

The Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition organises webinars with the National Coalitions for sharing best practices on addressing the challenges of the coronavirus crisis

The Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition is coordinating sessions with the National Coalitions and their members to identify and share good practices in meeting the sudden demand for digital skills.

Throughout the current crisis precipitated by the coronavirus pandemic, the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition organises thematic webinars with National Coalitions and their members who highlight their challenges, solutions and experiences in response to the sudden need for digital skills among Europeans. Each webinar centres on a specific topic related to the new challenges facing stakeholders such as SMEs, businesses and schools.

A list of compiled resources from the National Coalitions is being made available and will be regularly updated after each webinar.

Webinars

4th Webinar: Inclusion and solidarity, 18 May 2020

Watch the recording on Youtube.

The latest webinar in the series, having already dealt with solutions and initiatives for education and learning, SMEs and workers and digital specialists, turns to the topic of inclusion and solidarity. What has become apparent, throughout the emergency and confinement, is that the provision online of services and opportunities is only one part of the puzzle. During this webinar, participants were able to hear how initiatives have managed the transition online for training with elderly persons, the provision of equipment and software to school children in need in Romania and Belgium, and the role of government and the private sector in meeting these needs.

The engaging sessions were supported by an introduction to the new European Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative, allowing to mobilise quickly cash reserves from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) – the EU's cohesion money. These resources, managed by Member States, can support digital skills initiatives. A representative of the Digital Academy explained how to equip Europeans with advanced digital skills.

Reminder that there is an open call for the provision of AI master courses closing on the 25th June 2020.

Key takeaways:

- Ensuring that digital skills are developed across the whole of society is not solely about providing resources and training, free at the point of service. It is about overcoming the physical

and technical barriers for grandparents to communicate through devices, disadvantaged students having the appropriate devices to learn online and managing the communication and support to those who struggle to understand language or suffer from impairments.

- The network of public libraries within Member states represents a valuable resource in digital inclusion as demonstrated by the Connected Lithuania project, providing training to over 100,000 persons, the vast majority women and a significant proportion above the age of 51.
- Social media networks can be leveraged to provide one-to-one and group interventions online while physical encounters are hindered. Traditional media such as television and radio are also key to engaging older adults and those with fewer digital skills. In the short-term, as restrictions are eased, the physical elements of programmes can be increased through small, open-air gatherings.
- Delivering devices alone is one part of the challenge. The need to overcome knowledge, language or physical impairment preventing the activation and correct use has been brought into sharp relief by the crisis. This support alongside the device is much harder and intensive to deliver well but can take advantage of technologies such as chat bots.
- The most effective method for scaling such initiatives is to not create a novel or new initiative but rather to connect the ecosystem members who have the expertise, knowledge, channels, skills and relationships to execute and reach the most in need.
- Engagement beyond the ICT sector is central to the success and certain level of centralisation is required to align efforts and ensure multiplication rather than duplication. Certain standards in terms of devices and licences related to target beneficiaries could support this scaling.
- Security and privacy are key concepts which underpin the digitalisation of citizens and should be considered throughout the e-inclusion journey.
- Within the European structural funds, there has been a change in the implementation which provides the national governments with more flexibility to address the digital inclusion element of the COVID-19 crisis such as support to self-employed or SMEs for IT solutions, digital literacy to access digital medical care, etc. Interested parties should contact their national coordinating body to find out more.
- Advanced digital skills and literacy in technologies such as AI, IoT and blockchain are necessary across the population, not just for specialists as these technologies become more pervasive in the world of work and social care. The challenge remains in driving the engagement and promotion of basic skills in these areas.

Speakers:

- Viola Pinzi, European Digital Academy (presentation)
- Annika Ostergren and Silvia Merisio, Updates from the European Commission - EU Code Week and CEF call for Master courses in AI (presentation)
- Jurgita Vasilavičiūtė-Garunkštienė, Connected Lithuania (presentation)
- Resa Koleva-Demonty, How can the European Structural Funds can help? (presentation)
- Panel debate with: Saskia van Uffelen (presentation on PC Solidarity from Belgium), Valentin Negoita (presentation on IT4Kids rural from Romania) and Jana Novohradská (Slovakia)

3rd Webinar: Advanced digital skills and digital experts, 30 April 2020

Watch the recording on Youtube.

The focus of the third webinar with the National Coalitions was on the role of the digital experts and the promotion of advanced digital skills. Participants were first able to meet the Italian national coalition – the 24th and latest to be established. Then they heard about two specific actions from Italy and Ireland related to the development advanced skills like AI and Cybersecurity across the workforce and education. The session finished with a discussion around the creation of a targeted AI course –

Elements of AI - which has already reached 400,000 people and aims to grow and evolve with partners across Europe.

Key takeaways:

- As EU Member States seek to lessen the restrictions proportionally, we must be prepared for the challenges in skills mismatches created during the hard recovery.
- The Italian National Coalition aims to increase opportunities for people to find a job and to allow everyone to be ready for the digital era.
- AI and other advanced digital skills require a full spectrum approach, introducing the elements at the primary school level working towards life-long learning.
- Advanced digital skills training works best in response to and collaboration with enterprise and industry demand.
- Adaptations of programmes to more digital formats during the COVID19 crisis is seeing results and facilitating nationwide engagement not possible through physical events.
- Skills like AI are built up from the basics, spreading the knowledge and demystifying the concepts is the first step in ensuring the upskilling of the population and growing the strength of the labour force in this area.

Speakers:

- Brendan Rowan, Secretariat, Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, Updated on the new Call for pledges (presentation)
- Nello Iacono, Introduction of the new Italian Coalition for digital skills and jobs (presentation)
- Barbara Cominelli, Ambizione Italia by Microsoft (presentation)
- Carmel Somers, Technology Ireland ICT Skillnet, skills on cybersecurity (presentation)
- Interview about the online course "Elements of AI with professor Teemu Roos from the University of Helsinki and Ville Sinisalo from Reaktor

2nd Webinar: Companies, organisations and employees, 7 April 2020

Watch the recording on Youtube.

Centring on the theme of the changing environment of work and the impact on companies and their employees, the speakers brought diverse aspects to the session. Participants were able to hear about initiatives for encouraging companies and communities to promote remote working, how the IT community has come together to support the donation and distribution of old devices to school children, SMEs standing up to provide solutions to the current crisis and how Digital Innovation Hubs can be the catalyst for digitising in these times.

Key takeaways:

- Remote work is a full-time and salaried role but require companies to have the culture, technology and policies in place to make it happen successfully.
- While many training providers and governments are making huge strides in supporting online training and education, physical barriers to digital skills use exist.
- Digital SMEs are both beneficiaries and providers of solutions tackling the new world of work.

Speakers:

- Brendan Rowan, Secretariat, Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, New Call for pledges and current context (presentation)
- Tracy Keogh, Grow Remote, Concept of remote work and transformation of work methods

(presentation)

- Amalia Pelegrín, AMETIC, Spanish national coalition on how it helps businesses and employees (presentation)
- Giuseppe Linati, Digital Innovation Hub Lombardy, Example of what a digital innovation hub can do (presentation)
- Sebastiano Toffaletti, European Digital SME Alliance

1st Webinar: Digital solutions for education, 25 March 2020

Watch the recording on Youtube.

Speakers:

- Brendan Rowan, Secretariat, Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, Introduction to current context (presentation)
- Josef Dašek, Activity Coordinator, Czech Digital Coalition, Promoting Digital Education in Czechia (presentation)
- Alessandro Bogliolo, Ambassador Coordinator, EU Code Week, Overview of the impact on education in Italy
- Lidija Kralj, Assistant Minister, Croatian Digital Coalition, From 0-100%, transitioning to remote learning (presentation)
- Tonis Kusmin, CEO, 99Math Education Nation – digital learning tools from the Nordics

Downloads

Webinar 1 - Presentation by the Croatian digital coalition
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Webinar 4 - Presentation about EU Code Week and CEF call on Master courses in AI
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