

The need for a European Business Campaign on “Skills for jobs”

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Author: Stefan Crets, Executive Director, CSR Europe

We have all heard the dramatic figures surrounding Europe’s employment situation, but few are aware of the countless initiatives being carried out by corporate companies to deliver impactful solutions to society. For example, **Coca Cola Enterprises** ‘[Passport to Employment](#)’ initiative helps to prepare around 2,700 young people into the world of work, a further 29,000 people have gained access to paid employment through **L’Oréal’s** [Solidarity Sourcing Programme](#) and **Telefónica’s** [Think Big Youth Programme](#) has already seen 3,500 projects launched by young social entrepreneurs to the benefit of more than 65,000 young people, encouraging innovative thinking, entrepreneurship and new young business across Europe. At National level, [The Swedish Jobs and Society Foundation](#), is setting an example by using the resources of corporate companies to help more than 10,000 people every year to start-up successful and viable enterprises. This is what makes me enthusiastic about Europe; the results clearly show what a difference business can make to our society by taking entrepreneurship and innovative initiatives to make life better and more meaningful for its citizens.

For companies, the business case for combating unemployment is clear: a cohesive society and a thriving economy go hand in hand. What does this mean in practice? To take an example, in Europe, demographic change is a pressing issue for both the public and the private sector. Over the next decade, many European regions will face major challenges associated with an ageing and stagnating or in some cases declining population. Compared to other continents, Europe already has the oldest population: 19 of the world’s 20 “oldest” countries are in Europe^[1]. In terms of CSR, companies have to take into account the characteristics of an ageing workforce, for example in areas such as enabling lifelong learning and promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace. **IBM**, for example, is running a partnership with Age Action Ireland, ‘[Getting Started](#),’ which focuses on teaching fundamental computer and internet skills, enabling older people to take advantage of ICT to gain independence and play a full role in society. In 2011, the Getting Started Programme trained 2,430 older people across Ireland.

Similarly, demographic change is also a challenge for human resources management; with a lack of younger employees and an older generation ready for retirement, a potential skills gap emerges. To combat this, many organisations have set up programmes whereby older employees are able to transfer knowledge and know how to younger employees. **Business & Society Belgium’s** [Active Ageing Awards](#) celebrated some of these initiatives.

For the European economy to grow and to be competitive, businesses operating in Europe need more effective investments in human capital, in skills, in new ways of

working and in career development. This is true for the current (ageing) workforce but also for the future workforce and the ones currently not able to enter the job market. Engineering and technical skills, more knowledge of mathematics and science, entrepreneurial skills and workplace attitudes are only some of the areas where companies are all investing in but where more can be done through enhanced collaboration.

The Commission's Europe 2020 strategy puts forward a target to have 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed by 2020. If Europe wants to achieve this target, business must join forces to create the conditions for a different type of growth that is smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive to deliver higher levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

Building on the above examples and other work of CSR Europe's 70 corporate members and 36 national partners, Enterprise 2020 will shortly launch a joint European Business Campaign on "Skills for Jobs" to innovate skills development, job creation and new options for career development. In this context, CSR Europe will lead best practice learning workshops and engage in enhanced dialogue with the European Commission on the subject. Beyond this, the network of CSR Europe will develop a series of business innovation projects, bringing together companies, thought leaders, educational NGOs and policy makers to drastically improve the efforts and their successes towards Europe's employment situation.

I therefore call on each of you to join us in our efforts to really help shape this Campaign and jointly help to turn one of Europe's most pressing sustainability challenges into a new era of opportunity for its entrepreneurs and citizens.

To find out more about CSR Europe's forthcoming Skills for Jobs Campaign, join our webinar on Monday the 28th of January at 15:00-16:00: http://www.csreurope.org/events.php?action=show_event&event_id=864

For some more ideas on building skills programmes, visit CSR Europe's online solutions database:

<http://www.csreurope.org/solutions.php>

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