e-Leadership for the Digital Economy: France on its way to delivering skills for transforming the economy

06/11/2014 – When welcoming the around 150 participants at the ‘e-leadership for the Digital Economy’ event organised by the European Commission and CIGREF, Pascal Buffard, Chairman of CIGREF and Chairman of AXA Technology Services demanded the creation of a ‘new entrepreneurial leadership’ whereby the development of the human capacity and skills become a critical issue. CIGREF has been working on the topic of competence frameworks and development already since 1991 contributed to the development of the e-Competence Framework and just published the 2014 edition of the ‘Nomenclature RH – Les métiers des systèmes d’information dans les grandes entreprises’. The chairperson Bruno Lanvin, Executive Director of INSEAD’s European Competitiveness Initiative opened the event at the UNESCO building in Paris speaking about the ‘Darwinian necessity’ to pick up the topic of digital transformation and e-leadership since e-leaders are to lead the digital transformation to ensure survival of the business. He invited decision makers in organisations to more ‘focus on developing visions of what ICT can do’ instead of focussing on product development and cost reduction only. He also called on CIOs to become true e-leaders by being ‘themselves the bridges’ they wanted to see between market demand and supply of ICT-based services. Participating 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.

In his video-address, French Digital Champion Gilles Babinet made the point that different ecosystems (industry as well as education institutions) need to work together to bridge the gap between e-skills demand and supply.

Referring to his own work on the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI), INSEAD’s Bruno Lanvin reminded the audience that Europe is rather well positioned on the talent front, but has to urgently address its talent mismatches, both from a sectoral and from a geographical point of view, as divergences are growing between North and South.

André Richier from the European Commission drew a general picture of the coming years with respect to the new perspectives for the world economy. He stressed on the importance for Europe to foster greater productivity, growth, competitiveness, ICT-led innovation and digital jobs. 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 has been 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 the EU long-term e-skills strategy and the mobilisation of Member States and stakeholders (Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs) and awareness raising (e-Skills for Jobs 2014 campaign, http://eskills-week.ec.europa.eu/).

When speaking about the current technological trends and their implications on e-leadership skills, Marianne Kolding, Vice President at IDC Europe described the e-leadership skills as a mix of skills including those of re-imagining much of what we take for granted, strategic management/collaboration skills, hybrid market-ICT skills which include competences in customer-centred approach and issues, capability to develop new IT-based business opportunities and industry-specific skills, i.e. competences in specific industry business processes and of IT innovation implementation issues. The overview of required e-leadership skills by new technology trend is depicted in the overview above which she presented.

This was followed by Werner B. Korte Director of empirica who 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. He also presented the results from an analysis of more than 1000 higher and executive education programmes with a
propensity to e-leadership throughout Europe. In the very end only 47 potential programmes and just 21 Candidate programmes could be identified which are taught at post graduate level combining ICT + business, targeted at those with professional experience, not full time on site, aimed at senior management with very high technical standard and where entry requires significant business experience and the programme has the mission to transform business.

He then pointed to the European e-leadership initiative. 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.) (www.eskills-guide.eu). It was followed in January 2014 by a complementary initiative on e-leadership targeting start-ups, gazelles, SMEs (entrepreneurs etc.) (www.eskills-lead.eu). 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/).

This presentation was followed by Jean-Pascal Gaudy of SAFRAN who emphasised the importance of partnerships of industry with universities and business schools for developing and getting staff with the necessary skills for managing the digital transformation which he asked ‘to be seen as a journey and not a destination’. The speech of Yves Poilane, Director Telecom Paristech and Chairman of Pasc@line emphasised the same topic by stating that ‘no business will escape from digital revolution’. Referring to Schumpeter’s ‘creative destruction’ he emphasised that ‘no company will live forever on acquired advantages’ and that he would see e-leadership also as entrepreneurship.

Finally Prof. Dr. Renaud Cornu Emieux, Directeur de l’Ecole de Management des Systèmes d’Information de Grenoble (EMSI Grenoble) – supported by the guidelines for curriculum development which have been developed as part of the European Commission e-leadership initiative (www.eskills-guide.eu) - demonstrated how they are going to deliver these through their higher education programme in the future to improve the quality of e-leadership, covering organisation leadership in ICT innovation to deliver business value.

A strong point was made by Bruno Brocheton, VP IS, Euro Disney and Vice President, CIGREF in the panel discussion when he asked for executive board members to also be trained in e-leadership ‘to get them out of their comfort zone and into the real world’. Daniel Dubreuil, Chief Information Officer, SAFRAN described the changes of his company over the past years with respect to its business model: instead of developing engines they now lease flight time as a service. He also emphasised that e-leaders need to be found at all levels not just CEO or CIO level and that these need to be created at universities and the need to inject in internal training programmes exercises which help them to develop e-leadership skills at all levels. Tristan Monroe, Chairman of Metanex described his view of an e-leader as a person able to design and develop new uses of digital technology, experimenting with ideas and turning these into a business model.

When being asked the question whether MOOCs could be seen as the solution for training e-leadership skills more widely Prof. Dr. Sharm Manwani, from Henley Business School made the point that significant areas of skills development especially for this target group need to be interactive but that a core base of knowledge acquisition may be provided successfully via MOOCs.

Finally, Prof. Dr. Renaud Cornu Emieux even went so far to demand that e-leadership should be part of the curricula of all programmes in business and management schools.

In his conclusions the chairman, Bruno Lanvin highlighted the key issues and results of the day. Instead of recapturing all of them we only want to highlight a few in the present report. He made the point that awareness for e-leadership has arrived: policy makers have understood that it is a matter of collective responsibility between industry and the higher and executive education institutions. Training of an e-leadership culture has to take place at all levels, from primary school to life-long-learning. Partitions need to be removed to generate an innovation culture across all sectors and foster interdisciplinarity. Universities and business schools need to speed up their efforts to adapting existing curricula and developing new ones to best address the needs of industry and labour markets. Pasc@line is seen as a worthwhile initiative which has shown that we need to build on the enthusiasm of the ‘Y’ generation. The education ecosystem (involving industry as the demand side actors) is still in the process of crystallising, and could benefit from the emergence of different types of ‘brokers’ as shown in the European Commission e-Leadership initiative.

Development of an appropriate ‘education ecosystem’ was seen as a 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.
With the European e-leadership initiative the European Commission is now providing valuable means to reduce the e-leadership skills gap. Its guidelines and Curriculum Profile approach 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). 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.

**e-Leadership Skills Definition**

- **ICT Savvy**: Envision and drive change for business performance, exploiting digital trends as innovation opportunities
- **Business Savvy**: Innovate business and operating models, delivering value to their organisations
- **Engagement capability**: Lead inter-disciplinary staff, and influence stakeholders across boundaries (functional, geographical).

The European Commission e-Leadership initiative started in 2013 has focused on the leadership needs of top decision-makers and professional leaders at larger enterprises. These leaders oversee portfolios of both well-defined and emergent innovation opportunities. Successful design and implementation requires developing and engaging highly qualified staff to achieve the target value. With this further initiative on ‘e-leadership Skills for SMEs’ - started in 2014 – The Commission is now targeting SMEs and start-ups.

**Feedback from the event**

- “I found the sharing of practical examples and the presentations of different points of view particularly useful”
- “The high level ‘brainstorming’ and the forecasts are highly appreciated. The sufficiently long breaks allowed for a very productive networking”
- “Very useful information and networking opportunities”
- “I liked the supplier versus demand view to address the topic”
- “First time large overview of the e-leadership topic”
- “I liked the European vision and how it is anticipated with programmes such as the Grand Coalition”
- “The agenda was very well organised and the moderator is excellent”
- “I liked the breadth of the debate”
- “Very good complementary contents and messages of the speakers’ messages. Practical information and guidance to address the gap in France”
- “Good information, good speakers and interaction between enterprises and business schools”
- “Very good SAFRAN testimonial about e-leadership”
- “I hope there will be more events of that quality”
- “This event set the foundation for what is required for e-leaders”
- “I liked the macro-economic and political point of view, the diversity of participants and the openness and professionalism of speakers”
- “Great focus on the demand and supply dichotomy”
- “Great European vision and very good networking opportunity”
- “High level quality speakers”
- “Good mix of views of people from different companies and countries”

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

- European e-leadership skills conference 2013: [http://www.insead.edu/events/e-leadership-conference/](http://www.insead.edu/events/e-leadership-conference/)
Photographs

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