Information society: e-economy, impact on companies

2002/2145(COS) - 05/12/2002

Taking into account the importance of the diffusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for growth, productivity and employment and the risks posed by a digital divide, the Council has adopted its conclusions in which it underlines the need: - to sustain the efforts to close the e-Skills gaps and to address mismatches despite the economic downturn and structural changes affecting the ICT sector; - to supply in a timely manner professionals with the technical and other skills relevant to the market and needed to ensure employees mobility; - for inclusiveness of the entire available potential labour pool to narrow and close the e-Skills gaps and to address mismatches, particularly addressing the severe under-representation of women in the ICT workforce; - to foster dialogue and the exchange of good practice between stakeholders. The Council welcomes the intention of the Commission to establish a European eSkills Forum in 2003 whose main objective would be to institutionalise an open dialogue between all relevant stakeholders and to catalyse actions to address the priorities that emerge from this process in view of helping to narrow e-skills gaps and to address mismatches. The Commission is called upon to, by the end of 2004, closely to monitor and analyse the ICT basic skills as well as the e-skills gaps and mismatches as well as to report back to the Council and the European Parliament by the end of 2004 on the progress made in narrowing the e-Skills gaps and addressing mismatches. The Member States are invited to promote co-operation between industry, universities and schools in order to achieve adaptation and flexibility of curricula to match future market requirements; to promote lifelong learning in co-operation with Industry in order to prepare for new jobs and a continuous upskilling of the workforce; to promote the attractiveness of studying scientific subjects as a basis for ICT and e-business jobs; to intensify efforts for training and improving skills for all age groups, genders, and people of all ethnic and social origins in the European Union; to develop, where appropriate, new initiatives and measures to help industry and SMEs, to access the talent and skills pools which are critical for their competitiveness, taking into account different levels of professional skills. Lastly, the Council encourages the industry and the social partners to define and communicate the ICT and e-business job profiles needed in the various business sectors and company sizes; to promote a common classification of ICT and e-business skills as a basis to forecast supply and demand of ICT and e-business skills; to facilitate lifelong learning of the labour force and finally to take social responsibility in order to improve the inclusion of the entire available labour pool.