



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology

Cooperation
Stakeholders

Brussels,
CONNECT/D4/AOP/ebo

MINUTES

Subject: Minutes of the Digital Champions Expert Group meeting held in Brussels, 25-26 November 2013

1. BACKGROUND

The Digital Champions (DC) Expert Group met for two half-day meetings on 25 to 26 November in Brussels. It was the fifth time the group had met. The previous meeting took place in the margins of the Digital Agenda Assembly (DAA) in Dublin in June 2013. Some of the Champions also participated in the webinars on Opening Up Education as well as TSM and the EU Cloud Strategy in September and October 2013.

There are currently 25 Digital Champions, as Estonia, Germany and Greece have not yet made appointments. 13 Champions and one Advisor joined the meetings. Reinis Zitmanis from Latvia participated in his first DC meeting.

One of the objectives of the meeting was to hear the Champions' priorities for 2014 and to find synergies with those of Vice-President Kroes and DG CONNECT. Another aim was to inform the DCs about available funding, such as the Structural Funds and to ensure that they were up-to-date with the latest policy developments. Building on discussions held at the DAA and the webinar on Opening Up Education the second day focused, in a participatory way, on discussing challenges/drivers and best way forward in the area of digitising education. In order to further strengthen the ties between the DCs and the Young Advisors an informal get-together was organised on Monday evening.

2. MEETING WITH THE HEAD OF VICE-PRESIDENT KROES' CABINET

After a brief welcome and introduction, the chair, Linda Corugedo Steneberg, Director of Cooperation, DG CONNECT gave the floor to Constantijn Van Oranje-Nassau, Head of Vice President Kroes' Cabinet. He gave an overview of the outcomes of the first European Council dedicated to the Digital Economy. He mentioned the urgent need to

reform the telecom market, end roaming, ensure open internet and provide more support for ICT and skills as well as innovation in the public sector.

The Head of the Cabinet underlined the importance of the Opening Up Education communication that was discussed in the Education Council the same day. He called for the help of the Digital Champions to engage in this issue in their respective countries.

He thanked the Champions involved in the launch of national Grand Coalitions for Digital Jobs in Poland, Lithuania, Spain and expressed support for the emerging initiatives in Romania and Bulgaria.

He further expressed VP Kroes' gratitude to DCs for contributing with guest blogs, helping during her visits to some of the Digital Champions' Member States and for their support for the Young Advisors' EU Code Week.

Discussion

The discussion mainly focused on how to drive the digitisation of education and how to fight unemployment, especially amongst the young where IRE called for urgent pan-European actions. CZ underlined the importance of the Connected Continent package and especially the need to quickly end roaming. The Head of the Cabinet linked the discussion in the Council with the structural funds, where funds for ICT investments have been made the 4th priority. However, the CZ DC pointed out that it was impossible to obtain funding for some activities such as Cloud Services due its nature of not being a one-off investment, but a provision of services. The FR DC suggested a digital "Marshal Plan" for Europe as he believed millions of euros need to be invested in innovation to ensure Europe's future economy.

Round table on priorities for 2014

A roundtable presentation took place where each DC presented their [priorities for 2014](#).

AT – Meral Akin-Hecke will focus on three areas in 2014: education ([digikomp.at](#), [saferinternet.at](#), open education conferences); inclusion ([internetfueralle.at](#), life-long learning, [digitalks.at](#)) and employability (youth employment, [austrianstartups.com](#) and [CodeWeek.eu](#)). She mentioned several on-going projects as well as the launch of new ones.

BE – Saskia van Uffelen will concentrate actions on three areas in 2014: the educational system (mapping of digital schools, ICT tools integrated in schools, digital visions for schools); speeding up digital commerce (3D printing as a new business model) and digital skills for minorities (CoderDojos).

BG – Gergana Passy has four priority areas for 2014: creating a National Coalition for Digital Jobs, creating a national online platform for education, working on social inclusion by means of ICT as well as continuing work to establish free Wi-Fi zones in schools.

CY – Stelios Himonas will continue working on eight activity areas in 2014: establishing free internet zones in rural and urban areas; ICT practitioners study; digital inclusion of disabled people, digitisation of the Cypriot cultural heritage; Cyprus Wikipedia; launch of an ICT innovation competition; e-skills week and active participation in the reform plan of the public sector.

CZ – Ondřej Felix will concentrate efforts in four areas: e-Government, promoting private and public cloud as a base to efficiently shared services, internal market of telco services and promoting online services for seniors.

FR – Gilles Babinet is pushing to have a national MOOC strategy and will continue to work on coding for kids with the Finnish DC. He is working with mayors to use the web as a tool for online democracy. He is also aims to establish a national digital think-tank in 2014.

IRE – Lord David Puttnam mentioned the opening of the National Institute on Digital Literacy in Dublin at the end of November. He is in the process of launching a campaign with senior role-models. He will look into the possibility of launching a series of digital TV programmes based on the same concept as cooking shows. He encouraged the other DCs to contact the national members of the European Film Academy to encourage their upgrade to digital.

IT – the Italian Champion, Francesco Caio, presented his priorities via video. His focus will be the implementation of the Digital Agenda in Italy with a focus on structural reform including a national register for population, digital e-identity, e-invoicing and investment in broadband infrastructure.

LV – Reinis Zitmanis reported that the infrastructure in Latvia is good, but that the elderly population has inadequate e-skills, so improving this situation is amongst his priorities, as well as increasing the e-signature penetration. He will also focus on finding solutions to the lack of funding for innovative start-ups and in the educational system he would like to see a switch from old programming languages to those that are on demand.

NL – Tineke Netelenbos will focus on three areas. The first is digital skills where there are two new public private programmes. The second is digital safety, where a portal will be launched and the third priority is ensuring global leadership of the Dutch digital infrastructure, continuing the establishment of the so called third [Main port in the Netherlands](#).

PL – Włodzimierz Marciński will continue working with the Digital Alliance for Digital Skills in 2014 and the digital empowerment of society, especially using the European Structural and Investment Funds for ICT education and for support for retraining.

PT – António Murta will focus on four areas in 2014: Promoting digital exports; combatting the parallel economy and further implementing e-invoicing; promoting digital entrepreneurship and nurturing venture capital; as well as encouraging the realisation of

an e-health platform. He also stressed the need to keep young educated people with ICT skills in the country which is currently a challenge.

RO – Paul Baran will push the operationalization of the Digital Agenda for Romania by creating a multi-stakeholder working group as well as bringing ICT to rural farmers and training them to apply for funding. He will also work to bridge the digital divide by connecting Romanians to relevant services such as e-government, e-health and agricultural and rural development.

SI – Aleš Špetič maintained the priority to increase the digital literacy of the elderly and wants to establish a systematic approach to bring them into the digital world. He is also advocating that digital should become an economic statistical category.

Discussion

The DCs discussed obtaining funding from business to support projects. This had been successful in many places, but one DC argued that the risk is that the business sees itself as the sole owner of projects.

A discussion turned around the necessary support of a Champion to make his or her work successful. Showcasing one's work, having strong backing by government and firm financial support were indicators of success.

3. OPERATIONAL MEETING WITH DG CONNECT

Ms Corugedo Stenberg opened the operational part of the meeting and welcomed the speakers. The following points were presented and discussed:

- **H2020**, including funding and the **Connected Advisory Forum** by Carlos Oliveira, Policy Officer, Programme Coordination Unit, F3
- **Digital Agenda Scoreboard**, by Lucilla Sioli, Head of the Knowledge base Unit, F4)
- **Grand Coalition** (Martin Ulbrich, Policy Officer Knowledge base Unit, F4
- **Structural Funds** by Katja Reppel and Marco Pino, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy and Hervé Dupuy deputy Head of the Broadband Unit, B5
- **Presentation of EU Code Week** by Alja Isaković, Young Advisor from Slovenia

The chair welcomed Robert Madelin, Director-General of DG CONNECT who made a short intervention on the European Council on Digital Economy and the process ahead. He mentioned that rapporteurs in the European Parliament have been appointed and hearings are scheduled in the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) as well as the Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) Committees at the beginning of next year.

Discussions with the Greek Presidency also seem to be on track. The aim is that the package will go for first reading in the European Parliament in April 2014.

In light of the elections to the European Parliament (EP) in 24-25 May 2014 he urged the Champions to contact the politicians candidating for the EP and discuss the Connected Continent proposal and other digital issues with them.

Mr Madelin also mentioned new funding opportunities such as the [ICT vouchers for SMEs](#) which are being tested in Spanish regions. These vouchers aim to help micro-enterprises and SMEs in the EU to use digital technologies to increase their competitiveness and enhance their growth prospects. ICT Innovation voucher schemes offer vouchers valued up to €10,000.

Mr Madelin also flagged the coming [communication on internet governance](#) due in January 2014.

Discussion

The Champions agreed that contacting the MEPs was a good idea and that supporting them with information so that they understand and can advocate digital issues – also in non-digital sectors. The Champions suggested it would be good if DG CONNECT could provide some common material, perhaps in the form of a menu where MEPs could chose to support some digital ideas – such as healthcare or education.

4. WORKSHOP ON OPENING UP EDUCATION

Building on discussions at the Digital Agenda Assembly as well as webinar on Opening Up Education on 27 September 2013, the second half-day was dedicated to digitisation of education. The DCs shared information about the situation in their countries and reported on biggest challenges and best practices.

Challenges

The common challenges are lack of high quality e-learning content, teacher take-up as well as lack of Directors' (School principals) having a digital vision for their schools. Another obstacle for teachers sharing and using online content is copyright.

The Champions also reported that in many countries schools are working with businesses such as Microsoft, Google, and Intel which finance tablets/computers/interactive whiteboards etc. with good results – but also with some risks. Certain roll-outs of ICT equipment had not been successful as the teachers or school directors were not on board. It was noted that digital content has to be produced by teachers – not by technicians – to be taken up by teachers.

The Champions sensed that the most efficient way to catalyse a change was for it to come bottom-up – from teachers and parents and to build on good examples.

Some DCs thought there was a need to agree on common standards for certification – others believed it was not necessary. There was also a sense that teaching has to be more valued at universities as opposed to research. Lord David Puttnam mentioned that in Chinese schools teachers now teach 70% of their time and use 30% for continuous training.

Ideas

One idea that was brought forward was to showcase good examples of advanced education solutions both for ministries, teachers, educational leaders and parents to give them concrete examples of what their students and children are missing out on.

Another idea launched was to work together on a network of Digital Champion Teachers and perhaps complimented by an annual gathering. Furthermore launching a Digital Schools of the month campaign was mentioned as well as sharing more widely the [teachers' online resources platform](#) promoted by David Puttnam and to work on a common digital vision for school directors.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were made:

- The DCs expressed an overall wish to continue working on Opening Up Education.
- Future meetings will be focused on themes.
- DG CONNECT will produce a report showcasing some of the DCs' activities.
- DG CONNECT will produce a leaflet with the top-five digital issues for the 2014 EP elections.
- DG CONNECT will continue to organise webinars on different topics on a regular basis. The Champions are encouraged to propose topics for these webinars.
- DG CONNECT will set up and test a collaborative space for the Champions.

6. NEXT MEETING

DG CONNECT will explore the possible dates and themes for a physical meeting as well as online meetings in the first half of 2014.

Digital Champions attendance 25-26 November

Name	MS		Participation
1. Meral Akin-Hecke	Austria	meral.akin-hecke@digitalks.at	YES
2. Saskia Van Uffelen	Belgium	Saskia.van.uffelen@telenet.be	YES
3. Gergana Passy	Bulgaria	gerganapassy@gmail.com	YES
4. Dr Stelios Himonas	Cyprus	stelios.himonas@mcit.gov.cy.	YES
5. Ondřej Felix	Czech Republic	ondrej.felix@gmail.com	YES
6. Gilles Babinet	France	gbabinet@googlemail.com	Monday
7. Lord David Puttnam	Ireland	Digital.Champion@dcenr.ie	YES
8. Reinis Zitmanis	Latvia	reinis@itero.lv	YES
9. Tineke Netelenbos	NL	info@digivaardigdigiveilig.nl	YES
10. Włodzimierz Marciński	Poland	Wlodzimierz.Marcinski@mac.gov.pl	Monday
11. António Murta	Portugal	antonio.murta@pathena.com	YES
12. Paul-Andre Baran	Romania	pabaran@irex.ro	YES
13. Aleš Špetič	Slovenia	ales@spetic.si	YES

Apologies:

- Darko Paric, Croatia
- Lars Frelle-Petersen, Denmark
- Linda Liukas, Finland
- István Erényi, Hungary
- Francesco Caio, Italy
- Kęstutis Juškevičius, Lithuania
- Björn Ottersten, Luxembourg
- Godfrey Vella, Malta
- Peter Pellegrini, Slovakia
- Jan Gulliksen, Sweden
- Alicia Richart Ramon, Spain
- Martha Lane Fox, UK

Advisors attending the meetings:

- Radoslav Repa, SK