PRESS RELEASE

Italy and Europe need to boost the e-Skills of the workforce to tap the job creation potential of ICT

ROME, OCTOBER 30th 2014 – Italy, with one of the lowest job vacancy rates in Europe, has one of the highest proportions of unfilled positions in the tech sector. With youth unemployment (ages 15-24 years old) last year at a shockingly high level of 40% it's hard to find a greater need for e-skills anywhere in Europe.

There were 15,000 job vacancies in the tech sector in Italy last year. In spite of the shortage of job vacancies in other sectors, 3000 of these tech positions went unfilled. Just over half of these job vacancies were for full-time positions, a third were part time and 13% were for apprenticeships, according to a study by the IT staffing services group Modis. Demand for people with e-skills is growing every year. In Italy Modis forecasts that the number of tech job vacancies will rise by around 4000 this year.

The situation in Italy may be one of the most extreme examples but the problem exists throughout the European Union. The skills gap – the gap between the number of jobs on offer and the number of people with the right qualifications to perform those jobs – is growing by 3% each year, according to the European Commission.

According to Empirica and IDC estimates the skills gap across the EU will grow from 275,000 in 2012 to half a million next year and 900,000 by 2020.

The latest statistics from the OECD on the Italian school and its degree of digital innovation leave no doubt: six computers per 100 students compared to a European average of 16; the percentage of students enrolled in schools which are high tech equipped is 6% compared to a European average of 37%. In the vast majority of cases the Italian schools are not digitally ready.

The OECD says that the Italian government spends about €30 million per year on the implementation of a digital education plan - roughly EUR 5 per student, or less than 0.1% of its education budget.

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There's an urgent need for action in Italy in particular," said John Higgins, Director General of DIGITALEUROPE. *"We are in danger of losing a generation of young people. It's essential that we get them back to work, and the obvious way to do that when there are so few positions available is to train up for the industries that are hiring. And that means acquiring the e-skills that tech jobs require,"* he said.

Digital skills are now a necessary part of education and vocational training. This is what prompted the European Commission's e-Skills for Jobs campaign.

The e-Skills for Jobs 2014 event taking place in Rome on October 30th is dedicated to addressing the skills gap that has emerged between stubbornly high unemployment and a growing number of unfilled digital jobs.

The Rome event brought together policymakers, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, ICT professionals and especially young people, to draw their attention to the growing need for digital skills.

The event - part of the European Commission's Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs – is being coordinated by DIGITALEUROPE at European level and by ANITEC, its Italian trade association member in Italy.

The main focus of the campaign is to raise awareness of the education, training, jobs, and other opportunities that are available to people with e-skills – those who know how to effectively use digital technologies. It will inform students, unemployed people, ICT professionals and SMEs about the vast range of opportunities that ICT-related jobs present During the course of 2014, the e-Skills for jobs campaign will run in 30 European countries*.

Michel Catinat, Head Unit, Key Enabling Technologies and Digital Economy, DG Enterprise and Industry at the European Commission, congratulated the organisers of the e-Skills for Jobs campaign in Italy and welcomed the new Italian plans to fill the digital gap. "*The Italian Presidency of the EU addressed prominently the e-skills challenge at its Digital Venice event organised last July. Today Italy presented its new ambitions to remedy the digital gap. The European Commission fully supports these efforts and is very committed to this important issue. The pan-European campaign e-Skills for Jobs will continue in 2015 and 2016 as we need to inform more people how to acquire e-skills and find jobs in the digital economy*".

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The campaign is coordinated by DIGITALEUROPE and European Schoolnet in conjunction with hundreds of national and pan-European partners including, SEPE (partner for Greece), the European Centre for Women and Technology, JA-YE, Telecentre Europe and many major IT industry partners.

"*Competence in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) is increasingly seen as a fundamental policy objective for our education systems. Europe needs pupils, citizens and a workforce – both inside and outside education – engaged with STEM subjects, capable of making informed scientific and technological choices and interested in careers in science and ICT.*" Marc Durando, European Schoolnet Executive.

Find out more about e-Skills for Jobs here: http://eskills-week.ec.europa.eu

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*Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UK.
**European Schoolnet Briefing Paper number 6 http://www.eun.org/observatory/surveyofschools/

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