National Country report for Project "Generation 0101" data research – Latvia

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INTRODUCTION

The Organization responsible for research in Latvia was Generation 0101 partner Latvian Information and communication Technology association (LIKTA). Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association is a non-governmental professional organisation, encompassing the ICT industry and leading universities, ICT professionals, established in 1998. With its members LIKTA represents more than 27 000 ICT professionals in Latvia. The principal objectives of LIKTA are to promote and further the development of Information Society, provide ICT skills evaluation, training and certification for individuals and SMEs and to support ICT industry growth in Latvia. LIKTA is one of the leading e-Skills and e-Inclusion stakeholders in Latvia: coordinating and implementing practical activities, developing innovative approach and methodologies for e-Skills development and professional ICT training in Latvia. LIKTA is the initiator and coordinator of "National partnership for e-Skills and jobs" in Latvia, established in March 2013. LIKTA has extensive experience in working with young people, job seekers and entrepreneurs, especially SMEs and micro enterprises.

The research in Latvia took place from February to April 2015, the information sources used for the research were: web sources, official sources of statistics (EUROSTAT, CSB) consultations with experts, face-to-face meetings, e-mails   and online youth survey.

DIGITAL AGENDA STRATEGY

The main Policy document addressing the Digital Agenda strategy in Latvia is "Information Society Development Guidelines 2014-2020" which have been developed under the lead of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of Latvia. The document has been designed in close consultation with other Ministries, the leading ICT industry associations and other National level NGOs and approved by Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia at 14 of October 2013 .
The aim of the "Information Society Development Guidelines 2014-2020" is to set the targets and necessary actions in the following areas:
- ICT education and e-skills;
- Wide accessibility to Internet;
- Modern and effective public governance and e-government;
- E-services and digital content to the society;
- Cross-border co-operation for the digital single market;
- ICT research and innovation;
- Trust and security.
These directions are in close correlation with the key pillars of DAE.
 The state authority responsible for Implementation of DAE goals is Ministry of Regional development and Environmental protection of Latvia which is considered as Ministry of Digital Agenda in Latvia. The other Ministries closely involved in implementation of Digital Agenda goals in the area of E-skills for jobs in Latvia are:
- Ministry of Education and Science
- Ministry of Transport and communication
- Ministry of Welfare and State Employment agency
- Ministry of Economy
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Culture

Two other policy documents recently approved by Latvia Government and contributing to DAE strategy goals are:

- [Education development guidelines 2014-2020](#)
- [Cyber Security strategy of Latvia 2014-2018](#)

To implement DAE goals in Latvia close cooperation is in place between public, private and NGO sector. On the opening event of Get Online week 2013, representatives of governmental sector, non-governmental organizations and key industry players have signed a cooperation agreement aimed at development of e-Skills for jobs in Latvia. Memorandum of cooperation on "E-skills partnership" have been signed by LIKTA, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Latvian Chamber of Commerce, Latvian Open Technology Association and Latvian Internet Association. The partnership was enlarged in March 2014 when Library network of Latvia (with over 860 libraries) as well as large ICT companies – like Microsoft, Lattelecom etc. joined the Coalition.

By signing The National coalition "E-skills partnership" memorandum, government, non-governmental organizations and entrepreneurs have agreed to cooperate in four main areas:

- ICT training for the labour market needs;
- Youth involvement in ICT;
- Modern and interactive learning process;
- Educating the society on the necessity of digital literacy

The progress towards these goals has been reviewed on a yearly basis, including progress in policy, projects and awareness raising areas.

MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS FOR ICT SKILLS AND YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

Major stakeholders in Latvia have been identified and classified in four main groups – Academic sector, Public sector, industries and NGO's.

Main academic stakeholders are Universities and higher educational institutions with technical faculties like, Riga Technical University with more than 14 000 students and University of Latvia with more than 15 000 students.

Public sector – Main public bodies in Latvia responsible for Digital Agenda implementation are State Employment agency and Ministry of Education and science.State Employment agency is the main institution solving youth unemployment issues, it participates and organizes activities for youth involvement in ICT, also participating in E-Skills week and Get Online week, it also organizes training in ICT for unemployed youth and people seeking job and provide consultations how to apply for job online and use EU offers like EURES and youth guarantee program.

Industry often sees the gap between market needs and education provided by the formal education system and offers initiatives for youth to overcome this gap. World players like Microsoft, Accenture and CISCO act locally also in Latvia to bring initiatives and provide youth training to interest students and pupils to take choice in ICT career path.

NGO's are one of the main players in bringing European activities in local level. NGO's often uses informal education methods to bring interest to youth in ICT. NGO's like Junior Achievement Latvia use of modern informal training techniques and create interactive training materials for high school student. Informal Education initiatives try to introduce formal education system with more up-to-date informal teaching methods.

Regional telecentres and libraries create local actions of Digital Agenda - youth training and initiatives to interest students and pupils to take choice in ICT career path.

COUNTRY FIGURES IN ICT SKILLS AND YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

Comparing the statistical data from 2013 beginning to the end of 2014 numbers indicate a growth of unemployment rate. In the 2014 the unemployment of youth was 27.6% or 27100 people aged 15-24.

In total 96,80% of respondents age 16-24 are active internet users and only 0,38% in the age frame, has never used internet, comparing to 21, 40% of people who has never used internet in all ages.

40,80% of all employed persons are using computers at work, but 32,10% of persons think that their ICT skills are perceived as insufficient for the labor market. ICT skills to be sufficient for labor market are 52,60% of employed people and 37% of unemployed.

In total 16,40%of enterprises are employing ICT specialists, but the number is constantly growing. 2,42% of these enterprises are reporting that it's hard to fill vacancies for ICT specialists.

Digital skills indicator shows that 62,50% of citizens show basic digital skills, and only 12,20% show that their digital skills are above basic, but 25,30% - below basic.

According to the focus expert interviews with representatives from academic, governmental, NGO and private business sectors, the big unemployment rate reflects the knowledge gap between ICT skill demand and supply.

YOUTH SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

The average age of the 100 overall respondents is 23 years old, with a major representation of those aged between 19-24, and an almost identical percentage of those between 16 and 18 (24%) and those between 25 and 30 (25%).
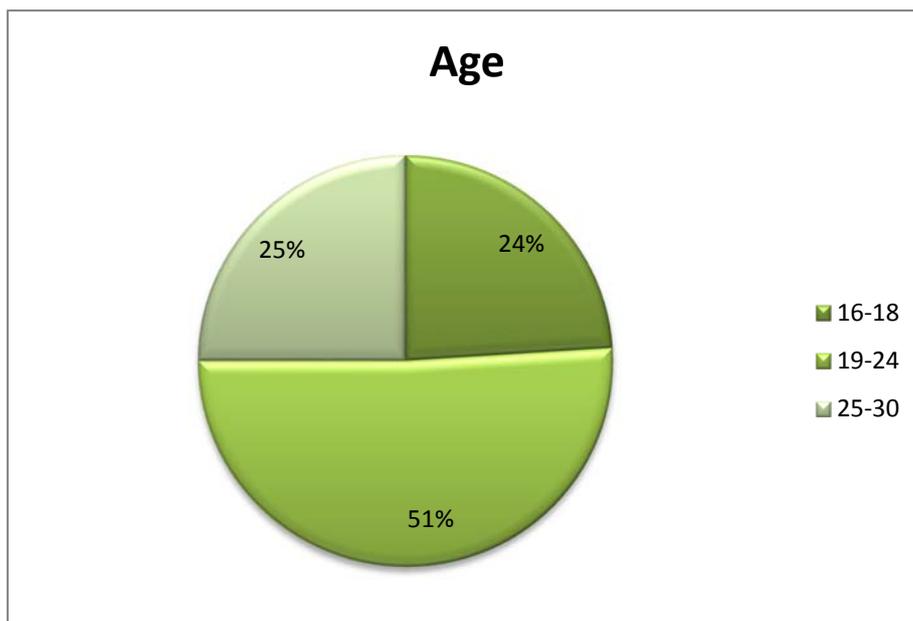
Even though, a lot of different promotion channels where used women were more active to respond, so from all the respondents 62% were female and 38% were male respondents.

Sex

38%

62%

- Female
- Male
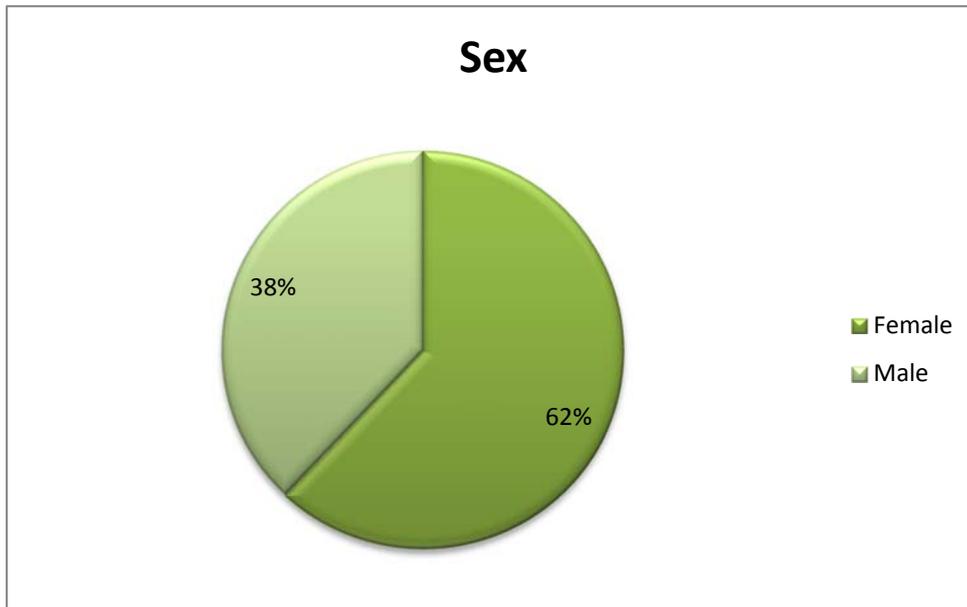
Respondents were asked to evaluate their ICT skills based on market needs, and only 67% of the respondents replied that they are confident enough that their skills are enough for market needs. Significant amount of 33% fell that they need to improve their skills. This question could also not show the real situation, as a lot of experts showed in interviews, that youth often overestimate their skills compering with the skill market needs.

ICT skills are sufficient for job market needs

0%

33%

67%

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
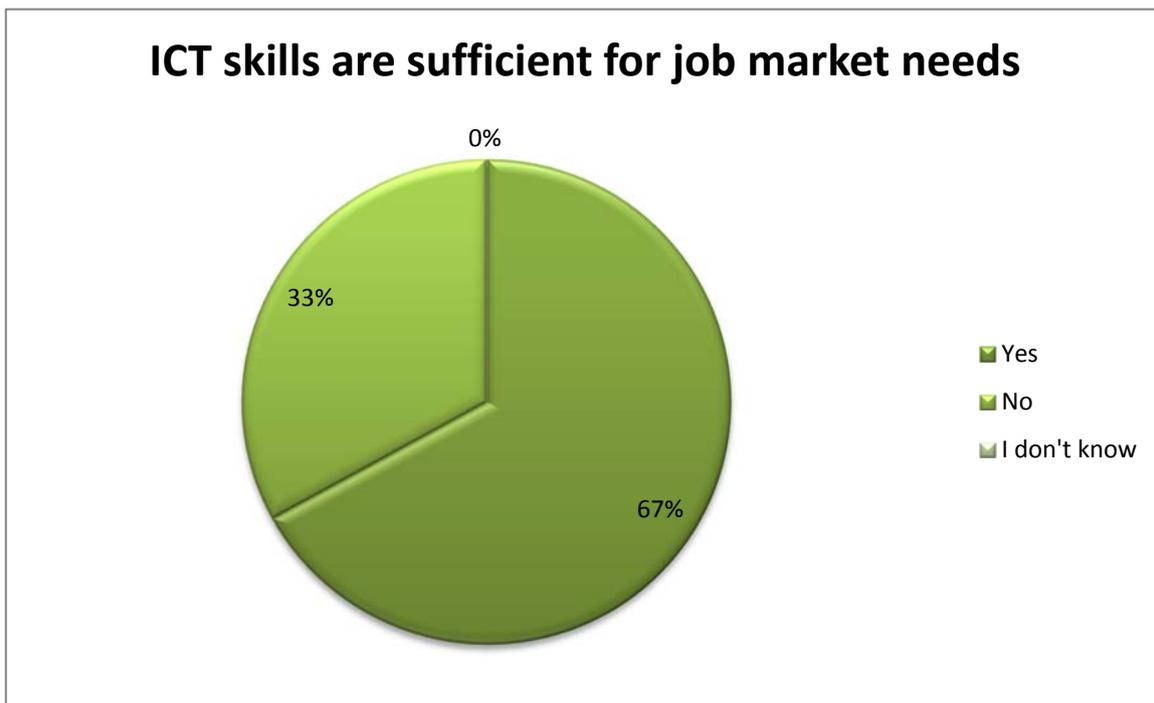
Respondents were asked to point out reasons why they have left or interrupted studies and the 3 main reasons were – lack of time, choosing work over studies and not knowing what to study.

Reason for leaving/interupting studies

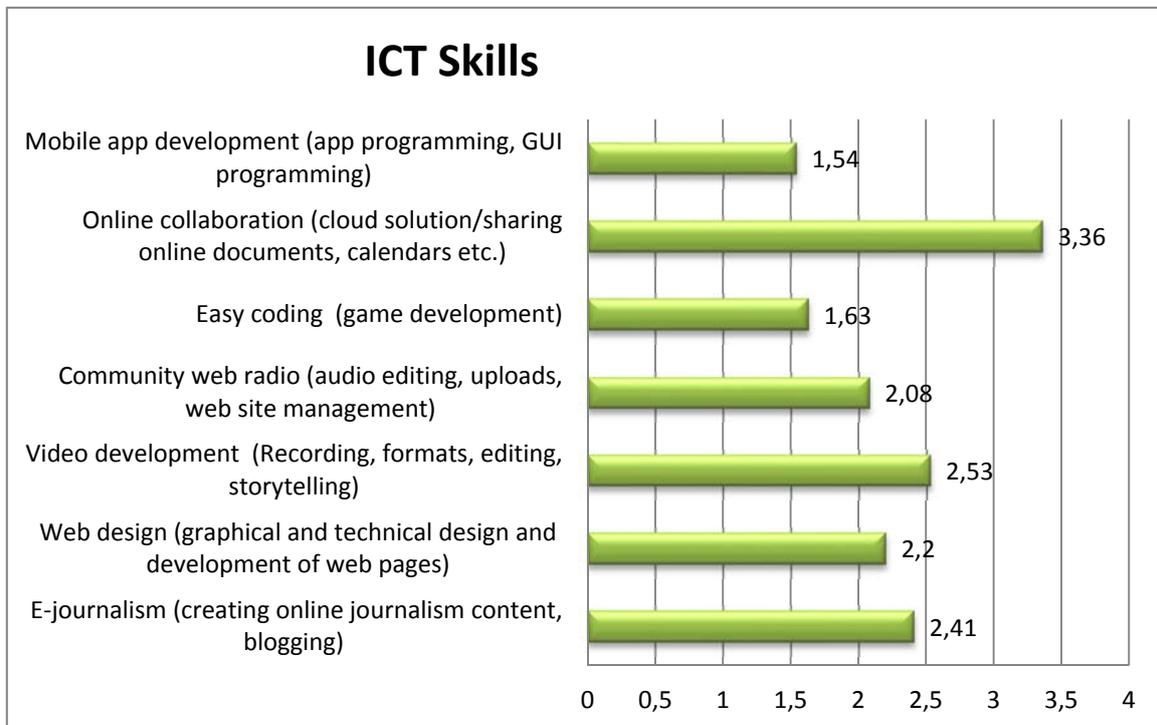| Reason	Value
Lack of time	6
Unable to attend because of timetable	3
High cost of enrolling and attending	3
Training centres are hard to reach from home	1
Don't meet the needed requirements	0
Don't know what to study	6
Not interested in studying	0
Need to work prevents studying	1
Prefer to work instead of studying	6
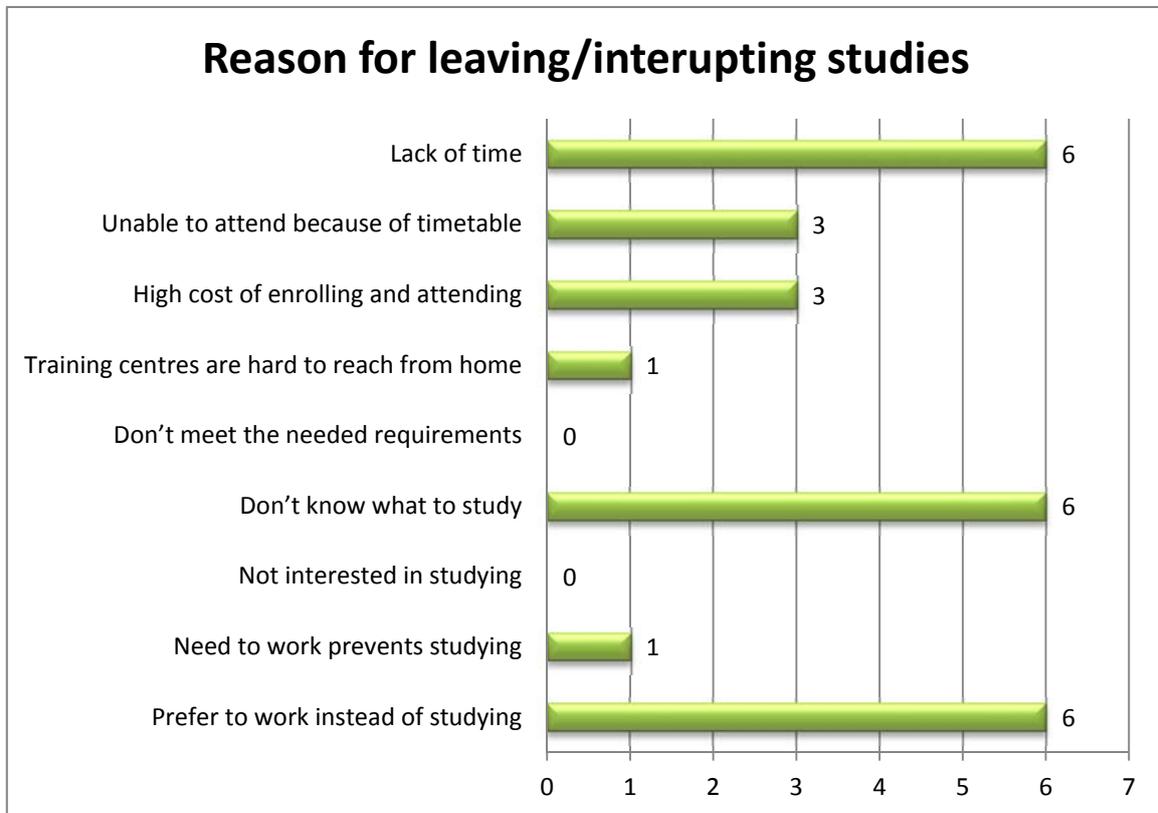
Respondents were asked to point out their ways of learning new technologies and the main way of gaining knowledge is – self – thought, also expert interviews showed out the tendency for youth to learn more from tutorials, videos and self seeking because formal education does not always give the knowledge needed and is not up-to-date.

Ways of learning new technologies

Way	Value
Self-taught (alone)	80
At a private facility (commercial Internet point, Internet café etc.)	5
At a non-profit/public facility (association, online centre, job centre, library, etc.)	22
On the job	32
At university	33
At a college/upper secondary institution	37
At school	23
From relatives, friends and/or acquaintances	62
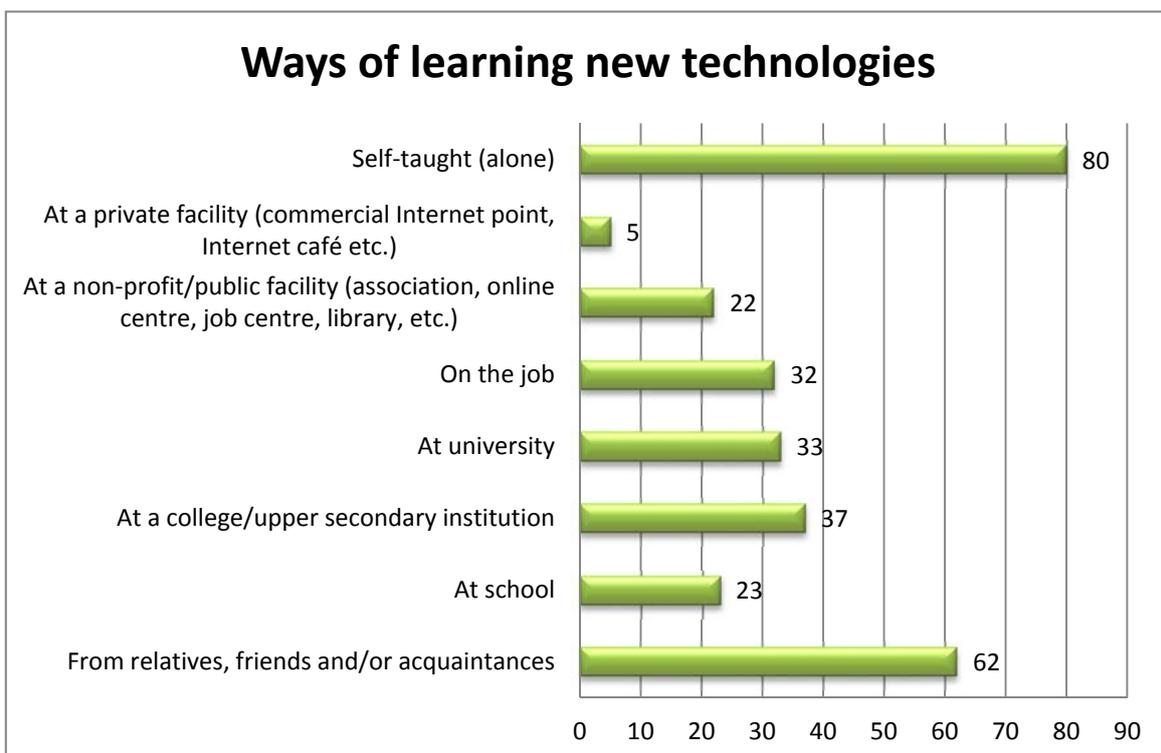
Through the survey respondents were asked to evaluate their knowledge on particular set of skills, and it showed a tendency that respondent knowledge is specific programs are quite low. The lowest level of competencies youth had in Mobile application development and Easy coding. But as mentioned before youth skills could not always be measured accurately as they tend to over evaluate their skills.

ICT Skills

Skill	Value
Mobile app development (app programming, GUI programming)	1,54
Online collaboration (cloud solution/sharing online documents, calendars etc.)	3,36
Easy coding (game development)	1,63
Community web radio (audio editing, uploads, web site management)	2,08
Video development (Recording, formats, editing, storytelling)	2,53
Web design (graphical and technical design and development of web pages)	2,2
E-journalism (creating online journalism content, blogging)	2,41

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- There is a relevant Digital Agenda strategy in Latvia, the recent one formulated in Information society guidelines for Latvia 2014-2020. A special chapter is related to ICT skills and digital competences.
- There exists a strong National Coalition (E-skills partnership) in Latvia since March 2013, including governmental bodies (4 ministries) , NGO s – representing ICT sector, libraries, business entities and academia
- E-skills are priority in Latvia for different stakeholders
- ICT education and career is a priority for Latvia, including government allocating free budget places for ICT studies
- Many private initiatives are active in Latvia, raising awareness about ICT careers , providing coding initiatives and other involvement of young people into ICT and e-skills
- These initiatives however are quite fragmented and very often realized on project base
- The formal education system not always provides up- to date and innovative training of ICT at schools (until now mandatory from 5 th grade, from September 2015 pilot schools starts teaching Computing from 1 st grade)
- The formal education system is slow to accept and mainstream the innovative non formal ICT training that NGO s and ICT companies provide on project or initiative basis
- Young people are interested to join innovative ICT training, from the Generation0101 courses in Latvia they prefer mobile applications, web development, Online collaboration and easy coding

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a strong need to support teachers at formal education system, so that they can provide innovative and up –to date Training of Computing and ICT skills
- Creative initiatives for non-formal ICT training have to be easier mainstreamed   and introduced to formal education system
- Efforts to motivate young people to learn Computing and choose ICT careers have to be increased
- In order to attract young people to ICT training like Generation 0101, the training has to be attractive, based on latest technologies and applying the devices young people use most often
- Awareness raising campaigns about ICT skills and profession for young people should be extended to parents, teachers and career consultants
- ICT training initiatives like Generation0101 modules should include not only training of young people into these areas, but also provide roadmap how they can use acquired skills for their first job experience. For example, developing small projects for communities, sharing the knowledge with classmates (as trainers) etc.