

European Commission Vice-President Kroes Delivers Keynote Address on the Importance of Digital Skills for Competitiveness and Inclusion

European Commission (EC) Vice-President and Commissioner for the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) addressed delegates at the ECDL Foundation Forum on the key role that digital skills have to play in driving economic growth, and in reducing the risk of digital exclusion that faces those without the skills to access technology.

The ECDL Foundation Forum, which this year was hosted in Dublin, is an annual event that brings together delegates from all continents to share knowledge and best practice around Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills development, and the promotion of global digital literacy. Vice-President Kroes spoke on the key importance of digital literacy and inclusion in the DAE, the European Commission's strategy for sustainable, inclusive growth for Europe. In her speech, Vice-President Kroes spoke about the increasingly central role that technology plays in everyday life, and in the labour market, and how those without computer skills were at risk of ending up on the wrong side of the digital divide. While acknowledging the achievements of previous policy initiatives, Vice-President Kroes warned against complacency in the campaign to ensure that every citizen has a basic level of digital competence. To underline this point, she pointed to the fact that more than a quarter of the population of the EU have still never used the Internet, and that those most at risk from being excluded from the Information Society through a lack of adequate skills were the poor, the elderly, and other marginalised groups.

ECDL Foundation CEO, Mr. Damien O'Sullivan reaffirmed the Vice-President's cautionary stance on increasing levels of digital exclusion, adding:

"As more and more essential services, information, and indeed personal identities migrate online, the deepening of the digital divide becomes an increasingly urgent problem, and the numbers of those on the wrong side of this divide - those without the requisite ICT skills - will grow exponentially with society's increasing dependence on technology."

The DAE, and other digital agendas beyond Europe, provide the best form of political impetus and awareness-raising for the need, at national and international level, to both drive economic growth and to reduce levels of digital exclusion.

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About ECDL Foundation

ECDL Foundation is the certifying authority for the leading international computer skills certification programme - ECDL / ICDL. ECDL Foundation's mission is to enable proficient use of ICT that empowers individuals, organisations and society, through the development, promotion, and delivery of quality certification programmes throughout the world. With over 11 million candidates participating in a range of programmes, ECDL Foundation has set the global benchmark in end-user skills certification. For more information about ECDL Foundation, and about the ECDL / ICDL programme, please visit: www.ecdl.org

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