PRESS RELEASE

Europe steps up coordination of advanced digital skills training

New EU-funded initiative ELEVATE+ will connect specialised training academies with industry as Europe remains well short of its 2030 target for ICT specialists

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ELEVATE+

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Europe still lacks around half of the ICT specialists it needs to meet its 2030 target. In 2025, only around 10.5 million people in the EU worked as ICT specialists, compared with a target of 20 million. Women accounted for less than 20% of them. The European Commission's 2026 State of the Digital Decade report warns that progress towards the target has stalled, increasing the pressure on Europe to develop the digital talent needed for its competitiveness and technological sovereignty.

A new European initiative launched this week in Dublin aims to better connect Europe's advanced digital skills training and build stronger links between what is taught and the skills industries need.

ELEVATE+, a four-year project funded under the EU's Digital Europe Programme, will establish the European League of Advanced Digital Skills Academies. The League will bring together the EU's sectoral Digital Skills Academies and connect them more closely with industry, education providers and policymakers.

The Digital Skills Academies are EU-supported initiatives designed to develop specialist skills in strategic technology areas. This includes skills needed to develop and deploy AI systems, strengthen cybersecurity, advance quantum technologies and work with high-performance computing and virtual worlds.

Under the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025–2027, the EU is investing in these sectoral academies alongside the Cybersecurity Skills Academy, supporting wider European priorities including the Digital Decade, the Quantum Europe Strategy, EU Cybersecurity Strategy, Competitiveness Compass, the Union of Skills and the AI Continent Action Plan, among others.

Each academy brings specialist knowledge of its own technology area. ELEVATE+ will create the structures that allow them to coordinate priorities, share knowledge and build stronger links between the training Europe provides and the skills its industries need.

Connecting training, quality and industry demand

The European League will bring the academies, the European Commission, HaDEA and industry representatives together to identify common priorities and coordinate their work. An EU Digital Talent Network of leading European industry associations will provide expertise from sectors including AI and data, cybersecurity, IoT and edge computing, high-performance computing, electronic systems and virtual worlds.

ELEVATE+ will introduce European Seals of Quality and Excellence for ICT training, targeting 150 programmes over the four-year project, alongside a certification mechanism for micro-credentials. The aim is to strengthen the quality and recognition of advanced digital skills training across Europe.

The project will also combine labour-market data with expert foresight and industry knowledge to identify where skills supply and demand are moving apart. This evidence will support the academies and inform annual recommendations for policymakers, education providers and employers.

For learners and professionals, ELEVATE+ will connect opportunities across technology areas through mentoring, fellowships, an EU-wide alumni network and an annual virtual jobs and careers fair. Particular attention will be given to increasing the participation of women and other groups currently under-represented in advanced digital technology fields. The project will also support the European Advanced Digital Skills Competitions and make League resources available through the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform.

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"Europe has invested in specialised academies for the technologies that will shape its competitiveness. The next step is to make sure they do not work in isolation. With Europe at only half of its 2030 target for ICT specialists, we need to connect expertise across technology areas, improve how high-quality training is recognised and build stronger links with the industries that need these skills. ELEVATE+ is about creating that common European framework," said **Dr Monique Calisti, CEO of Martel Innovate**, and Coordinator of ELEVATE+.

From individual academies to a European network

ELEVATE+ officially kicked off in Dublin this week, bringing the project partners together to begin the four-year collaboration and lay the foundations for the European League of Advanced Digital Skills Academies.

Following the kick-off, ELEVATE+ will organise the "Building Sectoral Specialisms" workshop on 15 October at Digital Talent EU Days 2026 at Trinity Business School in Dublin. The session will bring together representatives from the EU Digital Skills Academies and European industry associations to explore how closer collaboration can help align specialised digital skills training with Europe's changing industry needs.

The project builds on the work of LEADS and LEADSx2030, which brought together projects working on advanced digital skills across Europe. ELEVATE+ takes this work forward by creating a structure for collaboration between the sectoral academies and the wider European digital skills ecosystem.

The ambition is for the European League to continue beyond ELEVATE+, providing a lasting mechanism for cooperation around advanced digital skills in Europe.

About ELEVATE+

ELEVATE+ (European League of Advanced Digital Skills Academies) is a four-year Coordination and Support Action running from October 2026 to September 2030 and funded by the European Union under the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL-2026-SKILLS-09).

Coordinated by Martel Innovate, the consortium brings together European industry associations, higher and vocational education networks, universities and research organisations, and specialists in labour-market intelligence.

ELEVATE+ establishes the European League of Advanced Digital Skills Academies to strengthen cooperation between Europe's sectoral academies, improve the quality and recognition of advanced digital skills training, and help align training provision with changing labour-market needs.

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