

## Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition

### Action Plan for 2018 and beyond

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The digital transformation of society, the economy and industries across all sectors will have a far-reaching impact for Europe and its citizens. It presents a major opportunity for Europe but is also accompanied by a number of challenges. In particular, Europe must ensure that its citizens and its labour force have **the appropriate digital skills to live and work in the new digital era**. No one must be left behind.

The Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition (Coalition) brings together Member States, companies, social partners, non-profit organisations and education providers who take action to tackle the lack of digital skills in Europe. It is organised around four major pillars:

- **Digital skills for all** – developing digital skills to enable all citizens to be active in our digital society;
- **Digital skills for the labour force** – developing digital skills for the digital economy, e.g. upskilling and reskilling workers, jobseekers; actions on career advice and guidance;
- **Digital skills for ICT professionals** – developing advanced digital skills for ICT professionals in all sectors of the economy;
- **Digital skills in education** – transforming teaching and learning of digital skills in a lifelong learning perspective, including the training of teachers.

A cross-pillar priority is to make sure women can make full use of the opportunities the digital economy provides, including how to motivate more girls and women to consider a career in digital.

The Governing Board of the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition (Board) was set up in September 2017 to improve the governance of the Coalition and to make it more impactful. In line with its mandate, it provides strategic advice, leadership and overall direction.

The first activities developed and supported by the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition confirmed the political importance to accelerate efforts to boost digital skills and to mobilise all key stakeholders to meet this key challenge in Europe. Based on the achievements so far, the Board believes that the following key elements need to be taken into account in the next phase of the Coalition:

- **Expand the current membership of the Coalition** across all sectors of the economy (in particular SMEs) by improving the value proposition of the initiative to make sure it attracts more and more active members.
- **Harness and include those networks** and actors who are providing the solutions on the ground, at national and local level; national, regional and local governments, regional grass-roots organizations and social partners but also actors at European level such as the Digital Champions;
- Make sure the **EU's future multiannual financial framework** is putting an emphasis on supporting digital skills so that all Europeans can make the most of the ongoing digital transformation.

Building on the success already achieved and to support further progress on the achievement of the Coalition's goals in the immediate future, the Governing Board proposes the following Action Plan for 2018 and beyond:



### ***Action 1: Contribute to the success of the Digital Opportunity Traineeship initiative***

The Board will support the European Commission's efforts to provide up to 6,000 students and recent graduates with hands-on experience in digital. The emphasis is on reaching under-served communities, including young women and people coming from adverse socio-economic circumstances. Members of the Board will promote the scheme within their organisations and networks by promoting this initiative through their channels and encouraging their respective stakeholders to participate.

### ***Action 2: Help expand the EU Code Week initiative to 50% of schools in Europe and beyond the school system.***

EU Code Week is a successful grassroots movement, contributing to changing the approach to digital education in Europe by leveraging intuitive coding activities to link together computer programming, creativity, innovation, and computational thinking. The Board will support Action 6 of the recently-adopted Digital Action plan (<https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/digital-education-action-plan.pdf>): "Bring coding classes to all schools in Europe, including by increasing schools' participation in EU Code Week". The Board will support the scaling up of the initiative to encourage all schools in Europe to participate in EU Code Week by making sure the members and pledging organisations of the Coalition collaborate with Code Week ambassadors, authorities in EU Member States, the eTwinning network, and all relevant stakeholders. The Board will also support joint initiatives enabling to associate both formal and non-formal education actors within the EU Code Week initiative.

### ***Action 3: Strengthen existing and build new bridges between different stakeholders.***

The objectives of the Coalition are shared by many stakeholders across Europe. These include the European Commission and its Digital Champions, Member State governments, the European Parliament, the Code Week Ambassadors, social partners, education systems, training providers, enterprises from different sectors and NGOs and not the least existing National Coalitions.

The Coalition will endeavour to link-up with other networks of stakeholders engaged in training. In particular, the aim is to engage with social partners at various levels. Social partners are key players in organising training for the labour force – in many countries and industries elaborate structures exist for this purpose.

### ***Action 4: Raise the level of funding available for digital skills in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)***

National Coalitions can make a meaningful impact by demonstrating leadership in identifying actions that can be taken at national, regional and local level that address the skills gap. Many of such actions however may rely on organisations receiving European Commission funding in order to implement these. The Board members represent organisations familiar and often experienced with the use of EU funds. The negotiations of the next long-term EU budget are a unique opportunity to ensure there are strong ties between the needs of local actors at member State level such as the National Coalitions and sources of funding from the EU, such as the ESF.

For the priorities of the next MFF, the Board recommends setting up the appropriate mechanisms for guaranteeing the visibility and the funding to be given to the digital skills agenda for the next period. More particularly, the Board recommends that the four pillars of the Coalition receive particular attention

for funding ambitious initiatives (Digital skills for citizens, Digital skills for the labour force, Digital skills for ICT professionals/advanced skills, Digital skills in education).

The Board's recommendations include:

- The establishment of appropriate financial support for the up-skilling and retraining of the labour force. A possible digital skills training fund could take the form of public-private partnership, involving the contributions from the EU with possibly matching funds from business or Member States.
- Ensuring that digital skills are strongly supported under the European Structural and Investment Funds in the next long-term EU budget.
- Improvements to the current funding system which could include easier procedures, faster decision making, pre-approval of projects, ensuring that also advanced technical skills are covered as well as development of a new funding models which meet the needs of all stakeholders.
- Particular attention to the digital skills in education, by ensuring a sustainable framework for supporting the participation of schools in EU Code week (associating also the non-formal education sector).
- Specific attention to the digital skills for all by developing specific actions, including actions for the target groups within the four pillars, to make sure they can reap all benefits of the digital transformation.

#### ***Action 5: Move membership and pledge commitment to the next level***

The membership of the Coalition needs to be expanded across all sectors of the economy. For this to happen, the current value proposition needs to be improved to make it more attractive. This should also be reflected in a joined-up communication activity, highlighting progress of the Coalition, success stories and best practices (with the promotion of successful pledges). It is important to ensure the continuation of an annual Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition conference and Awards competition and to continue promoting best practices at all levels from all sectors.

#### ***Action 6: Raise awareness about the digital skills for the current and future workforce.***

In looking to solutions to the digital skills gap, there is considerable emphasis on the supply side of the solution i.e. the various schemes, projects, best practices, providers. It is very important to also consider the demand side of the solution i.e. the individual workers, their managers, employees' representatives, trade unions and business leaders to convince them of the need for up-skilling in digital.

The Board recommends the launch of a Digital Skills Week campaign or a digital skills awareness, networking and training platform with a focus on activities at national level but linking up the national initiatives at European level. National Coalitions would be the driving force behind organising national/local actions (information sessions, workshops, networking events, etc.). The goals of the campaign would be to raise awareness about the importance of digital skills and the future roles and jobs available in the digital economy across all sectors of the industry. The campaign would target employers, workers, social partners, teachers, students and citizens. The campaign could be closed by a European event.

### **Action 7: Empowering the National Coalitions**

The existing National Coalitions have received in 2017 and 2018 minimal seed funding to activate their support tasks. This funding runs out at the end of July 2018. The Board recommends that additional funding be attributed to the existing and future National Coalitions, as well as more support for coordination, communication and exchange of best practices from the European Commission or by national governments. National coalitions should consider the participation of all stakeholders.

### **Action 8: Raise the level of digital skills of SMEs**

It is important to continue raising the level of digital skills within SMEs in various ways. As an example, the establishment of the network of Digital Innovation Hubs presents an excellent opportunity to disseminate information about possibilities to boost digital skills and the digital skills needs for the future among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Social dialogue mechanisms should also be used for this end.

The Board recommends that the European Commission encourage all Digital Innovation Hubs to become involved in their respective National Coalitions, with possible dedicated financial support for digital skills development, including skills for advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, high-performance computing or cybersecurity. The Coalition should drive a campaign to reach out and connect with all Digital Innovation Hubs for skills anticipation and delivery.

### **Action 9: Promote and leverage existing tools supporting the acquisition and assessment of digital skills**

Quite a lot of tools developed by the Commission already exist which support the 4 pillars of the Coalition (e.g. DigComp, European e-Competence Framework, Selfie). These tools are key for understanding, comparing and developing digital skills. The Board recommends to promote and leverage the use of all these tools at all levels of the Coalition.

*The outlined actions will be operationalized by the Board in cooperation with the members of the Coalition, national coalitions and the Commission services.*