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Bulgarian Presidency of the Council  
of the European Union

## Sofia Call for Action on Digital Skills and Education

*[On the occasion of the Bulgarian Presidency Flagship conference “Educate to create: from Digital Consumers to Digital Creators” in Sofia on 19-20 April 2018, stakeholders from education and training, business, NGOs and government gathered to discuss the common challenges that Europe is facing in education and training. Conference participants call for a joint effort to harness the potential of digital technologies and support education and training to become more innovative, inclusive and accessible. ]*

1. We welcome the European Commission’s **Digital Education Action Plan** and call for its **dedicated and thorough implementation**. We invite the Commission to report regularly on progress and lessons learnt. We call on Member States to foster digital skills initiatives and, with the support of the Commission and all relevant stakeholders, to drive forward the digital transformation of education and training systems, also recognising the key role of non-formal and informal learning in helping people adapt to the digital age.
2. We call on **educational and training institutions**, stakeholders and educators to create and use educational content that is appropriate for the age and developmental stage of learners and to foster an inclusive environment for digital education and training. This should address the needs of all learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds. All learners should be supported and given opportunities to become **digital creators** of their own content and tools, in order to support their personal and professional growth.
3. We call on Member States to:
  - a. Ensure **digital education and access to digital skills for all**. This means providing access to all learners from an early age, and at all types and levels of education and training and in both formal and non-formal learning spaces, to comprehensive digital education that provides the necessary skills and competences in all relevant sub-fields – from algorithms, informatics and programming, through cybersecurity and resilience, to digital creativity, media literacy and others.

- b. Ensure a gender balanced approach in promoting ICT careers. Encourage and support more **female students and women** to pursue a career in the digital field;
- c. Make **inclusiveness and innovation** guiding principles for education and training in the digital age to ensure that digital technologies do not reinforce existing inequalities;
- d. Ensure lifelong learning opportunities for **teachers and trainers** to support the development digital competences of all learners; Promote the attractiveness and importance of the teacher profession and support teachers' continuous upskilling. Even though many of the jobs of the future are unknown yet, the teaching profession is among those that will retain its central role for society in the era of crosscutting technological innovation and artificial intelligence.
- e. Provide support to **school leaders** who are aiming to implement **whole-school approaches**, which encourage lifelong learning of their staff and facilitate collaboration with stakeholders, including non-formal education providers, parents and carers.
- f. Reflect on the need to incorporate digital skills and competences into national lifelong learning strategies with the aim to enhance learners' personal and professional development, active citizenship and inclusion in society.
- g. Exploit the potential of digital technologies to support innovative assessment methods, including self-assessment, that can supplement traditional approaches and better respond to the needs of learners.

4. We call on the Commission and Member States to:

- a. Increase and scale-up opportunities for **digital making** by encouraging and supporting digital making organisations, public services (such as libraries and local training centres), NGOs and businesses to extend the provision of digital making opportunities, and by providing teachers, trainers, parents, carers and learners the digital making opportunities available which indicates the responsibility of the industry in this regard;

Lifelong learning opportunities for digital skills needs to be available also for the current workforce.

- b. Explore the opportunities of Blockchain technology in an educational context, for example to enhance international student mobility.
  
- c. Ensure that **sufficient resources** from national budgets and European Structural and Investment Funds are allocated not only to connectivity and accessible digital educational infrastructure and resources, but also to basic and digital skills development at all levels and across all forms of education,-
  
- d. Strengthen the focus **of the next Erasmus+** Programme on adapting formal and non-formal education and training to the digital age for learners of all ages in all educational contexts.
  
- e. Bolster **cooperation between business, civil society, and formal and non-formal education including public-private or innovative partnerships** in order to develop digital skills training programmes for the upskilling and reskilling of all learners, educators and teachers.
  
- f. Promote awareness-raising at EU and national level on the need and importance of digital skills development and on the importance of **digital careers** equally accessible to all learners, regardless of their socio-economic background, abilities or disabilities.