Digital Volunteers Pilot Programme

Participant Guidance Document

Date: 13th July 2021

Version: 0.1

Digital skills for all
Digital skills for the labour force
Digital skills for ICT professionals
Digital skills in education

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0 Introduction

The Digital Volunteers Programme aims to support European SMEs in their digital transformation journey by growing their employees' digital competences, with the support of skilled mentors from larger businesses. The digital mentors will contribute solving a specific challenge related to digitalisation identified jointly by the mentee company and its mentor.

The Digital Volunteers Programme is an initiative announced in the SME strategy, published in March 2020. The programme is a flagship mechanism contributing to the targets set by the Digital Decade Communication: equipping at least 80% of the EU citizens with digital skills by 2030 and reach 20 million employed ICT specialists; as well as achieving a critical mass of 75% of European enterprises having taken up cloud computing services, Big Data and Artificial Intelligence and more than 90% of European SMEs with a minimum level of digital.

The Digital Volunteers Programme is implemented in two-phases. A **Pilot phase**, which has started in May 2021 and will run until the end of the year. This Pilot will serve to gather insights, preparing for the full roll-out the programme in a scaled-up version during 2022. During the ongoing piloting phase, the select group of large companies will provide digital mentors to SMEs to deliver training, advisory services, and/or the development of joint digital projects.

Figure 1 Overview of the key steps and process for the Digital Volunteers Pilot Programme

The following document outlines the process to be followed by companies interested in participating in this Pilot programme, including the practical steps and contact points at each step in the process. The following diagram outlines the process, with details on the steps in the sections below.

1 Register interest for the pilot programme

Deadline

31st of July 2021

Validation

Commitment to participate to the Programme confirmed via email to the CCE.

Actions

1. Signal your commitment to the Conseil de Coopération Economique (CCE) via email
2. CCE will pass on the information to the Commission and the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition Secretariat.

Key contacts

- Stéphanie Godin, CCE, cm2@s-europe.org
- Véronique Clogenson, CCE, asst@s-europe.org

FAQs

- **What type of commitment is required at this stage?**

The first stage is a registration of interest, you will need to provide a brief outline of your proposed mentoring activities. This will be developed further, in more detail, in the following steps with the completion of the reporting fiche.

- **I am not sure that my programme fits within the set requirements, can I still participate?**

This pilot programme is available for those corporate and mid-cap organisations who can provide digital mentoring to SMEs in the areas that they operate or within their own value chain. If you have any doubts, please get in touch via the contacts above to discuss your specific concerns.

2 Submit your reporting fiche

Deadline

31st August 2021

Validation

Reporting fiche reviewed and approved by the CCE and Commission.

Actions

1. Identify possible beneficiary SME(s).

2. If a SME has not been identified, provide specific information about the programme to the CCE via email. This must include all the following:

    a. Name and specific areas of digital expertise of the Volunteer-mentors ;

    b. Location(s) where they will operate ;

    c. Specific projects/initiatives they will support ;

    d. Availability and frequency required ;

    e. Any additional information that can be relevant for a better definition of the partnership.

3. Complete the reporting fiche and submit to the CCE.

Key contacts

- Stéphanie Godin, CCE, cm2@s-europe.org
- Véronique Clogenson, CCE, asst@s-europe.org
- Arthur Treguier, European Commission, arthur.treguier@ec.europa.eu
- Silvia Merisio, European Commission, silvia.merisio@ec.europa.eu

FAQs

- **Where do I get the reporting fiche template?**

The reporting fiche is available on the dedicated page "Digital Volunteers Pilot Programme" on the Digital Skills & Jobs Platform. You can also get in touch with the CCE/Commission contacts provided above to obtain the reporting fiche template.

- **Where should I find a beneficiary SME from?**

We recommend that you first identify a beneficiary SME either for example within your organisation's own value-chain (suppliers or clients) or via existing actions such as Corporate Social Responsibility activities your organisation might be carrying out.

- **Is support available for locating a beneficiary SME?**

There are a series of potential routes and contact points that may be able to help such as a regional Digital Innovation Hub, through the National Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition and/or within the membership of the DSJC. If none of these routes are successful, the Commission can provide further support and engage its local and sectorial networks (e.g. EEN) to help with finding an SME beneficiary. While every effort will be made to support the companies, the sourcing of the beneficiaries forms part of the pilot activity and participation of the organisations in the pilot programme and the Commission is not responsible for providing them.

- **What activities can be included in the programme?**

Any activities of support with the digitalisation of SMEs can be carried out, including, but not limited to: training on the use of digital tools, supporting the implementation of such tools into existing business processes, general advisory services related for digitalisation or the development of joint digital projects. It is at the discretion of your organisation to decide the areas of mentorship.

IMPORTANT: All Volunteer-Mentors commit to protect adequately the confidential commercial information of the beneficiary SMEs and refrain from suggesting solutions that may result in a technological lock in or an uptake of their own digital solutions, services or products. They may propose a solution that is adapted to the specific needs of the SME.

- **My SME quit part-way through the programme, what shall I do?**

Please contact your Volunteer team at the Commission.

- **Can more than one SME be supported? Can more than one mentor participate?**

There are no limits of the numbers of SMEs or mentors participating, the objectives and scope of activities should be realistic and proportional within the operating capacity of your organisation. Supporting more than one SME or involving more mentors is highly encouraged.

- **Is there a minimum effort to be spent during the pilot phase and how is this monitored?**

In the Pilot Programme, there is no "minimum effort" for this mentoring scheme since this programme aims to be as flexible as possible. The intensity of the scheme is to be defined by the participating company itself, in collaboration with the SME, from a few joint meetings to a more intense collaboration with multiple days spent in the SME. There is no specific monitoring scheme as it is understood this is a commitment made in good faith

- **Could the mentor company be composed by a partnership between two companies/entities?**

As long as this is described in the fiche and the pledge initiative, there is no objection of having Mentors coming from different entities.

3 Present your commitment as a pledge to the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition

Deadline

31st August 2021

Validation

Pledge approved by the Commission and published on the Pledge Viewer.

Actions

1. Sign up on the Pledge Viewer at https://pledgeviewer.eu/user/signup.
2. Complete a short description of your organisation.
3. Create the pledge according to the specific pledge description provided in the provided How-to Guide.
4. Add an initiative with a specific description for each set of activities.
5. After pledge review by the Secretariat, they may contact you for any specific queries.
6. Final review by the Commission and publication on the Pledge Viewer portal.
7. Notification of publication.

Key contacts

- Robert Pomohaci, DSJC Secretariat, pledges@bluspecs.com

FAQs

- **Is there a deadline for the pledge submission?**

While there is no specific deadline, we recommend that you start the process as soon as possible after fiche approval, in order to support the communication of your participation in the programme.

- **Is the pledge submission compulsory?**

The pledge and its publication on the Pledge Viewer is the public demonstration of your participation in the pilot programme. The pledge will provide the source for communicating your activity.

- **What is a pledge?**

A pledge is the commitment to perform an action which promotes the acquisition of digital skills amongst Europeans. Each pledge has a common goal and theme but is made up of one or more initiatives with specific actions, pillars and/or beneficiaries resulting in individual

indicators to aid reporting and progress. Within the framework of the Digital Volunteer Pilot Programme, a specific pledge description and format are provided.

- **Do I have to select a theme from the pledge description? How do I choose it?**

This is not a compulsory field, however if you feel that the activities of the programme fit any of these defined areas, please complete as necessary.

- **Is a pledge legally binding?**

No, it is understood that pledges are initiatives provided by various organisations which contribute, in good faith, towards the goals of the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition.

- **I am having trouble accessing my Pledge Viewer account, what can I do?**

Please contact pledges@bluspecs.com to reset your password and re-connect to your account.

- **I encountered a problem completing the Pledge Viewer fields, can I receive support to solve this?**

Incomplete fields will be highlighted, please review first. For specific support, please get in touch at pledges@bluspecs.com with a screenshot of the error code.

4 Deliver the programme

Deadline

31st October 2021

Validation

Second part of reporting fiche submitted to the Commission.

Actions

1. Deliver the planned activities as outlined in your fiche.
2. Provide regular feedback on the progress of your programme with other participants and the Commission, through the format of regular workshops to be organised by the Commission.

Key contacts

- Arthur Treguier, European Commission, arthur.treguier@ec.europa.eu
- Silvia Merisio, European Commission, silvia.merisio@ec.europa.eu

FAQs

- **Is attendance to the workshops and reporting compulsory?**

While the attendance to the workshops is not compulsory for all participants, it is strongly recommended and will support with the preparation of the obligatory final report.

5 Provide feedback

Deadline

12th November 2021

Validation

Acceptance of reporting fiche by Commission.

Actions

1. The final version of the second part of the reporting fiche will be shared with participating companies in September and could be downloaded from the Digital Skills & Jobs Platform. It must then be completed.

2. Support the Commission with any further requests for information that will be used for the final report on the Pilot Programme.

3. Attend summary event.

Key contacts

- Stéphanie Godin, CCE, cm2@s-europe.org
- Véronique Clogenson, CCE, asst@s-europe.org
- Arthur Treguier, European Commission, arthur.treguier@ec.europa.eu
- Silvia Merisio, European Commission, silvia.merisio@ec.europa.eu

FAQs

- **I do not understand how to complete a section of the fiche, what shall I do?**

Please get in touch with the Commission/CCE to discuss queries about the reporting fiche.

6 Communicating about your participation

You are welcome to communicate about your participation once you have received pledge approval. We encourage you to share your pledge and your contribution to the initiative through your own communication channels, however it is requested to refrain from the publication of press releases until the Commission has issued its formal communication.

FAQs

- **Will there be a formal communication about the launch and/or programme itself?**

As a pilot initiative the communication will be limited at the initial stages with a greater level of activity towards the completion of the piloting period. The European Commission will formally communicate along the following times:

EVENT	FORMAT	CHANNELS	EST. DATE
Publication of first 10 pledges	News Item Social Media	- European Commission - DigitalSkillsEU - Twitter - Facebook	31st July 2021
Mid-way	Social Media	- DigitalSkillsEU - Twitter - Facebook	30th September 2021
Completion	News Item Social Media	- European Commission - DigitalSkillsEU - Twitter - Facebook	5th November 2021
Outcomes	Summary Event		19th November 2021
Reporting	Report News Item Social Media	- European Commission - European Commission - DigitalSkillsEU - Twitter Facebook	12th December 2021

- **Do you have some sample communication messages for our own communication activities?**

Please see below for two example messages, feel free to adapt these as needed for your communication:

"We are supporting the digitalisation of European SMEs through our participation in the Digital Volunteers Pilot Programme. In collaboration with @DigitalSkillsEU, we will provide mentors to support companies to digitalise their operations as part of the Digital Volunteers Pilot Programme. See our pledge at [LINK]. #DigitalVolunteersEU"

"*The successful digitalisation of SMEs is key to our shared prosperity and growth. We are providing digital mentors as part of the @DigitalSkillsEU Digital Volunteers Pilot Programme to help Europe realise its Digital Decade. To find out more: [INSERT PLEDGE LINK]* #DigitalVolunteersEU"

- **Is there a specific hashtag or accounts that we should use?**

Please include the @DigitalSkillsEU accounts and use the hashtag #DigitalVolunteersEU

- **What are the limits on the use of the pledger badge?**

The pledger badge serves as a recognition of your commitment and activities, and you are free to use this when communicating about the pledge activities. Please do not use the badge, or the Coalition logo for the promotion of other activities unrelated to the pledge.

- **Will you re-tweet my message on social media to amplify dissemination?**

We would be more than happy to support the dissemination of pledge activities in such a manner. Make sure to include the @DigitalSkillsEU account in your posts so we can pick them up.

digitalskills@bluspecs.com