

### **Progress Report of O3**

The work of the past months for the specific deliverable was focused on the analysis of the ICT sector and its trends worldwide, at a European level, as well as going on a country base analysis of the ICT sector in Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria, analysing their current situation, opportunities, gaps and needs along with future prospects.

Focusing first on the European dimension the analysis found that Competitiveness, innovation and job creation in the European industry are being increasingly driven by the use of new information and communication technologies. This needs to be backed up by a workforce that has the knowledge and skills to apply these novel technologies efficiently. Given the transversal role of digital competences in the economy, a shortage of ICT specialists and workers with advanced ICT skills could hamper Europe's growth objectives. Digital transformation should be supported with a wide-range of actions on the governmental level. Europe's future competitiveness lies on its ability to stay relevant in areas that are the most likely to generate innovation and growth in the short term and this aim requires training and educating the digital workforce in the right direction.

As a next step the work was focused on finding the ICT status and situation of the partner countries under investigation for the project. Starting with Greece through an in-depth review identified the main critical occupations are emerging which in terms of knowledge, skills and competences that are linked to the ICT sector such as Mobile Applications Developer; Software Engineer (Developer); Systems Analyst/ Network Planner; Business Analyst; Digital Media Specialist and/or Web Master; Network Engineer and many other. Over the last 10 years the ICT labour market in Greece has been characterised by a rapid rate of occupational change, driven by the emergence of technologies requiring new skills and new ways of working. As a result, serious skills shortages have occurred. A possible solution is the provision of continuing training to employees to enhance the acquisition of new skills and new ways of working.

Subsequently an analysis for Cyprus and Bulgaria was conducted regarding their position in the ICT sector. Through the study it is indicated that Cypriot companies are beginning to see the strategic importance of infrastructure optimisation, consolidation, and transformation after some resistance to invest in ICT in recent years. As companies progress on their digital transformation journeys and inevitably require expertise in the implementation and utilisation of new technologies, they increasingly feel the effects of skills shortages, which we observed as a common issue with that of Greece.

Regarding Bulgaria it has a growing ecosystem of digital and tech entrepreneurs has emerged in the past years. Businesses in Bulgaria are adopting different digital technologies to enhance productivity, such as sharing internal information electronically or using RFID, eInvoicing, Social Media and Cloud. New opportunities exist in the ICT sector as Bulgarian companies work to increase their competitiveness in the EU, and as the Bulgarian Government complies with EU directives and legislation concerning its digital economy. As of July 2019, Bulgaria's ICT sector is characterized as stable and constantly growing, making it one of the most profitable sectors in Bulgaria. This opens new prospects for future developments and possible collaborations between know-how exchange and tackling common issues in the partner countries.

### Completion Plan - Next Steps

<b>June 2020</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Phase of the Questionnaires</b>
<b>July 2020</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of the Questionnaires</b>
<b>August 2020</b>	<b>Final report of the Foresight Study (O3)</b>