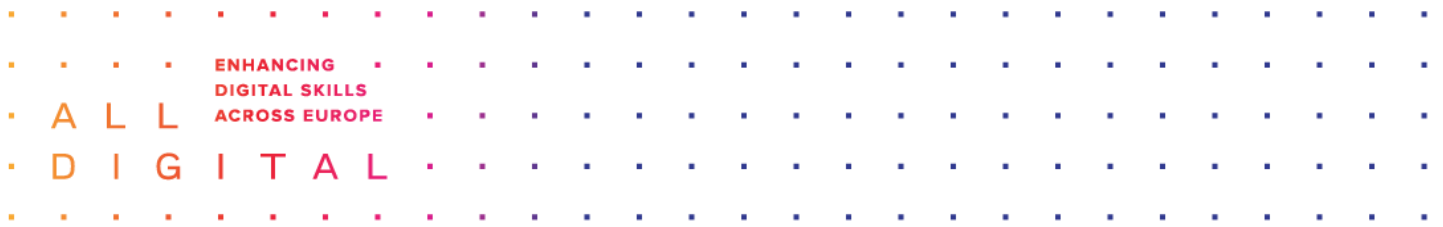


## ALL DIGITAL REACTION TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023

On 18 October 2022, the European Commission released its Work Programme for 2023, setting out its planned activities and priorities for the upcoming year. As already announced by President Ursula von der Leyen in her State of the European Union address in September, and confirmed by the Work Programme, the European Commission is proposing to make 2023 the European Year of Skills. Such an initiative would give an important boost to the delivery and implementation of the ambitious, but sorely needed, targets set out in the Digital Decade, the Skills Agenda, and the Social Pillar Action Plan, particularly in terms of digital skills and competences. While the Digital Economy and Society Index for 2021, published on 28 July, shows some improvements in the share of European residents having at least basic digital skills, the rate of increases won't suffice to meet the targets.

In this context, the Commission's considerable progress on the delivery on the actions set out in the Digital Education Action Plan in the past years is most welcome. This includes the anticipated Council Recommendations on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training and on enabling factors for digital education, originally planned for Q3 2022 but pushed to Q1 2023, thus allowing for a more thorough consultation and drafting process. The recognition of digital competences as a cornerstone for a successful digital transition is essential, yet this recognition alone does not reach far enough if it stops short of including the importance of treating digital competence development as a lifelong learning need, acknowledging the vital role of informal and non-formal provision of education and training.



Despite 2023 having been declared the European Year of Skills, the Commission's Work Programme for the upcoming year shows little in the way of planned new policy initiatives for digital competence development. Nevertheless, we welcome the proposed Cybersecurity Skills Academy, as it aims to address the significant proficiency deficit in that competence area among European residents. Likewise, the Work Programme announces an update of the learning mobility framework, to improve the recognition of skills certifications acquired outside of the European Union. Disappointingly, both initiatives appear to have a narrow focus on employers' needs rather than a learner-centred approach, framing the European Year of Skills through a labour market lens. In addition to these new initiatives, there are four still pending previous proposals with relevance to digital competences, covering digital identity, artificial intelligence, the protection of personal data in electronic communications, and a European Health Data Space. However, all of these contain scarce direct references to the role of the digital competences related to their field, despite the clear relevance.

Digital competences are a key success factor and investment area for the digital transition and reach far beyond employability concerns. They are essential for inclusiveness and personal development, for social participation and active citizenship, for strengthening our democracies and fighting exclusion and discrimination. A broad level of basic digital competences among European residents lays the foundation for efficient and targeted training programmes for IT professionals, for the uptake and continued expansion of e-government services, and for European employers to find both qualified employees as well as informed customers. They are important for all members of society to engage in an increasingly digitalised world. Digital competences are key to creating accessible offers for persons with disabilities, as well as to combatting disinformation, increasing cultural exchanges and reducing discrimination and hate speech. Digital competences are first and foremost life competences, while job qualifications are only a slice of the whole.

The ALL DIGITAL Manifesto for Enhancing digital competences in Europe sets out key principles for a successful approach to digital competence development. [Read and endorse the Manifesto here.](#)