



Digital Agenda Assembly - A Success but Digital Skills & Competences Remain Crucial for Overall Digital Agenda Progress

05th July 2011

The fact that the first Digital Agenda Assembly, 16 - 17 June, was attended by approximately 1,500 delegates, yet 2,500 others who had expressed an interest in attending had to be turned away, is a clear indication of the importance of the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) and of the success of the event itself. The purpose of the European Commission-organised event was to assess the progress to date of the aims of the Digital Agenda for Europe, and to plan further concrete actions in a multi-stakeholder, collaborative environment.

One of the key pillars of the DAE is 'Enhancing Digital Literacy, Skills and Inclusion', and a series of plenary sessions, panel discussions, and workshop sessions were held at the assembly to assess the progress of the DAE in this area, and to determine future actions to be taken. ECDL Foundation CEO, Mr. Damien O'Sullivan, presented at the main digital literacy and e-inclusion session; he confirmed ECDL Foundation's commitment to high-level aims of the DAE and announced a series of national events, driven by ECDL Foundation and its pan-European network, that will promote the DAE and will influence decision makers who are either unconvinced or unaware of the importance of digital literacy as a policy issue. He called on the European Commission to assist in connecting these events with influencers across Europe, and in making digital literacy and e-inclusion a political imperative. At a national level, this can only be achieved if governments adopt permanent digital literacy strategies and implement them urgently. If European digital literacy levels are not significantly raised, in a timely and comprehensive manner, many other aims of the DAE will not be achieved.

According to Mr. O'Sullivan:

"Accomplishing the targets of the Digital Agenda requires immediate action to reach out to all of those across Europe who are unconvinced or uninformed of the potential of ICT to empower people; this means policy commitment from every Member State, dedicated funding allocated for skills development, and long-term planning delivered with short-term urgency."

As a prelude to the event, the 'Digital Agenda Scoreboard' reported details of the progress that has been made in the delivery of all aims of the DAE since it was launched in May 2010. Despite reporting much welcome progress, the scoreboard highlights the following troubling statistics: only 18.5% of employed people in Europe possess ICT user skills, and the ICT skills uptake rate amongst disadvantaged groups is also still only at 48%.

Additionally, in assessing the progress in European digital literacy rates, the scoreboard only takes into account the ability of individuals to negotiate the Internet. ECDL Foundation believes this to be too low a metric for determining digital literacy; to avoid exclusion, and to be able to participate fully in a knowledge society, individuals need to possess end-user computer skills at a considerably higher level than those which enable them to merely operate online.

ECDL Foundation reaffirms its continued commitment to the DAE as an ambitious yet achievable roadmap for the creation of a sustainable, inclusive, and competitive digital economy for Europe.

In Malta, ECDL Malta is responsible for operating ECDL certification programmes on behalf of the ECDL Foundation which is the certifying authority of the world's leading end-user computer skills certification programme.

For more information about the ECDL programmes view our website www.ecdl.com.mt .

ECDL Malta may be contacted via e-mail on info@ecdl.com.mt or phone number 21667706.