



LEADS AT WORK TO BRIDGE THE ADVANCED DIGITAL SKILLS GAP BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION IN EUROPE

In Europe, around 9 million people work as ICT specialists. The latest data shows that 55% of enterprises that recruited or tried to recruit ICT specialists reported difficulties filling such vacancies (**DESI report 2022**). As digital technologies become an integral element that influences employment and engagement with society, a successful digital transformation of EU industries and society will depend on developing the next generation of skills, closing the gap between digital talent supply and demand. The path to the **Digital Decade** proposal aims to increase the number of employed ICT specialists in the EU to at least 20 million by 2030 and without a significant change to business as usual, this will not be met.

To address this challenging situation, **LeADS** - The Leading European Advanced Digital Skills, the first ever **Digital Europe Programme** (DIGITAL) digital skills Coordination and Support Action (CSA), is launched today, November 18, 2022.

The DIGITAL programme is funding €580 million for developing Advanced Digital Skills over 7 years to support the design and delivery of specialised programmes for future experts in key capacity areas like data and Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, quantum and High Performance Computing (HPC). LeADS will support the productive deployment of the Advanced Digital Skills funds to ensure that upskilling and reskilling opportunities are provided to drive future European competitiveness and digital sovereignty.

LeADS aims to make Advanced Digital Skills part of a solution to the digital divide and unemployment that has been hindering the uptake and use of emerging key digital technologies. Bridging the digital skills gap of European industries with research and education is one example of how LeADS will guide Europeans to leverage cloud services, big data and AI, through the availability of digital experts.

The CSA will collaborate with a community of industry stakeholders and, education and training providers to develop specific skill profiles for technologies, demand forecasts based on tech adoption trends, the definition of the skills gap, and guidelines for industry and education bodies. By incorporating its findings and insights into roadmaps and guidelines in line with the market's gaps, LeADS hopes to retain and attract highly skilled individuals in line with the labour market's demand by fine-tuning education programmes to attract students' interest in the evolving technologies.

Together with 9 consortium partners (**BluSpecs, IDC Italia SRL, Maggioli S.p.A., Universidad Politécnica De Madrid, Trinity College Dublin, Maersk Mc-Kinney Moller Institute at the Technical faculty of University of Southern Denmark, Martel Innovate, Alliance for the Internet of Things Innovation BV, and the Big Data Value Association /DAIRO** - Data, AI and Robotics aisbl), LeADS will create a sustainable, dynamic and scalable ecosystem that fosters the exchange of good practices and support the digital transformation of the education sector at the European level by boosting innovation and expanding advanced skills capacities in the workforce and society.

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