

# INTRODUCTION

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eLearning is a relatively new phenomenon for Poland, because the country is at an early stage of Internet development and penetration. Poland is just starting to discover all the advantages embedded in ICT. Nevertheless, the changing work environment has contributed to increasing awareness of the role of continuous education and training in professional and personal success. However, while demand for education is growing, the capacity of the public sector to satisfy that demand is being challenged. At the same time, the development of ICT provides alternative ways of delivering higher education.

The ICT infrastructure in Poland has been boosted by the stable economic growth, steady increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) and the implementation of large-scale IT infrastructure projects. Significant government efforts are being made to improve the broadband network and to support the ICT industry development. The Polish Government is increasingly more often recognising eLearning as an integral part of a complete learning environment and has formulated numerous policies and laws in order to enhance investment in ICT and ICT R&D in education and training. All these policies will contribute significantly to the promotion of web-based or online learning as a method of delivering education and training.

This book aims at presenting the development and applicability of eLearning in Poland. It comprises six chapters, providing detailed analysis of institutional and policy background related aspects of eLearning, as well as its state and trajectory, its main factors, drivers and barriers. Chapter I describes the theoretical background of the role of education in macroeconomic growth and development. The evidence of a positive relationship between skills and competencies of workers, labour productivity and income is being discussed here. Further analysis emphasises on eLearning as a factor of knowledge, skills and competences. The main focus of Chapter II is on the macro-level trends that are most relevant to the development of lifelong learning and eLearning in Poland. Although these developments seem to have a rather indirect influence on eLearning performance, it is still valuable to include them here, as they are important for strategic decision-making and policy implications. In

addition, they facilitate a better understanding of the context in which eLearning issues are being analysed. Chapter III provides more insight into the importance of eLearning in the current education system in Poland, including a description of the education and training system, ICT skills and of the attitudes towards ICT usage. Chapter IV deals with the institutional structures and resources (strategies, policies, action plans and project) with regard to eLearning in Poland. Chapter V gives an overview of the main achievements and shortcomings of eLearning in Poland. This part presents a genuine analysis of the factors behind the existing developments of eLearning in Poland, as well as a list of the incentives and barriers to future eLearning development. The closing chapter concludes the report by giving insights into the key policy implications and the R&D challenges for eLearning.