# "Wanted: Cyberellas for Europe"

*EU Telecoms Commissioner Viviane Reding is attending today the Global Meeting of the Women's Forum for Economy and Society in Deauville (France) to meet with other female leaders from politics and industry. She will call for more women with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills (so-called 'Cyberellas'). This will be a powerful tool to address the shortage of 300,000 ICT qualified staff expected in the EU by 2010.*

**Mrs Reding said this morning in Deauville***: "Europe's capacity to recover after the financial and economic crisis will depend to a considerable extent on the health and innovation capacity of the sector of ICT. Representing over 5% of the EU's GDP and contributing 50% to the EU's total productivity growth and, the ICT sector is one of the economy's most dynamic ones. However, the ICT sector will only flourish if it can rely on well trained staff with excellent IT skills."*

*"This is why the present shortage of IT skills in Europe is alarming: the ICT sector in Belgium currently faces a shortage of 10,100 IT qualified staff, in Poland 18,300, in Italy 2,800, in France 4.300, in Spain 41,800 and in Germany, Europe's largest economy, even 87,800!"[1]*

*"One solution for closing this dramatic skills gap is staring us in the eyes: making use of the <u>female</u> potential. Only one sixth of ICT employees in the EU are women! Female graduates in engineering account for less than 20% of all higher education graduates and for only 0.9% in computer sciences. Only 30% of scientists and engineers in the EU are women. The female potential is thus clearly under-exploited, as we can also see from the fact that female employment is currently at just 57% in Europe."*

*"This is why I call on industry and politicians responsible for education and higher education in the Member States: Forget that ICT was once a man's world! That is the past. Today, IT jobs are more than engineering. They require interactivity, creativity, social networking and emotional intelligence. Skills that certainly many men have. But women as well. All doors should therefore be opened wide to train and recruit more women for ICT jobs."*

*"We will simply need more 'Cyberellas' to have a happy end to Europe's problems of an ageing workforce, falling birth rates and skills shortages. Instead of solving these problems with a magic wand – as the classical 'Cinderella' probably would have done – a 'Cyberella' will use her science or engineering degree to get an attractive job in the ICT sector and make her way to a decision-making position. A 'Cyberella' will be able to contribute to the design and production of tomorrow's technologies and communication networks. She will thereby be able to have a strong impact on shaping Europe's economic and societal future."*

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[1] Source, IDC forecasts for 2008:
http://www.est.ipcb.pt/academiacisco/IDC_Networking_Skills_Shortage_EW_Europe_FINAL_5_Oct.pdf

*"Only through the joint forces of academic institutions, the private and public sectors will we be able to make best use of Europe's female potential. This is why the European Commission, together with an industry working group, is currently preparing a 'European Code of Best Practices for Women in ICT'. This Code, which I expect to be ready early in 2009, will cover education, recruitment, career development, uptake after leave and professional maturity. I call on all industry leaders to support the development of this code and to fill it with ambition. If we harness women's skills more successfully this could result in an increase of 2% in GDP."*

## Background:

One of the initiatives of Commissioner Viviane Reding to raise awareness about Europe's female potential for ICT is the *Shadowing Initiative,* organised every year since 2007 (see IP/08/392). It gives young pupils and students the opportunity to experience, at an early stage of their education, the ICT world by 'shadowing' a female ICT engineer or technologist as she goes about her daily duties. So far, 70 pupils and students from 15 countries have participated in such 'Shadowing', which is well documented in films on the Commission's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/itgirls/shadowing/index_en.htm.

Following the example given by the Commission, shadowing days are now also being organised in Germany, Luxembourg, the U.S., and in Australia.

For more information on Women in ICT:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/itgirls/info/index_en.htm

For more information on the Women's Forum for Economy and Society in Deauville:

http://womens-forum.com/zzRestofsite/a_2008events_Deauville.php