



Benchmarking Policies on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for e-Skills in Europe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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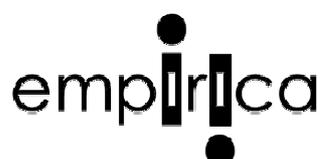
RESEARCH TEAM:

WERNER B. KORTE
NOMO BRAUN
KARSTEN GAREIS

Prepared for the European Commission



and the European e-Skills Forum



1 Background and Introduction

Further to the work of the European e-Skills Forum¹ and the report of the ICT Task Force² (November 2006), the European Commission's Communication³ on "e-Skills for the 21st Century: Fostering Competitiveness, Growth and Jobs" (September 2007) and the Competitiveness Council Conclusions on "A Long-Term Strategy for e-Skills" (November 2007), **there is now a strong consensus on e-skills in Europe**. E-skills are becoming central in formulating policy designed to ensure that Europe can boost the productivity and the employability of its workforce and respond to global competitive challenges.

The Declaration of the European e-skills conference⁴ (October 2006, Thessaloniki) emphasised the need for Europe to ensure that the knowledge, skills, competences and inventiveness of the European workforce – including, but not limited to, its ICT practitioners – meet the highest global standards, and that they are constantly updated in a process of effective lifelong learning. To this end, the Declaration calls for efforts "to improve co-operation between the public and the private sectors on a balanced and long term basis and to ensure a seamless framework linking basic e-skills training, vocational and higher education and professional development for the benefit of the workforce". This means that "**the way forward towards the widening and deepening of e-skills within the EU is through involvement of all actors from government, industry, social partners and academia in multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnerships for action**".

In his speech⁵ at the launch of the e-skills industry leadership board⁶ (June 2007), Günter Verheugen, Vice-President of the European Commission, referred to the three key messages which recently emerged: it is essential to adopt a long-term and consistent e-skills agenda; co-operation between the public and private sectors must be improved in order to link effectively basic e-skills training, higher education and professional development; and industry and policy makers should act more decisively and consistently regarding their strategies to promote the attractiveness of ICT education, jobs and careers.

He continued by stating that the components of a long-term e-skills agenda include "the longer term cooperation between public authorities, industry, academia, trade unions and associations through scalable and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships; human resources investment to ensure sufficient public and private sector investments in e-skills education; attractiveness and the promotion of science, maths and ICT as well as role models, job profiles and career perspectives; employability and e-inclusion and the development of digital literacy and e-competence actions tailored to the needs of groups at risk of exclusion; lifelong acquisition of e-skills and the promotion of better and more user-centric e-learning approaches."

2 Definition of multi-stakeholder partnerships

In the context of e-skills development, **multi-stakeholder partnerships** (MSP) have received substantial attention. The European e-Skills Forum identified multi-stakeholder partnerships as a key requirement for making progress towards a situation in which e-skills attainment is continuously adapted to e-skills needs and requirements in Europe. Multi-stakeholder partnership is seen as "a more general concept than public-private partnership (PPP)", offering the potential to stimulate cooperation between educational or training establishments, enterprises, and other key stakeholders (social partners, associations and intermediaries) on e-skills issues including training, certification, market transparency and so forth.

2.1 What do we mean by multi-stakeholder partnerships?

The key feature of multi-stakeholder partnerships is that private-sector partners (industry, employers from the private sector) take **new roles and responsibilities** which have been held (more or less) exclusively in traditional education systems by public sector institutions. They build

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm> and <http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/esf>

² <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/taskforce.htm>

³ COM (2007) 496 final

⁴ www.e-skills-conference.org

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemshortdetail.cfm?item_id=698

⁶ www.e-skills-ilb.org

pragmatically on the recognition that the private sector can complement, supplement and extend services provided by the public sector by increasing the available resources, expertise and channels.

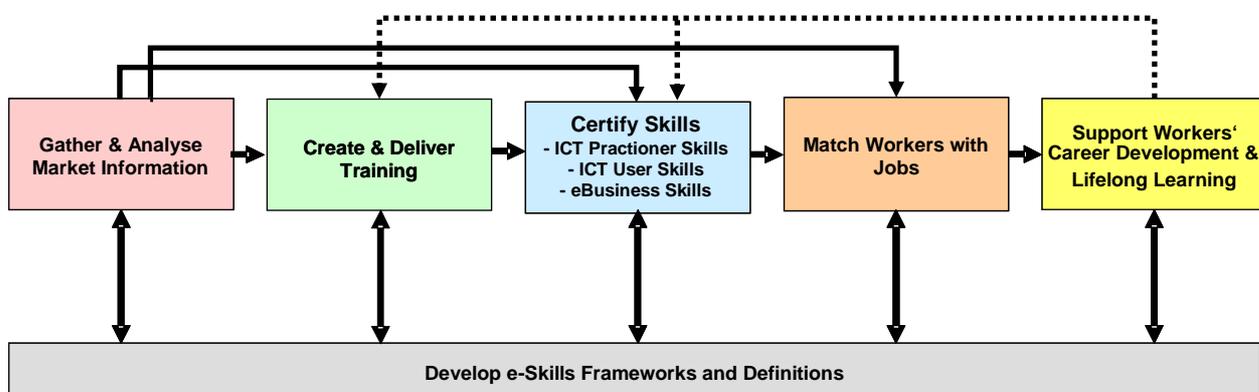
They are related to the idea of **public-private partnerships** (PPP), which are usually defined as systems in which a government service is funded and operated through a partnership between government and one or more private sector companies. In a multi-stakeholder partnership, non-industry partners come not only from the public sector but also from social partners and civil society, e.g. trade unions, non-governmental associations (NGO), etc. A key difference is the **emphasis on involving key relevant stakeholders** for a certain e-skills related issue – rather than just a couple of partners who join forces to stem a fixed-term assignment. This is seen as the best way to ensure that progress will be self-sustainable and all-encompassing, as opposed to piecemeal, opportunistic and uncoordinated approaches. Some of these multi-stakeholder partnerships have also been launched by IT vendors and other stakeholders under the umbrella of the corporate social responsibility alliance (CSR).⁷

Multi-stakeholder partnerships present the possibility of overcoming the traditional polarisation between the public education system, which is the main factor behind supply of (formalised) skills on the labour market, and employers, which exert demand for particular skills. In many cases, industry has stepped in to **fill the gap** which it perceives between the skills supplied by formal education systems on the one hand, and the current needs of employers on the other hand. The fast-moving area of e-skills has been a field where industry-based education has quickly become one of the mainstays of skills provision. This has helped to close some of the most obvious gaps in skills availability on labour markets and to overcome some of the structural shortcomings of formal systems of education.

2.2 Areas for multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives in Europe

Over the years, multi-stakeholder partnerships on e-skills have been developed for different purposes.

The “idealised” e-skills development process



Source: Modified from e-Skills Forum Issue Paper, March 2004

In order to identify and categorise the main areas in which these can be active, it is useful to look at the idealised e-skills development process (cf. box below) which distinguishes between the following elements: (1) market information; (2) creation and delivery of training; (3) skills certification; (4) matching workers with jobs; (5) support for career development and lifelong learning; and (6) skills frameworks and definitions.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/index_en.htm

Categorisation and application areas of multi-stakeholder partnerships on e-skills

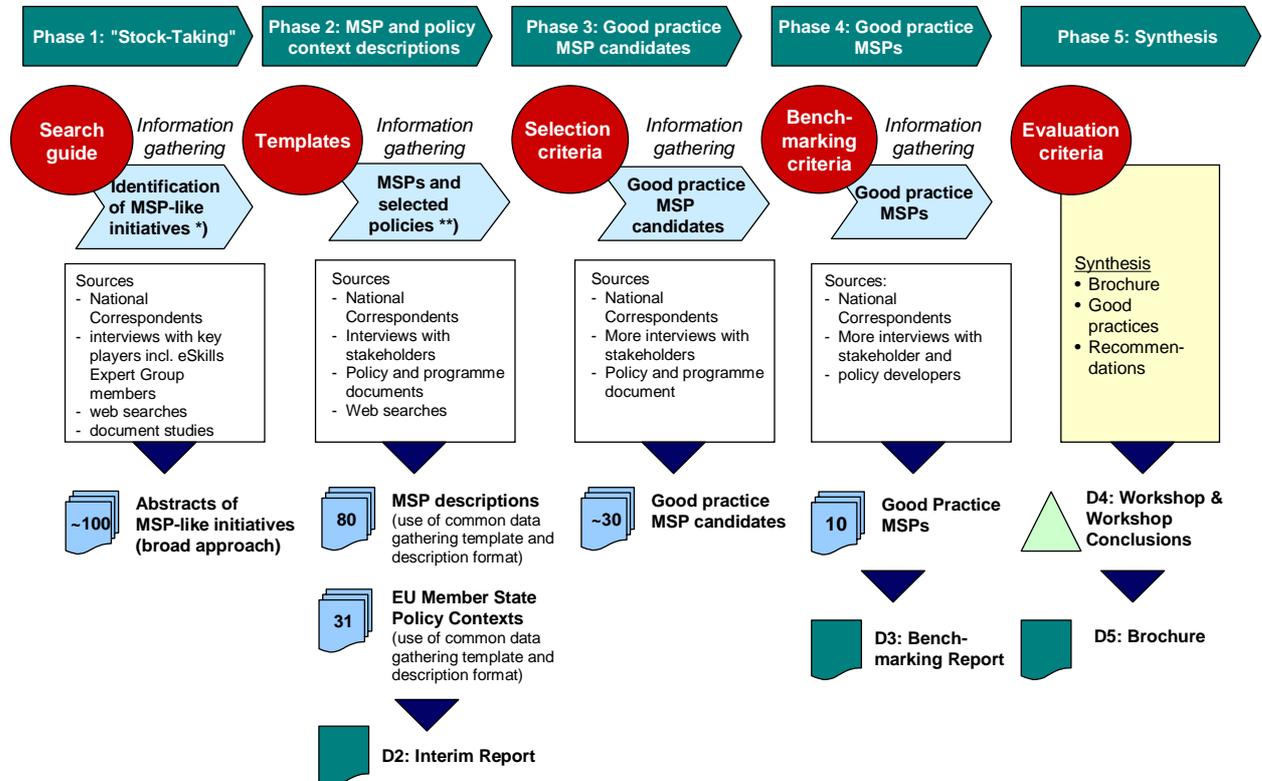
Market Information	This includes regular gathering, analysis and publication of information about supply and demand in e-skills, and the skills gaps, mismatches and shortages resulting from these, as well as future needs for e-skills. The information and the data need to be collected and disseminated in effective and efficient ways.
Creation and delivery of training	This includes the development and continuous updating of ICT-related curricula to fit the rapid pace of technical innovation as well as the evolving needs of industry and society. It is crucial to provide students and workers with alternative channels of educational achievement and there is a need for enhancing workers' capability for "on-the-job" and "just-in-time learning". SMEs need to be enabled to engage more in staff training and new approaches to delivering e-skills are needed, whereby the contribution of e-learning should be better exploited.
e-skills certification	Individuals need to be enabled to get their prior learning recognized and certified, regardless of how, when or where it was acquired. Progress in skills certification could improve the ability of workers to signal their skills to potential employers, thereby improving the efficiency of the market mechanism on the labour market. Certification activities can apply a vendor-specific or a vendor-independent approach.
Matching workers with jobs	This implies the establishment of a coherent system or mechanism to steer relevant individual professional and skill development to meet the needs of employers and society and the ambitions of individuals. Facilitating geographical workforce mobility across regions and countries is an important element in this. Related measures include the implementation of highly usable Internet portals/knowledge databases.
Support for career development and lifelong learning	In order to improve the skills of the labour force with regard to its ability to meet the requirements of employers, all stakeholders need to step up their efforts to strengthen employability. This includes support for career development and lifelong learning, both of them independent – as much as possible – from individual employers and job positions held. Related initiatives include creation of social support structures for the mobile workers of today. The ultimate goal is a labour force which is provided with the possibility and the ability to increase its skills, strengthen its employability, and get better job opportunities.
e-Skills frameworks and definitions	A horizontal objective which touches upon market information, development and delivery of training, certification as well as supply-demand matching and support to employability is the development of widely recognised e-skills frameworks and definitions. Such frameworks are needed for the much-needed "impact-laden, effective, and efficient ways to enable knowledge flow between industry and educational institutions". Examples of such initiatives launched in the late 90s include AITTS with APO-IT (Germany) ⁸ and SFIA (U.K.) ⁹ at the national level, and more recently efforts launched in 2007 to develop a European e-Competence Framework in the context of the European Standardisation Committee (CEN/ISSS).

⁸ <http://www.kibnet.org/english/en.aitts/content.en.aitts.2/index.html>

⁹ <http://www.sfia.org.uk/>

3 The methodological framework of the study

The methodological framework of the study describes **five phases** of data collection and activity and – for each step or phase – a set of selection / evaluation criteria or data gathering templates to guide data collection and analysis as well as multi-stakeholder partnerships and/or policy context description development was developed (see the figure below).



*) supported by information gathering guide **) supported by data gathering templates

Altogether, more than 100 multi-stakeholder partnerships initiatives were found in the 31 countries covered; 87 detailed multi-stakeholder partnerships descriptions were produced, including their relevant policy contexts; 30 good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships candidates were selected; and 10 best practices multi-stakeholder partnerships have been identified.

4 Multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills: overview and typology

Different types of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills in Europe exist which can be differentiated according to target groups and organisations. An attempt to develop a typology of these multi-stakeholder partnerships resulted in the following types. In the last column, the number of multi-stakeholder partnerships in each category which have been analysed and described in more detail is provided.

Overview of the typology multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills in Europe

MSP Type	Multi-stakeholder partnerships	Number
INDUSTRY		
Workforce development and e-skills certification of IT practitioners		
Type 1:	Multi-stakeholder partnerships of private sector partners, together with partners from the public and civic sector (e.g. trade unions, NGO). They correspond very well to our definition. Very good examples of such multi-stakeholder partnerships include major e-skills initiatives such as e-Skills UK ¹⁰ in the United Kingdom; Formatic ¹¹ partnership and Brutec ¹² in Belgium; Loket MBO-ICT ¹³ (aiming at the intensification of the cooperation between Ecabo and Kenteq) ¹⁴ in the Netherlands and FIT (Fast Track to IT ¹⁵) and Skillnets in Ireland. This kind of multi-stakeholder partnership has also been used to set up ICT skills frameworks, such as SFIA (Skills Framework for the Information Age) in the United Kingdom ¹⁶ ; AITTS (Advanced IT Training System) ¹⁷ and its methodology, APO IT, in Germany; and the referential of ICT skills developed by CIGREF ¹⁸ in France. Many European companies operating in these countries developed their “e-competence” catalogues on them. However, multi-stakeholder partnerships of this type (i.e. multi-stakeholder partnerships of private-sector partners, together with partners from the public and civic sector) still do not exist in many European countries. It seems that there is a solid ‘tradition’ for e-skills multi-stakeholder partnerships in some European countries which still does not exist in others. Approximately 30 such multi-stakeholder partnerships have been described.	32
Type 2:	Vendor initiated multi-stakeholder partnerships and industry-based e-skills training and certifications (“vendor qualifications”) such as Cisco Systems (Cisco Networking Academy Program, CNAP ¹⁹), Microsoft (Microsoft IT Academy Program ²⁰), Oracle and other vendors and which have been set up with the involvement of local/regional/national government(s) (institutions) and training centres, universities and schools. IT Vendor-initiated multi-stakeholder partnerships are usually based on worldwide programmes and exist in all European countries under review. Around 20 have been selected but it was decided to describe only the most prominent examples in more detail, thereby focusing on some examples at local, regional and national levels. Slovakia, Poland, Romania and Hungary are at a national level, and Spain (Catalonia) and Germany (Thuringia) are at a regional level. Additional examples, which are also described, originate from countries like Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland.	19
EDUCATION		
(Universities, high schools, colleges, vocational schools) E-skills development through vendor-based qualification offers (from awareness to courses and certification)		
Type 3:	Initiatives of governments, universities, IT companies, associations, etc., to create an awareness and promote IT-based studies at universities to ensure that a larger number of male and female students start studying IT subjects and/or to familiarise them with more professional uses of IT. It is not aiming at directly qualifying/certifying individuals to become IT practitioners. It was decided to focus on very successful cases for further	10

¹⁰ www.e-skills.com

¹¹ www.formatic.be

¹² www.brutec.be

¹³ www.loketmboict.nl

¹⁴ www.syntens.nl/ndiv

¹⁵ www.fit.ie/fit_home.htm

¹⁶ www.sfia.org.uk/

¹⁷ www.kibnet.org/english/en.aitts/content.en.aitts.2/index.html

¹⁸ <http://cigref.typepad.fr>

¹⁹ www.cisco.com/web/learning/netacad/index.html

²⁰ www.microsoft.com/education/msitacademy/default.aspx

	description. These are originating from larger European countries and from Nordic countries, where this type of multi-stakeholder partnership is more prominent (e.g. TISIP in Norway ²¹ and VålJIT in Sweden ²²).	
Type 4:	Initiatives of governments and universities, together with vendors, aimed at considering vendor-based trainings and certifications (e.g. CNAP) in IT studies at polytechnics, universities and as part of the training of apprentices at vocational schools. These initiatives, such as the Cátedras Telefónica ²³ in Spain, can be seen as a further attempt outside the business world to increase the number of IT practitioners.	3
CITIZENS Digital literacy, basic e-skills development to support employability of individuals		
Type 5:	Digital literacy initiatives with or without certificates addressed to citizens and special needs groups, including teacher training initiatives, etc. Only those with a strong focus on improving the employability of the workforce have been selected including the national activities of the "European Alliance on skills for Employability" ²⁴ launched by IT vendors and other stakeholders in 2006 and progressively implemented in Greece, Germany, Belgium, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Some of these have been selected for further analysis and description, including "IT Fitness" in Germany ²⁵ .	20
EUROPEAN-WIDE SCHEMES		
Type 6:	Specific types of European-wide multi-stakeholder partnerships which indirectly result in e-skills related multi-stakeholder partnerships in different countries, such as the EU Grants Advisor initiative from Microsoft (EUGA) ²⁶ , or include plans and first national initiatives for further developments of already existing initiatives addressed to citizens, such as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) ²⁷ from the ECDL Foundation.	3
	Total number:	87

5 Analysis of the good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships

The analysis revealed that multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills are increasingly becoming commonplace in Europe. There is a steady development of multi-stakeholder partnerships and they widely exist in different forms and facets. The majority of these initiatives are targeting citizens to help them achieve and further develop their digital literacy (i.e. basic e-skills). Well-focused types of schemes and initiatives addressed specifically to the further e-skills development and certification for IT practitioners (i.e. professional and advanced e-skills) have been identified in all European countries. The main focus of the study was on the latter type of multi-stakeholder partnerships, but some key results of all different types are briefly presented before concentrating on a more detailed elaboration of the results on the e-skills multi-stakeholder partnerships. They can be distinguished according to the **target groups** being addressed and the type of e-skills to be provided and/or further developed.

These are mainly addressed to the:

- **Citizens** for digital literacy improvement to increase their employability;
- **Public education system** like universities, high schools, colleges and vocational schools offering e-skills development through vendor-based e-skills training and certification activities and ranging from awareness and promotion activities, initiatives to make these offers an integral part of the study programme, to multi-stakeholder partnerships offering and running such training courses and certification opportunities;

²¹ www2.tisip.no/engelsk/elaring.html

²² www.valjit.nu

²³ www.uc3m.es/uc3m/inst/GRAL/catedras/telefonica.html

²⁴ www.e-skills-ilb.org/initiatives/ease.aspx

²⁵ www.it-fitness.de

²⁶ www.microsoft.com/emea/euga

²⁷ www.ecdl.com/publisher/index.jsp

- **IT practitioners** including well known and widely recognised vendor-based schemes, but also those developed by different groups of stakeholders, as part of multi-stakeholder partnerships with the aim to establish vendor-independent e-skills schemes.

Quantitatively, the majority of initiatives are addressed to citizens and include digital literacy activities aiming at basic e-skills provision to individuals of different types (e.g. unemployed, disabled people, special needs groups etc.). Some of them aim to increase their employability in an information-based economy. Initiatives with a strong focus on improving the employability of the workforce are of relevance for the study and have been analysed in more detail. These range from the national activities of the "European Alliance on Skills for Employability" launched by IT vendors and other stakeholders under the umbrella of the Corporate Social Responsibility Alliance (CSR)²⁸ in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Portugal and the United Kingdom, but also to large-scale ECDL initiatives²⁹. Some of these have been selected for further analysis and description.

Further initiatives include those addressed to actors in the public education system (universities, high schools, colleges and vocational schools) and offer e-skills development through vendor-based qualification offers ranging from awareness and promotion of IT-based studies at universities to ensure that a larger number of male and female students start studying IT subjects and/or to familiarise them with more professional uses of IT to initiatives offering actual courses and certification opportunities. Again, such activities can be found throughout Europe. In this study, it was decided to focus only on very successful cases for further description as part of the present study and only select some, mainly from larger member states and the Nordic countries, where this type of multi-stakeholder partnership is more prominent (e.g. TISIP in Norway and VäjIT in Sweden). Further initiatives selected include those of governments and universities, together with vendors aimed at considering vendor-based trainings and certifications (e.g. CNAP) in IT studies at polytechnics, universities, and also as part of the training of apprentices at vocational schools. These initiatives - such as the Cátedras Telefónica - can be seen as a further attempt outside the business world and industry to increase the number of IT practitioners.

E-skills multi-stakeholder partnerships schemes addressed to IT practitioners could be identified in all European countries whereby these range from well known and widely recognised vendor-based schemes to those developed by different groups of actors as part of multi-stakeholder partnerships with the aim to establish vendor-independent e-skills schemes. These schemes can vary in scope and range from those aimed at gathering relevant market information, those for the creation and delivery of training to e-skills certification, the matching of workers with jobs, the support for career development and lifelong learning and finally those addressed to the development of e-skills frameworks and definitions. An important expectation of IT training companies is that relevant high-quality industry-based e-skills training and certifications (those which are highly appreciated and in demand by employers and IT practitioners) receive some form of **recognition by formal education systems** in Europe (i.e. integrated to national qualification systems).

To date this expectation has been addressed in some European countries by:

- The recognition of some vendor certifications by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority³⁰ (QCA) in the United Kingdom;
- The recognition of vendor certifications by the Dutch National Body for Vocational Education (ECABO) in the Netherlands;
- The development of a "National Vocational Qualification" (NVQ) in Hungary based solely on the first four semesters of the Cisco Networking Academy Program (CNAP).

Although e-skills development and certification schemes of different types have been developed and are offered by IT vendors in all countries under review, initiatives have emerged and developed by different stakeholder to reduce the dependency on such schemes which have resulted in the development of vendor-independent schemes. Since the **focus of the study was on e-skills schemes addressed to IT practitioners**, the following sections will focus on these

²⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/index_en.htm

²⁹ For example in the UK, see : www.ecdl.nhs.uk

³⁰ <http://www.qca.org.uk>

and further elaborate on the key issues and success factors using some selected good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills as they have been identified as part of the study.

Overview of good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills in Europe

Country	Name of multi-stakeholder partnerships	MSP type
VENDOR-INDEPENDENT multi-stakeholder partnerships		MSP type
Belgium	TechnofuturTIC competence centre	e-skills training and certification
Finland	ChangePro	e-skills training and certification, focus: SMEs
France	« La nomenclature des métiers du système d'information dans les grandes sociétés 2005 » by CIGREF (Club informatique des grandes entreprises françaises)	e-skills framework development
Germany	AITTS (Advanced IT Training System) and APO IT	e-skills framework and methodology development
Germany	KIBNET (Kompetenzzentrum IT-Bildungsnetzwerke) (Competence Centre IT Training)	e-skills awareness and promotion
Ireland	FIT "Fast Track to IT"	e-skills training and certification, focus: unemployed
Netherlands	LOKET MBO-ICT	e-skills framework development
United Kingdom	SFIA (Skills Framework for the Information Age) Foundation	e-skills framework development
United Kingdom	e-Skills UK	e-skills framework development, awareness and further activities
VENDOR-BASED multi-stakeholder partnerships		
Cisco Systems		
Germany	Cisco Networking Academy Program (CNAP) in Thuringia	e-skills training and certification
Germany	Cisco meets APO	e-skills awareness and promotion leading to training and certification
Bulgaria	CIST (Centre for Information Society Technologies)	e-skills training and certification
Poland	E-Pracownik (E-Employee)	e-skills training and certification
Microsoft		
Germany	" IT Fitness " (part of the 'European Alliance on Skills for Employability')	e-skills awareness, promotion, training and certification
Portugal	Technology, Innovation and Initiative Programme (Programa Tecnologia, Inovação e Iniciativa)	e-skills training and certification
Europe-wide	EUGA (EU Grants Advisor)	Enabler for multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills
Oracle		
United Kingdom	Oracle Workforce Development Programme	e-skills training and certification
United Kingdom	Oracle Academy	e-skills training and certification

5.1 Vendor-independent e-skills and certification schemes

Vendor-independent e-skills and certification schemes have been developed and promoted over the past ten years in several European countries. However, there are huge differences across Europe with clear frontrunner countries where one can observe a longer tradition of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills which have resulted in well developed vendor-independent e-skills frameworks and job profiles. These are regularly updated by different actors and provide a framework to which also vendor-based schemes adhere to and map on.

This applies to countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, with internationally well known e-skills frameworks and

methodologies like AITTS (Advanced IT Training System) with APO IT in Germany³¹, SFIA (Skills Framework for the Information Age) in the United Kingdom³², the referential developed by CIGREF (Club informatique des grandes entreprises françaises) in France, and LOKET MBO-ICT (formerly ECABO) in the Netherlands. In these countries, vendor-independent schemes co-exist with vendor-based IT practitioner schemes.

The situation in the New Member States is different. Here the e-skills development and certification scene is largely dominated by the vendor-based training and certification schemes. In extreme cases, such as in Hungary, these and the associated curricula have even been adopted by the national vocational IT education systems as national standards in this area. Nowhere in these countries can vendor-independent schemes be identified which aim at IT practitioner e-skills development and/or certification. Initiatives identified are addressed to citizens, universities, schools, etc. and not the IT practitioner employee or employer.

5.2 Vendor-based e-skills and certification schemes

Vendor-based schemes are widely known and offered in Europe and are well recognised in industry and by employees and other players in the field. Among the most prominent vendor-based schemes, one can find those from Cisco Systems (Cisco Networking Academy Program), Microsoft (Microsoft Academy, initiatives as part of the 'European Alliance on Skills for Employability') and Oracle (Workforce Development Programme, Oracle Academy). But many other vendors are also active in this field. Typically these schemes have been set up as multi-stakeholder partnerships with the involvement of local, regional or national government(s), (institutions) and training centres, universities and schools. The ones selected as good practices include some typical examples and have been further analysed as part of the study.

What became apparent is that vendor-based initiatives dominate the market of e-skills development and training in many European countries, especially in the new Member States, where they typically team up with commercial training institutions and public institutions to provide their offers. Here, no major vendor-independent partnership could be identified.

5.3 Cooperation of vendor-independent and vendor-based certification schemes

Cooperation of vendor-based schemes with independent schemes is now starting to emerge. An example for this is "Cisco meets APO" which constitutes a combination of the global Cisco Networking Academy Program and the German APO IT³³ further training concept. Both partners use existing structures and content, but the combination results in a new quality of further education for employees in the IT industry.

The founding partners of the Cisco meets APO partnership are Cisco Systems and the Metal Workers' Union (IG Metall). The "Cisco meets APO" initiative includes many other partners and represents a typical multi-stakeholder partnership. The social partners of the IT industry, Cisco Systems as a private company, KIBNET as the APO IT further training consulting institution and two certification bodies (Cert IT and GPS Cert) are involved at the institutional level³⁴.

6 Characteristics and evaluation of e-skills multi-stakeholder partnerships

A further elaboration of the key issues and success factors of multi-stakeholder partnerships addressed to IT practitioner skills development and certification focused in more detail on the following issues: (1) stakeholder involvement; (2) structure, institutional frameworks, governance and business model; (3) duration; (4) financial issues and funding; (5) external communications,

³¹ <http://www.kibnet.org/english/en.aitts/content.en.aitts.2/index.html>

³² <http://www.sfia.org.uk/>

³³ <http://www.kibnet.org/english/en.aitts/content.en.aitts.2/index.html>

³⁴ www.cisco-meets-apo.filmportrait.de/; www.cert-it.de/index.php?article_id=252

PR and marketing; (6) achievements; (7) future development and scalability, capacity to grow; (8) sustainability; and (9) transferability.

The aim is to learn from existing good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills and support stakeholders in other European countries and regions on policy and strategy development in this area, thus avoiding having to make the same mistakes which others have already experienced and learning from the previous lessons learned by the players in these multi-stakeholder partnerships.

6.1 Stakeholder involvement

The kind of stakeholders, their number, and the type and intensity of involvement in a multi-stakeholder partnership vary heavily and strongly depend on the type of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Differences occur as to whether a multi-stakeholder partnership is addressed to e-skills framework development, such as AITTS, SFIA or CIGREF, or aiming at e-skills development and certification like e.g. FIT or APO IT³⁵, or whether it includes the establishment and operation of a (not-for-profit) institution set up by different actors trying to unite industry, educators and government in collaborative action to ensure that European countries have the skills necessary to compete globally (e.g. e-skills UK), or whether it constitutes a vendor-based multi-stakeholder partnership for e-skills. Several of the vendor-independent schemes also aim at the involvement of the social partners.

6.2 Structure, framework conditions, governance and business model

6.2.1 Structure and set-up of multi-stakeholder partnerships

The structure and set-up of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills in Europe varies significantly across the countries and schemes with very different institutional frameworks being applied.

These include schemes which have been implemented as:

- **Government funded competence and training centres** (e.g. TechnofuturTIC, Loket MBO-ICT) providing related services,
- **Legal entities governed by a board** which are primarily government funded agencies/offices either directly or indirectly funded through awarding contracts by governments for the performance of specific services (e.g. e-Skills UK, FIT),
- **Publicly funded projects** making use of either national funding programmes (e.g. APO IT, KIBNET) or European structural funds such as the European Social Funds (ESF) (e.g. ChangePro³⁶, e-Pracownik³⁷),
- **Research and training centres at a University** set up with funds from EU PHARE and TEMPUS programmes offering vendor-based e-skills training and certifications services on a commercial basis (CIST³⁸ and other examples mainly in the New EU Member States),
- **Service offer by a foundation** (ECDL) already active in the field of digital literacy courses and certifications to citizens to act as promoter to bring a product (e-skills certification developed by a informatics professions association) into the market, and
- **An agency** fully funded by the commercial partners operating on a project base (IT Fitness project running as part of the “European Alliance on Skills for Employability”).

These are complemented by the **broad range of vendor-based schemes**, all of which are based on a business model and are operating according to similar principles. In most cases, these schemes also manage to achieve some direct, yet mostly indirect public funding through a division of labour in these schemes, where public institutions take over specific roles (cf. above

³⁵ <http://www.kibnet.org/english/en.aitts/content.en.aitts.2/index.html>

³⁶ www.dipoli.tkk.fi/itkoulutus/changepro

³⁷ www.epracownik.edu.pl/cps/rde/xchg/pi

³⁸ www-it.fmi.uni-sofia.bg/cist

for instance: CNAP Thuringia) or where vendor-based schemes build a central part of ESF-funded projects in this area (cf. e-Pracownik built on the CNAP).

While all vendor-based schemes do have a business model, most vendor-independent ones strongly depend on public funding and are very often of a limited duration. Some can even be described as one-off while others have managed (or currently try) to obtain further funding and operate as a series of consecutive funding projects.

6.2.2 Lessons learned on legal and institutional structures, financial frameworks, ownership and communications

Legal and institutional structures, financial frameworks

Without a clear institutional structure and support by necessary legal and financial framework conditions provided by national (or regional) governments a multi-stakeholder partnership for e-skills development and certification is likely to fail in the long-run. There are numerous examples where multi-stakeholder partnerships - which started as projects - did not succeed in establishing themselves in the market as a central national and vendor-independent e-skills development and certification institution.

The major constraints include the lack of:

- The **accompanying necessary and supportive framework conditions** in terms of a strong government will for such an institutional structure to become established;
- **Incentives (financial) reaching beyond the scope of a project funding** (often funded through European funding programmes such as the European Social Funds); and
- Operation of the scheme as a project instead of **developing the necessary institutional structures**.

Examples such as e-Pracownik in Poland or ChangePro in Finland can be seen mainly as one-off activities (ChangePro) or a series of consecutive projects (e-Pracownik). They have a positive impact, but not to the extent achievable if they were running such as a venture at an institutional level under favourable framework conditions and with the continuous support of governments. The German example APO IT also illustrates how the lack of a legal structure and framework conditions supporting institution building, can constrain a wider take-up and diffusion of e-skills development and certification activities in a country. This happened despite the fact that the German Federal Government funded the initial project as well as a follow-up project (KIBNET) supporting the dissemination and communication of its approach and services. These activities only resulted in an operation of consecutive projects on e-skills development and certification, but not in the establishment of the necessary institutional structures for operating the e-skills development and certification services successfully in the market.

Managing multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills on a project base can only be recommended during the development and early operation phases since in such cases the necessary stakeholder commitment can, in the vast majority of cases, only be ensured for the limited duration of the project and is likely to result in a “lack of ownership” (cf. below) with all its negative consequences after project completion.

In particular, examples from the **United Kingdom** provide useful **guides and templates** for the setting of favourable framework conditions and establishing the necessary institutional structures promoting a long-term operation of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills.

Several multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as **e-Skills UK**, managed to develop a solid institutional structure and government has developed the necessary framework conditions under which the multi-stakeholder partnership now successfully operates. This partnership has taken the form of a **not-for-profit organisation** with a traditional company structure and clear lines of responsibility governed by a board constituted of high-level representatives from its members. Members include a series of stakeholders necessary to properly cover the field of action. It offers a **broad range of services** generating the incomes necessary for a successful operation in the market with the national government also taking an active role in providing its support through different means as it can be seen from the **mixture of incomes sources** including:

- Membership fees,
- Licensing fees for products and services,
- Licensing the SFIA framework, or
- Being licensed by government as the Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms,
- Certifications offers,
- Some government funding, including management fees, for disbursement of individual budgets for initiatives contracted for government, or
- Management fees for initiatives instigated by government in response to perceived needs, or
- Direct annual grants, but also for
- External contract work funded by EU, national and regional programmes.

Therefore, e-Skills UK could be seen as a **useful source of inspiration** for the establishment of a national institution acting as a gateway to e-skills development and certification in a country or a region, supporting the definition and the implementation of a long-term and consistent e-skills agenda in close co-operation between the public and private sectors.

Ownership, IPRs and communications strategy

The APO IT project is an example where the “**ownership**” question was left open after the end of the project phase and the lack of system owner and institutional affiliation resulted in some uncertainty about its future and sustainability. This was coupled with a less than optimal **communications strategy**. The lack of a coordinated and agreed communication plan resulted in an insufficient and less optimal communication of the system towards the target groups.

Also the complexity of the system in presentations (presentations were mostly given by researchers) was difficult to grasp and understand by people and practitioners outside the project, including those whom the project wanted to convince to become APO IT pilot organisations. A **streamlined presentation focussing on the key issues** would have helped to more easily, convincingly and successfully communicate its features and benefits associated with its use.

As a result of several different partners who were involved to a different extent in the projects, sometimes different (or even contradicting) messages about APO IT were spread. Again, the need for a **coordinated and agreed communication plan** becomes apparent, something which would have been much easier to achieve in a clear institutional setting and under supportive framework conditions as opposed to a series of projects with several partners and unclear situations with respect to ownership and intellectual property rights (IPR).

6.3 Duration

The duration and lifetime of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills range from (short-term) project-based schemes to those which are well established and operate as more or less institutionalised schemes set up as legal entities with an institutional framework and governance structures lasting for a longer duration and/or without a fixed duration.

6.4 Financial issues and funding

Financing and funding options of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills range from:

- **Fully publicly funded** multi-stakeholder partnerships projects and initiatives;

- **Not for profit institution** set up by different stakeholders using their own resources and other (indirectly also public funding) sources for completing the tasks allocated to them as part of the venture;
- **Participation/course fee-based, vendor-based schemes** run by vendors in cooperation with public and other institutions where participants aim to achieve an IT practitioner certification;
- **Industry-led and funded** initiatives constituting IT industry investments (in some cases with some public funding).

6.5 External communications and marketing

The vendor-based multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills are well-known and positively recognised in the market place. Other, i.e. vendor-independent, multi-stakeholder partnerships very often have problems in this respect and are a lot less known and recognised in public and among the target groups.

6.6 Achievements

One of the key results mentioned by all stakeholders in the different multi-stakeholder partnerships is the fact that all of them, and through the different lines of action pursued, have encouraged and **strongly increased levels and intensities of communication, cooperation and networking of the industry partners and other stakeholders**. This is seen as a major success.

Further achievements are mentioned. e-Skills UK for instance has been successful in **providing a focal point for industry in the e-skills area**. The CIGREF members report similar achievements about the **very positive feeling of “belonging to a community” active in the e-skills framework development at national and European level**. Multi-stakeholder partnerships such as APO IT³⁹ and TechnofuturTIC seem also have **very positively contributed to the quality of social partner relationships**.

With respect to the number of registrations and certifications, huge variations can be observed, and **it seems that the vendor-based schemes are much more successful than the vendor-independent ones**. Already the regional (and not even national) CNAP initiative in Thuringia (Germany) has resulted in 549 registrations in 2006 and more than 1000 over last three years.

The Centre for Information Society Technologies (CIST) in Bulgaria has been successful with its 615 registrations and 573 certifications in using different vendor-based certification schemes in 2006, which is a very good result for a small country like Bulgaria.

Project-based multi-stakeholder partnerships offering vendor-independent certificates like ChangePro achieved only around 100 registrations in two years. Other such schemes also do not yet reach high figures. APO IT for instance had in 2006 achieved 375 registrations and 180 certifications. The APO IT figures over the past three years show that more than 1000 registrations and more than 400 certifications could be reached for the whole of Germany.

Whether **cooperation activities of vendor-based and vendor-independent schemes like “Cisco meets APO”** can be more successful need to be seen since this multi-stakeholder partnership only started recently in 2006.

6.7 Future development and scalability, capacity to grow

In the vast majority of selected good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships, the responsible actors indicate that they have a clear plan and the capability to grow and reach a critical mass if not already achieved.

³⁹ <http://www.kibnet.org/english/en.aitts/content.en.aitts.2/index.html>

6.8 Sustainability

Almost all good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills have reached the level of **sustainability with a long term commitment of the key stakeholders** and a secured financing and funding for more than five years.

Vendors such as Cisco Systems typically agree on a joint activity in a country or region, together with governments and public authorities, by signing a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** in which all the details ranging from the duration, allocation of responsibilities, etc. are regulated. These MoU have proven to be a very useful and effective mechanism for establishing and running multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills.

Other multi-stakeholder partnerships have managed to develop a **solid institutional structure** under which they can operate such as e-Skills UK. This organisation has taken the form of a not-for-profit organisation with a traditional company structure and clear lines of responsibility governed by a board constituted of high-level representatives from its members. Members include a series of stakeholders necessary to properly cover the field of action. e-Skills UK offers a broad range of services and is generating an income through a mixture of activities ranging from membership fees, licensing fees for products and services (like e.g. licensing the SFIA framework or being licensed by government as the Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms), certifications offers, some government funding including management fees for disbursement of individual budgets for initiatives contracted for government or management fees for initiatives instigated by government in response to perceived needs or direct annual grants but also for external contract work funded by EU funding programmes or national and regional programmes.

Other multi-stakeholder partnerships are starting to achieve sustainability through the **commitment and active promotion** of its founding members, such as APO IT in Germany, with the union IG Metall applying it and promoting it through different means including the KIBNET initiative⁴⁰, and also by starting a joint initiative with Cisco Systems called "Cisco meets APO".

It is for the project-based and ESF funded schemes where sustainability has not yet been achieved because they started their initiatives with a short-term opportunistic approach.

6.9 Transferability

Transferability of the different schemes can be measured by identifying whether the multi-stakeholder partnership has achieved some recognition or even implementation outside the country or domain it was originally implemented in. Naturally, the **vendor-based schemes with their underlying business models have a clear advantage in this respect**. However, some of the vendor-independent schemes in different European countries have also shown transferability potential and some have even managed to be applied in other countries.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations have been formulated on the basis of the extensive body of empirical and analytical work that has been carried out by the study. They address the broad spectrum of issues and levels of action that must be taken into account to achieve scalable and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills in Europe.

These issues include a number of specific and/or (innovative) features and aspects of importance for the success of a multi-stakeholder partnership which could be identified in those analysed in more detail as part of the study and build the basis for the development of recommendations.

They cover issues like stakeholder types, involvement and roles, roles of vendors, requirements for appropriate institutional, financial and legal structures and frameworks needed for the development of scalable and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships. They are addressed to

⁴⁰ www.kibnet.org

policy makers interested in setting up multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills in their countries. Some recommendations also address the necessary EU policy level.

These include, amongst others, recommendations to help create higher levels of transparency and reduce complexity and confusion in the IT practitioner e-skills development and certification market in Europe, to provide mechanisms to support this activity and further indispensable to successfully implement a long-term e-skills agenda in Europe.

7.1 Overview of Recommendations

The following table presents a summary listing of the recommendations that are further elaborated on in the main study report. It structures the recommendations in three groups, i.e. those on: (A) strategies and guidelines; (B) institutional, legal and governance structures; and (C) awareness raising, promotion and monitoring.

A. STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES	
Recommendation 1	Develop, promote and implement in each European country a national strategy for e-skills, including specific provisions for the promotion of multi-stakeholder partnerships (with clear objectives and targets), in co-operation with all relevant stakeholders based on the findings of this study and the recent Commission's Communication on "e-skills for the 21 st century" COM (2007) 496 and Competitiveness Council Conclusions.
Recommendation 2	Thoroughly assess and monitor existing multi-stakeholder partnerships in each European country, where vendor-based and vendor-independent multi-stakeholder partnerships have been implemented, with a view to promote the scalability and the sustainability of successful initiatives.
Recommendation 3	Encourage and support the launch of industry led-initiatives on e-skills in each European country and recognise the importance of tertiary education funding in promoting e-skills development.
B. INSTITUTIONAL, LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES	
Recommendation 4	Build on the experiences from successful multi-stakeholder partnerships on how to use various sources of funding (including national and EU funding instruments and programmes) in order to foster new e-skills multi-stakeholder partnerships and to transfer efficiently good practices.
Recommendation 5	Develop guidelines and templates in each European country for the promotion of long term and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills based on the main findings of this study and good practices.
Recommendation 6	Create favourable framework conditions to establish and operate national mechanisms or institutions acting as a gateway to e-skills development and certification in the EU Member States playing a key and guiding role and supporting the development and implementation of a long-term and consistent e-skills agenda in close co-operation between the public and private sectors.
C. AWARENESS RAISING, PROMOTION AND MONITORING	
Recommendation 7	Set-up "e-skills information exchange and observatory mechanisms" at both EU and national levels, for e-skills development and certification and for long-term and regular monitoring of progress on the demand for and supply of e-skills, bringing together key stakeholders for the implementation of a long-term and consistent e-skills agenda.
Recommendation 8	Develop and promote a "European e-competence framework" at EU level in

	co-operation with relevant key stakeholders and in line with the European Qualifications Framework ⁴¹ , focusing on its benefits for stakeholders and its added-value to (existing or new) national IT practitioner skills frameworks. Each European country should develop its own e-competence framework.
Recommendation 9	Raise awareness among the European youth and population concerning the benefits of e-skills and digital literacy development, lifelong learning, e-learning and the existing offers and possibilities. Develop specific efforts to communicate to older people and marginalised groups.
Recommendation 10	Promote the setting-up of a “European e-skills and career portal” at EU level resulting in a better structure and transparency of the e-skills development and certification and a pooling of resources for joint activities, sharing of knowledge and exchanging of good practices.

7.2 Summary of each recommendation

7.2.1 Strategies and Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION: 01

Develop, promote and implement in each European country a national strategy for e-skills, including specific provisions for the promotion of multi-stakeholder partnerships (with clear objectives, targets and appropriate governance model), in co-operation with all relevant stakeholders based on the findings of this study and the recent Commission’s Communication on “e-skills for the 21st century” COM (2007) 496 and Competitiveness Council Conclusions.

Who: National Governments⁴² and stakeholders (especially industry and social partners) and European Commission

What: Multi-stakeholder consortium or task force establishment (including appropriate legal conditions and appropriate governance model)

How: Learn from existing government policies and experiences from multi-stakeholder partnerships such as e-skills UK (United Kingdom), FIT (Ireland), APO IT (Germany) and also carefully evaluate the experiences in this respect from the newly emerging “new” types of cooperation between vendor independent and vendor-based schemes (e.g. “Cisco meets APO”). Integrated approaches like “Cisco meets APO” are likely to provide some orientation and support, especially to new EU member state governments - where vendor-based schemes are prevalent - in their activities to develop a more balanced and vendor-independent e-skills strategy. It would support combining and integrating “the best of both worlds”. This would also ease the linking of such newly developed independent national e-skills frameworks to the European e-Competence framework⁴³. Based on this analysis, develop, promote and implement in co-operation with relevant stakeholders a national e-skills strategy in line with the recent Commission’s Communication and the agreement reflected in the Competitiveness Council Conclusions on e-skills of 23 November 2007.

⁴¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

⁴² and regional authorities where appropriate

⁴³ www.ecompetences.eu; www.cen.eu/cenorm/businessdomains/businessdomains/iss/activity/wsict-skills.asp; www.e-skills-ilb.org/initiatives/ecompetenceframework.aspx

RECOMMENDATION: 02

Thoroughly assess and monitor existing multi-stakeholder partnerships in each European country, where vendor-based and vendor-independent multi-stakeholder partnerships have been implemented, with a view to promote the scalability and the sustainability of successful initiatives.

Who: Stakeholders interested in or already involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships (especially industry and social partners); National Governments and European Commission;

What: Establishment of a new form of co-operation of vendor-based and vendor-independent multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills

How: Thoroughly monitor and evaluate the multi-stakeholder partnerships where a co-operation originating from vendor-based and vendor-independent multi-stakeholder partnerships has been implemented. Co-operation between vendor-based schemes and vendor-independent schemes has only just started to emerge with the cases of the “Cisco Networking Academy Program” and “APO IT” in Germany. With this multi-stakeholder partnership called “Cisco meets APO”, we seem to enter a further stage of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills operation in Europe. This scheme has been established as a co-operation model of a vendor-based scheme (CNAP) and a vendor-independent one (APO IT) only rather recently (2006). It is still in its development and early phase but may develop to an interesting model to learn from. Whether this can be seen as a future way forward needs to await results and experiences which are likely to become available from 2008 onwards.

RECOMMENDATION: 03

Encourage and support the launch of industry-led initiatives on e-skills in each European country and recognise the importance of tertiary education funding in promoting e-skills development.

Who: National Governments

What: Support for industry, and especially IT industry initiatives on e-skills; funding of tertiary education institutions

How: Provide necessary framework conditions and jointly establish multi-stakeholder partnerships with an agreed division of labour between IT industry players, other stakeholder and public sector stakeholders to secure substantial IT industry investments in such initiatives. National and regional policy makers are well advised in providing the necessary framework conditions for such initiatives to take place and happen in their own region or country in the form of a multi-stakeholder partnership with an agreed division of labour between the stakeholders (including public ones) to benefit from the substantial IT industry investments in such initiatives. The vendor perspective (e.g. the e-Skills Industry Leadership Board at European level) and user perspectives (e.g. CIGREF at national level) are equally important and can benefit each other through their respective strengths. National and regional governments should also actively encourage tertiary educational institutions to offer programmes in e-skills by giving them a higher priority weighting in decisions about funding allocation.

7.2.2 Institutional, legal and governance structures

RECOMMENDATION: 04

Build on the experiences from successful multi-stakeholder partnerships on how to use various sources of funding (including national and EU funding instruments and programmes) in order to foster new e-skills multi-stakeholder partnerships and to efficiently transfer good practices.

Who: Stakeholders interested in or already involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships; National and

Governments and European Commission

What: Experiences from and mechanisms for the transferability of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills to other European countries and regions

How: Learn from and build on existing experiences from good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships on how these are managed to utilise public funding (including regional, national and EU programmes e.g. European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and European Social Funds (ESF) and the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme 2007 – 2013⁴⁴ to establish and run multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills, and also for transferring their experiences and practice to other European countries and regions, building on successful existing initiatives. Develop appropriate tools for the different key stakeholders and target groups informing them about the possibilities of public support using already existing good practice examples for illustration and learning purposes. Already today the EU Grants Advisor initiative (EUGA)⁴⁵ can be seen as a first support tool and an enabler for the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills but also as a means for knowledge and experience transfer based on and supported by public incentives (European funding through ESF and other programmes in particular).

RECOMMENDATION: 05

Develop guidelines and templates in each European country for the promotion of long term and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills based on the main findings of this study and good practices.

Who: Stakeholders interested in or already involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships (especially industry and social partners); National Governments and European Commission

What: Institutional structures for multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills to help stakeholders in developing sustainable schemes

How: Establish templates of institutional structures for multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills taking different forms including a non-for-profit organisation with a traditional company structure and clear lines of responsibility governed by a board constituted of high-level representatives from its members where income generation is achieved through a mixture of activities. Multi-stakeholder partnerships members should include a series of stakeholders necessary to properly cover the field of action and to offer a broad range of services but will vary depending on the different national or regional situation. Successful examples of multi-stakeholder partnerships with an institutional structure of a non-for-profit organisation include SFIA⁴⁶ and e-skills UK⁴⁷ in the United Kingdom and FIT (Fast Track to IT) (addressing marginalised groups of people) in Ireland⁴⁸. These multi-stakeholder partnerships have managed to reach a stage where they generate an income through a mixture of activities ranging from membership fees, licensing fees for products and services (like e.g. licensing the SFIA framework or e-skills UK licensed by government as the Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms), certifications offers, some government funding including management fees for disbursement of individual budgets for initiatives contracted for government or management fees for initiatives instigated by government in response to perceived needs or direct annual grants but also for external contract work funded by EU funding programmes or national and regional programmes. In other cases stakeholders have joined forces and agreed on a longer-term commitment for partnership and joint activities in a multi-stakeholder partnership for e-skills under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which annual review meetings are fixed. The most prominent and successful examples for multi-stakeholder partnerships using this model come from the Cisco Networking Academy

⁴⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

⁴⁵ www.microsoft.com/emea/euga

⁴⁶ www.sfia.org.uk/cgi-bin/wms.pl/71

⁴⁷ www.e-skills.com

⁴⁸ www.fit.ie/fit_home.htm

⁴⁹ www.bildungsinitiative-networking.de/mailling/05/cuakademie_home.shtml

Program and include examples of such MoU signed with cooperation partners at regional and national level (cf. CNAP Thuringia⁴⁹). Alternatively, and depending on the national or regional situation it may prove useful to provide resources for external management consulting after a founding period of a multi-stakeholder partnerships of e.g. two years to support the institution building through a small grant.

RECOMMENDATION: 06

Create favourable framework conditions to establish and operate national mechanisms or institutions acting as a gateway to e-skills development and certification in the EU Member States playing a key and guiding role and supporting the development and implementation of a long-term and consistent e-skills agenda in close co-operation between the public and private sectors.

Who: National Governments⁵⁰ and stakeholders (especially industry and social partners)

What: National (or regional) non-profit associations / institutions (like for instance e-Skills UK in the United Kingdom) in all EU Member States uniting employers, educators and government on a common agenda for e-skills development and certification

How: National governments to develop the necessary and favourable legal and financial framework conditions and support mechanisms for the establishment and operation of national institutions acting as a gateway to e-skills development and certification in the EU Member States. Relevant stakeholders in the field of e-skills to establish and operate the national e-skills institutions and playing a key and guiding role in the development and implementation a long-term and consistent e-skills agenda in close co-operation between the public and private sectors. Members of this partnership need to be the relevant stakeholders in the e-skills development and certification area, together with the social partners, and - if deemed appropriate - ministries of education (national or regional, depending on the allocation of competence and responsibility for this topic in the country) or relevant subordinated authorities of these ministries. The constellation is likely to vary from country to country but its aims and objectives would be to bring together representatives and key players from the different stakeholders and unite them in developing and implementing a coordinated long-term and consistent e-skills agenda in their country or region. Ideally, they also closely cooperate with industry institutions and those representing global IT industry on topics like digital literacy and e-skills, such as the e-Skills ILB at European level. Such a non-profit body or organisation would require an institutional structure. The main bodies could be the Steering Committee and its Presidium. The Steering Committee would act as the decision-making body of the organisation. It may annually set up committees and working parties necessary for the effective attainment of the objectives and the implementation of the Work Programme. The Steering Committee should appoint an Executive Director for a period of five years with the responsibility to manage the organisations' office. The appointment should be renewable for a second period of five years. The office should provide the necessary supporting services for the Steering Committee, the Presidium, committees and working parties. An annual work programme needs to be developed and adopted by the Steering Committee. It needs to set the annual operational objectives and priorities and the work to be carried out. From successful examples we know that such a partnership can best operate as a non-for-profit organisation with a traditional company structure and clear lines of responsibility governed by a board constituted of high-level representatives from its members. Members need to include a series of stakeholders necessary to properly cover the agreed field of action of the organisation. Ideally it offers a broad range of services and thereby generates the income necessary for a successful operation and survival in the market with the national government also taking an active role in providing its support through different means as can be seen from the mixture of activities to be employed for generating an income and including (derived from those carried out by e-Skills UK):

- Membership fees,

⁵⁰ and regional authorities where appropriate

- Licensing fees for products and services,
- Licensing the SFIA framework, or
- Being licensed by government as the Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms,
- Certifications offers,
- Some government funding including management fees for disbursement of individual budgets for initiatives contracted for government, or
- Management fees for initiatives instigated by government in response to perceived needs, or
- Direct annual grants, but also for
- External contract work funded by EU funding programmes or national and regional programmes.

For each project and activity an indication of the source of financing and to which of the following funding categories it belongs:

- Core activities to be funded by all members and supplementary funding from other sources.
- Projects funded by members and other partners participating in the project.
- Development projects with the European Commission bringing together members and other partners to develop services, content and tools or to explore new issues in the e-skills area.

7.2.3 Awareness raising, promotion and monitoring

RECOMMENDATION: 07

Set-up “e-skills information exchange and observatory mechanisms” at both EU and national level, for e-skills development and certification and for a long-term and regular monitoring of progress on the demand for and the supply of e-skills, bringing together key stakeholders for the implementation of a long-term and consistent e-skills agenda.

Who: Stakeholders (especially industry and social partners and the e-skills Industry Leadership Board (ILB)⁵¹); National Governments (where appropriate, regional governments), CEN/ISSS Workshop on e-skills⁵², and European Commission (in cooperation with industry and Member State Governments and statistical institutes)

What: Setting up efficient mechanisms for a “European information exchange and observatory” platform for e-skills in Europe. Establishment and operation of a long-term and continuous coordination and monitoring exercise on progress, strategy and demand for and supply of e-skills in Europe providing policy analysis, indicators, statistics and foresight scenarios.

How: Build on the experiences from and work of the European e-skills Forum⁵³ with clear and efficient operational mechanisms at EU level, active participation of Member States and key stakeholders, annual deliverables and funding plan. Deliver an annual “e-skills in Europe” report (as a joint effort by the stakeholders involved) building on the Commissions’ Communication on e-skills of 7 September 2007⁵⁴ proposing a long term e-skills agenda and five actions lines at EU level. The key action areas will - amongst others - be focusing on promoting a regular dialogue, developing a European e-competence framework also

⁵¹ www.e-skills-ilb.org/msp.aspx

⁵² <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm>

⁵³ <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm>

⁵⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/policy/doc/COMM_PDF_COM_2007_0496_F_EN_ACTE.pdf

involving industry stakeholders, promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships and pooling resources, further development of the Europass initiative⁵⁵, new e-competence curriculum guidelines, increasing participation of women in the ICT sector and activities aiming at making financial incentives more efficient.

RECOMMENDATION: 08

Develop and promote a “European e-competence framework” at EU level in co-operation with relevant key stakeholders and in line with the European Qualifications Framework⁵⁶, focusing on its benefits for stakeholders and its added-value to (existing or new) national IT practitioner skills frameworks. Each European country should develop its own e-competence framework.

Who: CEN/ISSS Workshop on e-skills, stakeholders interested in or already involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships, National Governments, European Commission

What: Promotion of a “European e-Competence Framework” to enable more transparency in and structure for the IT practitioner certification market

How: Further develop and promote a “European e-Competence Framework” and its added-value to (existing and new) national IT practitioner skills frameworks (e.g. SFIA, CIGREF, APO IT) in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)⁵⁷ to make them easier to use by the employers (especially SME) and the workforce. There is an important need to strengthen the approach already started by CEN/ISSS (in the context of its Workshop on e-skills⁵⁸) with experts and representatives from national and international ICT industry, vocational training organisations, social partners and other institutions.

RECOMMENDATION: 09

Raise awareness among the European youth and population concerning the benefits of e-skills and digital literacy development, lifelong learning, e-learning and the existing offers and possibilities. Develop specific efforts to communicate to older people and marginalised groups.

Who: Providers of vocational and other adult education; key players in the financial sector; employer associations; trade unions, National Governments, European Commission but also associations which represent older people and marginalised groups in Europe.

What: Deliver a powerful message to enterprises (especially SMEs), the youth and citizens that e-skills development matters, by providing support to learners and SMEs that provide e-skills training, supported by e-learning techniques wherever possible

How: Bring together providers of funding (National Governments, European Commission etc.) with policy-makers and representatives of employers and employees and further organisations described above to agree on core features of an e-skills development and certification support framework (cf. “European e-Competence Framework”). Develop a continuous and well targeted communication campaign. Explore the possibility for using existing support mechanisms enabling for the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills with public funding support through European programmes like the ERDF or ESF. Explore through dedicated research the attitudes and perceived barriers that are relevant for older Europeans’ and marginalised groups’ participation in digital literacy and e-skills development.

⁵⁵ www.europass-info.de/EN/start.asp

⁵⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

⁵⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

⁵⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/ict/policy/ict-skills.htm>

⁵⁹ FIT is highly regarded and there have been some attempts to emulate its approach. For example, the “ICT Career Compass” initiative under the EC Leonardo da Vinci Programme, FIT in the UK (Northern Ireland), a “sister” project in Naples (Italy) under the EC EQUAL Programme, FIT-like initiative launched in Finland etc.

Design awareness raising initiatives and support networks. Develop training/learning and course supply which is more user-centric, making use of e-learning wherever reasonable and building on successful experiences from multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills addressed to the target groups like for instance FIT in Ireland with its further activities in other European countries⁵⁹.

RECOMMENDATION: 10

Promote the setting-up of a “European e-skills and career portal” at EU level resulting in a better structure and transparency of the e-skills development and certification and a pooling of resources for joint activities, sharing of knowledge and exchanging of good practices.

Who: Stakeholders (especially ICT industry), National Government and existing National e-skills Portals, European Commission; (national and regional governments in Europe; employer associations; trade unions; further stakeholders interested in or already involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships

What: Joint development of an online mechanism for exchange of experience, lessons learned, knowledge sharing and learning from each other

How: Build a European e-skills web portal resulting in a better structure and transparency of the IT skills certification market and a pooling of resources for joint activities, sharing of knowledge and exchanging of good practices which can be based on the outcomes of the feasibility study released to the European Commission in autumn 2007⁶⁰.

All the recommendations are further elaborated on in the main study report which can be downloaded from www.eskillspolicy-europe.org.

Detailed structured descriptions of the good practice multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills have also been developed. These use a common description format and can be found on the above website in form of an Online Knowledge Base.

In order to view them, please go to the above website and click on “Multi-stakeholder Partnerships”, then on “Benchmarking policies on multi-stakeholder partnerships for e-skills in Europe”, scroll down and press the button “search” and you will be presented with a list of the multi-stakeholder partnerships. When clicking on “view” they will be presented and you have the possibility to sort according to a whole series of items and search words.

⁶⁰ www.eskillseurope.eu