3. The need for inclusiveness of the entire available potential labour pool to narrow and close e-skills gaps and to address mismatches, particularly addressing the severe under-representation of women in the ICT workforce;
4. The need to foster dialogue and the exchange of good practice between stakeholders.

Welcomes the intention of the European Commission

To establish a European eSkills Forum in 2003 whose main objective would be to institutionalise an open dialogue between all relevant stakeholders and to catalyse actions to address the priorities that emerge from this process in view of helping to narrow e-skills gaps and address mismatches.

Calls upon the European Commission

1. By the end of 2004 closely to monitor and analyse the ICT basic skills as well as the e-skills gaps and mismatches;
2. To report back to the Council and the European Parliament by the end of 2004 on the progress made in narrowing the e-skills gaps and addressing mismatches;
3. To explore the most effective means to assist the cross-border mobility of ICT and e-business professionals, for example by increased transparency and by recognition of certification guidelines and schemes;
4. To raise awareness on the need for e-skills, the way to get access to training opportunities and high-quality learning resources;
5. If necessary suggest further actions to be taken in the report to the Council.

Invites Member States

1. To closely monitor the ICT basic skills as well as the e-skills gaps and mismatches at national level;
2. To promote co-operation between industry, universities and schools in order to achieve adaptation and flexibility of curricula to match future market requirements;
3. To promote lifelong learning in co-operation with industry in order to prepare for new jobs and a continuous upskilling of the workforce;
4. To promote the attractiveness of studying scientific subjects as a basis for ICT and e-business jobs;
5. To intensify efforts for training and improving skills for all age groups, genders and people of all ethnic and social origins in the European Union;
6. To develop, where appropriate, new initiatives and measures to help industry and SMEs, to access the talent and skills pools which are critical for their competitiveness, taking into account different levels of professional skills.

Encourages the industry and social partners

1. To define and communicate the ICT and e-business job profiles needed in the various business sectors and company sizes;
 2. To promote a common classification of ICT and e-business skills as a basis to forecast supply and demand of ICT and e-business skills;
 3. To facilitate lifelong learning of the labour force;
 4. To take social responsibility in order to improve the inclusion of the entire available labour pool.
-