

CONNECT UNIVERSITY SESSION
HOW CAN THE EU BOOST ADVANCED DIGITAL SKILLS?

27 FEBRUARY 2023, 10:00 – 12:00 CET

[The Digital Decade Policy Programme \(DDPP\) 2030](#), adopted by the EU in 2022, sets out a collaborative mechanism to ensure that Digital Decade objectives and targets are met in all Member States. [In force since the 9th of January 2023](#), the DDPP builds on already existing policies, programmes and strategies, setting out targets along 4 cardinal points, one of which being the **improvement of citizens' basic and advanced digital skills**.

[This year's Report on the 'State of the Digital Decade'](#), shows that **increasing digital skills in the population is one of the biggest challenges of the EU**, with **46% of Europeans**, particularly among older people, currently **not equipped with basic digital skills** – against the set target of 80% by 2030. Equally important is to ensure we meet the target number of **ICT specialists**, to avoid falling behind in the technological race. At this rate, by 2030 we will have 12 million ICT specialists, missing our target of 20 million. While the number of ICT specialists employed in the EU is growing, the Report highlights that **a majority of companies looking for ICT specialists continue to document substantial difficulties in recruitment**. The EU needs to **step up its efforts in the global race for talents**, particularly in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

How can this be done in practice?

The Commission is organising a CONNECT University session of about 2 hours on **Tuesday 27 February 2024** to discuss precisely this question.

The workshop will be divided into **two main parts**:

- **The first part** will feature two presentations setting the scene on where the EU stands with regards to the ICT specialists (advanced digital skills) target.
- **The second part** will be an open panel discussion with a number of experts, focusing on how we define ICT skills and why they are important, what different sectors are already doing to contribute to improving ICT skills, what are the challenges ahead of us, and what more can be done at EU level.

Agenda

10:00 – 10:10 – Setting the scene – ICT Skills in the 2023 Report on the ‘State of the Digital Decade’

- **Speaker:** Eric PETERS, Acting Head of Unit, Digital Decade Coordination, DG CONNECT

10:10 – 10:25 – What is the EU doing to improve advanced digital skills?

- **Speaker:** Rehana SCHWINNINGER-LADAK, Head of Unit for Interactive Technologies, Digital for Culture and Education, DG CONNECT – *participating online*

10:25 – 11:30 – Panel discussion

- **Moderator:** Brendan Rowan, Managing Consultant at BluSpecs

Speakers:

1. **Justina Bieliauskaite**, Innovation Director, European DIGITAL SME Alliance
2. **Madhumalti Sharma**, Entrepreneur & tech educator, EU Code Week Ambassador, EU Robotics National Coordinator [*representing the perspective of the importance of introducing children (and especially girls) to STEM/coding/etc. from an early age onwards*] - *participating online*
3. **Marc Durando**, Executive Director of EUN, European Schoolnet network
4. **Martin Hayes**, Professor of Digital Technologies at the University of Limerick & lead author of the “[Deans report](#)” on **How do we reach the target of 20 million ICT professionals by 2030?** [*representing the perspective of the Higher Education Sector*]
5. **Mylène Richard**, Director of Campus Région du Numérique Rhône-Alpes region
6. Representative from the Belgian Presidency of the Council (speaker TBC)

11:30 – 11:50 – Q&A with participants

11:50 – 12:00 – Conclusion – Rehana SCHWINNINGER-LADAK, Head of Unit for Interactive Technologies, Digital for Culture and Education, DG CONNECT – *participating online*

Background

The State of the Digital Decade Report

The first annual [report on the “State of the Digital Decade”](#) was published on 27th September 2023. It presents a ‘comprehensive’ outlook on EU’s digital transformation and identifies areas where progress is still insufficient.

The work behind it started last year, **with built cooperation and trust with Member States** to make the report reflect as much as possible a **shared diagnosis of the situation and of the actions** that should be taken.

It includes **a state of play of the EU’s digital transformation**. More specifically:

- A stock-taking on challenges and on the EU’s national progress towards the Digital Decade targets and objectives, and on Multi-Country Projects (MCPs);
- Thematic analyses, specifically focusing on big digital trends in 2023, leadership and sovereignty, digital citizenship, green transition, the international element, and working together within the EU through MCPs;
- Country chapters which describe the digitalisation and contribution of each Member State to the collective Digital Decade objectives;
- An analysis of significant gaps and shortages, and recommended actions to address them.

In terms of substance, the report sends a strong message – a wake-up call – to Member States and beyond, on the urgency to **act collectively** to complete the digital revolution. It encompasses key strategic areas – leadership and sovereignty, the empowerment of people and society as well as the twinning of the digital and green transformation including for verticals (i.e., industry, transport, energy). It also addresses the magnitude of investments and the policy adjustments needed to walk the talk on identified strategic areas for EU’s digital transformation. It contributes to better grasp how and where Member States have to focus and join efforts together with the Commission to realise the EU’s positive vision of change.

The Report in short – DIGITAL SKILLS

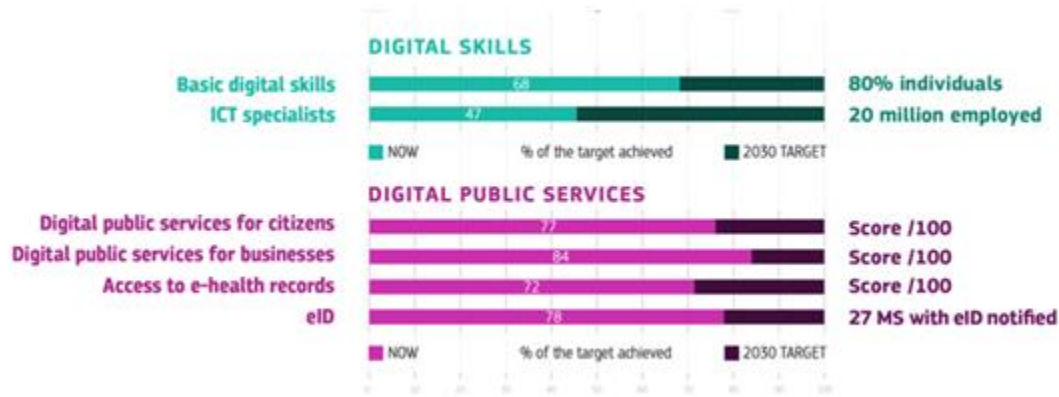


A HUMAN-CENTRED DIGITAL TRANSITION BASED ON EU VALUES

Ensuring that citizens are empowered and protected online and have adequate digital skills to fully benefit from the digital transformation, such as from digital public services, is at the base of the European Union's vision for an online world that is sustainable, safe, and inclusive for all.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Digital skills need to be put at the centre of the EU and Member States' actions through ambitious reforms to educate, attract and retain talents. To ensure that digital public services are accessible to all, we need to do more to provide everyone with the tools to benefit from the digital future we envision.



Next steps

The national Digital Decade strategic roadmaps

Member States submitted their national Digital Decade strategic roadmaps to the Commission.

In their roadmaps, Member States set out:

- the main implemented, adopted and planned policies, measures and actions contributing to the objectives and digital targets;
- national projected trajectories contributing to relevant digital targets measurable at national level;
- the impact expected to be made on each digital target as a result of the implemented, adopted and planned policies, measures and actions;
- the timing for implementation of the adopted and planned policies, measures and actions as well as an estimate of the timing when those policies, measures and actions are expected to produce an impact on the achievement of the digital targets.

On the basis of the national roadmaps and the fact-finding missions taking place now, the Commission will draft the 2024 State of the Digital Decade Report, planned to be published in June.