

# The way forward towards e-Leadership education for innovation and competitiveness in Belgium and the Netherlands

04/09/2014 - At the event 'New Curricula for e-Leadership - Delivering Skills for an innovative and competitive Europe' the chairperson Professor Steven de Haes from Antwerp School of Management underlined the importance of the need for specific skills of decision makers in organisations for achieving higher levels of innovation and competitiveness which the event would be going to address using the term 'e-Leadership' skills to address this. Belgian and Dutch representatives from industry, public administration and NGOs sent clear signals that there is a growing and critical lack of e-leaders in the economy, that is, individuals who are at the same time ICT savvy, business savvy and have the ability and skills to lead multi-disciplinary teams across functional and geographical boundaries. Business schools from two countries (Antwerp School of Management and Tias in Tilburg) – supported by the guidelines for curriculum development which have been developed as part of the European Commission e-leadership initiative ([www.eskills-guide.eu](http://www.eskills-guide.eu)) - demonstrated how they are going to deliver these in the future to improve the quality of e-leadership, covering organisation leadership in ICT innovation to deliver business value.

The conference was organised by the European Commission together with Antwerp School of Management (being part of the University of Antwerp), the CIO Forum Belgian Business and EuroCIO – European CIO Association. The cluster event brought together around 100 leading participants in this field from Belgium and The Netherlands.

It was opened by **Professor Steven de Haes**, Antwerp School of Management. He made the clear point that if organisations cannot adapt/transform their business models, they may not survive and that e-Leaders are needed to make this transformation but that they are hard to find. It was against this background that the agenda for the day focused on developing e-Leaders. The question "Does IT matter" is no longer an issue. He emphasised that digital disruption is not about IT, it is about whether you have good leadership and especially e-leadership. E-leaders require agility, i.e. the ability to create solutions incorporating latest IT developments quickly and in addition, they need to be able to orchestrate synergies between these multiple solutions / applications. Even CEOs need to be enabled to ask sensible IT-related questions which today very often does not seem to be the case. He therefore asked for the need to motivate people to a 'deep dive' which he equated to enabling them to become e-leaders.

This was followed by **Werner B. Korte** who put the position of the European Commission, underlining the impact of demographic change in the world, and that the new demands of consumers across the globe put new competitive pressure on Europe. The response must be to accelerate innovation! When referring to the multitude of European Commission activities in this area over the past years he made the strong point that the skills of e-leadership are essential for the Belgian, Dutch and European industry in general to maintain their excellent global competitive position and the need for universities and business schools to properly respond to the market demand with offers suitable to educate and train individuals to become e-leaders.

In this context the goal of the European Commission's initiative on e-Leadership which started in 2013 is to increase the talent pool of e-leaders for enterprises (CIOs, professionals, business leaders etc.). It was followed in January 2014 by a complementary initiative on e-leadership targeting start-ups, gazelles, SMEs (entrepreneurs etc.). Both are closely linked to the promotion of digital entrepreneurship and integrated within the EU long-term e-skills strategy and the efforts made to mobilise Member States and stakeholders (Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs) and raise awareness (e-Skills for Jobs 2014 campaign, <http://eskills-week.ec.europa.eu/>).

Important milestones at European level in 2014 include the launching event of the "e-Skills for Jobs campaign" with the Greek Presidency in Athens on 6 May. The closing event of the campaign will take place on 30 October 2014 in Rome with the Italian Presidency (<http://conference.eskillsforjobs.it/>). The European e-Skills 2014 Conference will take place on 2-3 December in Brussels ([www.eskills2014conference.eu](http://www.eskills2014conference.eu)). A major European conference on e-Leadership will be held in Brussels in June 2015.

< Photograph no. 1 >

**Dr. Nils Olaya Fonstad**, Research Scientist at the MIT Center for Information Systems Research (CISR) provided the definition of what e-leadership skills are and gave examples of some of today's e-leaders from different countries who had also been nominated and given a European CIO of the Year award. A presentation on ICT trends and their implications for e-leadership skills followed by Martin Canning, Group Vice President from IDC, one of the most prestigious market intelligence providers in the world.

< Photograph no. 2 >

**Peter Hagedoorn**, Secretary General of EuroCIO articulated the view of Europe’s CIOs and emphasised the importance of e-leadership skills and the activities which EuroCIO had started to compensate for the apparent lack of suitable higher and executive education offers in the market.

All introductory speakers therefore welcome the European Commission e-Leadership initiative which will help to improve Europe’s competitiveness. On support and developments in the e-leadership area they highly appreciated that Brussels had taken leadership here, to provide the necessary guidance and orientation and the initiation of first demonstrations of e-leadership higher and executive education programmes and courses.

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< Photograph no. 4 >

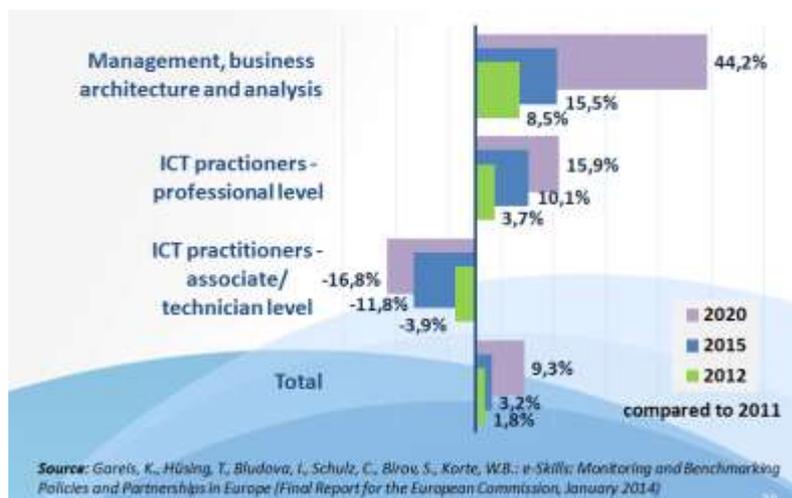
These presentations were followed by two practical demonstrations of successful digital transformation processes in two companies.

**Freddy Van den Wyngaert**, CIO Agfa Gevaert, Chairman of the European CIO Association, Chairman of the Board of the CIOForum Belgian business presented the perspective of a CIO having to have e-leadership skills and acting as a facilitator and change agent to achieve a digital transformation of a company. He emphasised the importance of running such an undertaking as a business and not as an IT project and integrating target achievement and making it part of the HR appraisal system. For him a successful transformation process requires business people with IT skills, IT people with business skills, and on top of that strategic leadership skills, providing them with the capability to develop new IT-based customer centric opportunities, a vision and strategy.

**Harold Rijckaert**, Director Large Enterprise, SD Worx presented the perspective of a business executive emphasising the e-leadership skills are indispensable for supporting the transformation of an organisation and that these should be with as many staff as possible.

**Werner B. Korte**, director empirica provided latest statistical forecasts from the work of empirica for the European Commission on the ICT workforce development showing that management, architecture and analysis jobs which include a significant portion of e-leaders, are expected to grow by 2020 compared to 2011.

### ICT Workforce Development in Europe 2012 – 2015 - 2020



< Photograph no. 5 >

Experts at the event confirmed that the skills gap in e-leadership is seriously being experienced in their own organisations with related open positions in their firms covering all the trends reported at the event by Martin Canning, Group Vice President at IDC. They described an a-leader as a person comfortable with regularly fulfilling tasks in the board room but also in what was described as ‘engine room’ and at the same time feeling at ease in both environments.

**Lex Hendriks**, Business Knowledge Consultant at EXIN asked for the establishment of a continuous dialogue between industry demanding e-leadership type individuals and universities and business schools expected to supply these to the market is needed to get out of the 'jungle' of the so far mostly unsuitable higher and executive education programmes for teaching e-leadership skills. This would help develop appropriate e-leadership higher and executive education programmes and help close the gap between demand and supply.

The European Commission e-leadership initiative has addressed this gap; dialogue is continuing and the curricula approach is intended to be implemented on an ongoing and continuous base.

Belgian and Dutch business schools are among the first in Europe to use the e-leadership curriculum development guidelines and apply the Curriculum Profile approach to their higher education courses.

**Piet Ribbers**, Professor at Tias Business School in Tilburg, reported about the results of a mapping of their Executive Master on Information Management to an e-leadership *curriculum profile* developed in the initiative. It had helped them to identify area of improvement for the programme to become a true e-leadership one. In his view a curriculum profile for e-leadership can "create transparency and comparability" urgently demanded in the market.

< Photograph no. 5 >

**Steven de Haes**, Professor at the Antwerp Management School reported using the Initiative curriculum profile to map two of their programmes. He found this a very useful tool.

Both, were impressed about the assessment process and expressed support for its wider use but would also welcome improvements to ensure assessment judgements are not just easy to make but also unambiguous. De Haes also proposed as a next step the development of further e-leadership curriculum profiles since they have identified the need for this in also other areas for instance one on IT Governance & Assurance.

Several experts concluded that the e-Leadership Curriculum Profile approach looks like an interesting one to carry out the mappings of existing courses and programmes in order to further develop and adapt them in a way to help satisfy the demand for these types of skills in industry and provide promising career opportunities to students.

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The expert panel member Niek De Visscher emphasised that organisations due to the rapid development in ICT are losing their business models and but should see this as an opportunity not threat and use IT as an enabler. However, organisations have to build the capabilities for this and this is where e-leadership skills come into play. Today we can very often observe a failure in internal communications resulting in failure of translating a management strategy into an operation plan.

Frans Verstreken confirmed this argument and identified the rapid pace in which transformation is taking place as the major threat. He also stressed that staff in organisations have to themselves develop communication / negotiation skills since not all of this can be done in higher and executive education programmes.

Development of an appropriate 'ecosystem' was seen as another key direction for closing the skills gap since interaction with like-minded individuals was seen as essential to keep up with the pace of change. This requires e-leaders needing continuous interaction with a network of likewise people to keep up and to keep pace. The strong point was made that in the future young people will not accept working in a company which is not adapting to that model.

With the European e-leadership initiative the European Commission now is providing the means for closing the e-leadership skills gap since with the guidelines and Curriculum Profile approach it is enabling a range of educational ecosystem actions to:

- Improve processes of generating educational offers with demand and supply stakeholders
- Encourage programmes based on new course design and content and
- Strengthen communication flows in e-leadership skills development and deployment.

There was unanimous agreement that e-leadership will be a key competence in the future economy and that the European Commission e-leadership initiative has been very timely and started at the right moment (more information: [www.eskills-guide.eu](http://www.eskills-guide.eu)). This European initiative aims to develop and recommend specific curriculum profiles for e-

leaders (based on the European e-Competence Framework) and outline the knowledge and skills necessary for business leaders to turn into e-leaders.

### Feedback from the event

- "I found it particularly useful to get to know about the European Commission initiatives and to hear and share views on the topic of e-leadership"
- "The event started my thinking about IT-related skills of leaders, i.e. understanding IT and its possibilities and implications. It opens a new look at forms of leadership"
- "Very positive to get the different views on e-leadership in one day"
- "Eye-opening event"
- "I found the contacts and the people particularly useful for me"
- "I liked the general concept of e-leadership and the real-life cases"
- "I think the whole day was interesting"
- "I received information and a 'story' to convince SME leaders (my clients)"

### Links to European initiatives and reports on e-leadership and e-skills:

- European e-Skills 2014 Conference: e-Leadership and ICT Professionalism: <http://eskills2014conference.eu>
- European Guidelines and Quality Labels for new Curricula Fostering e-Leadership Skills: <http://eskills-guide.eu/home/>
- e-Leadership Skills for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises: <http://eskills-lead.eu/home/>
- European e-leadership skills conference 2013: <http://www.insead.edu/events/e-leadership-conference/>
- E-Skills for the 21st Century website - DG Enterprise and Industry: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/e-skills/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/e-skills/index_en.htm)
- Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs website: <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/grand-coalition-digital-jobs-0>
- European e-Competence Framework (e-CF) website: <http://www.ecompetences.eu/>
- CEN Workshop on ICT Skills: <http://www.cen.eu/CEN/sectors/sectors/iss/activity/Pages/wsict-skills.aspx>
- e-Skills for Competitiveness and Innovation: Vision, Roadmap and Foresight Scenarios: <http://eskills-vision.eu/home/>
- Towards a European Quality label for ICT industry training and certification: <http://eskills-quality.eu/home/>
- E-Skills: the international dimension and the impact of globalisation: <http://www.eskills-international.com/>
- European guidelines and quality labels for Curricula for e-leadership skills: <http://eskills-guide.eu/home/>
- Monitoring and benchmarking e-skills policies and partnerships in Europe: <http://eskills-monitor2013.eu/home/>
- Fostering the ICT Profession in Europe: <http://cepis.org/index.jsp?p=827&n=940>
- Professional e-Competence in Europe: <http://cepis.org/index.jsp?p=940&n=2406>
- Monitoring e-skills demand and supply in Europe: <http://www.eskills-monitor.eu/>
- Evaluation of the Implementation of the Communication on e-Skills for the 21st Century: <http://eskills21.eu/>

## Photographs

< Photograph no. 1 >



**Werner B. Korte**, Director empirica GmbH, at the opening of the event on ‘New Curricula for e-Leadership - Delivering Skills for an innovative and competitive Europe’ organised by the European Commission together with Antwerp School of Management being part of the University of Antwerp, the CIO Forum Belgian Business and EuroCIO – European CIO Association on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in Antwerp.

< Photograph no. 2 >



**Dr. Nils Fonstad**, Research Scientist, MIT Center for Information Systems Research (CISR), at the event on ‘New Curricula for e-Leadership - Delivering Skills for an innovative and competitive Europe’ organised by the European Commission together with Antwerp School of Management being part of the University of Antwerp, the CIO Forum Belgian Business and EuroCIO – European CIO Association on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in Antwerp.

< Photograph no.3 >



**Prof. Steven de Haes**, Antwerp School of Management, at the event on 'New Curricula for e-Leadership - Delivering Skills for an innovative and competitive Europe' organised by the European Commission together with Antwerp School of Management being part of the University of Antwerp, the CIO Forum Belgian Business and EuroCIO – European CIO Association on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in Antwerp.

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**Prof. Piet Ribbers**, TIAS Business School, Tilburg at the event on 'New Curricula for e-Leadership - Delivering Skills for an innovative and competitive Europe' organised by the European Commission together with Antwerp School of Management being part of the University of Antwerp, the CIO Forum Belgian Business and EuroCIO – European CIO Association on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in Antwerp.

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**Panel discussion experts**, at the event on 'New Curricula for e-Leadership - Delivering Skills for an innovative and competitive Europe' organised by the European Commission together with Antwerp School of Management being part of the University of Antwerp, the CIO Forum Belgian Business and EuroCIO – European CIO Association on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in Antwerp.

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