

PREFACE

Information and knowledge are the thermonuclear competitive weapons of our time. Knowledge is more valuable and more powerful than natural resources, big factories, or fat bankrolls.

Tom Stewart,
Intellectual Capital. The New Wealth of Organizations,
New York 1998

In the last decades the economic and technological forces have transformed many economies from production-based to service-based economies. The latter has generally been called „new economies”, whereas production-based economies are referred to as traditional. The traditional economies emphasized the importance of physical and financial assets as the main corporate values. Whereas the new economies give the first and foremost place to intellectual capital. However, the life cycle of human knowledge and skills today has become shorter than ever. This has increased the pressure to update the education and skills throughout the whole career development process. Apart from higher levels of education, the new global economy poses new challenges for people who work with computer literacy, information analysis or critical thinking. Lifelong learning¹ is therefore a tangible contribution to the economic growth and competitive advantage of nations.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been an integral element of the growth of professional education and lifelong learning. eLearning is defined as learning through the use of ICT, which encompasses the use of ICT in traditional education (in schools and higher education), the use of ICT in training and learning at the workplace, the use of ICT in lifelong learning (including reskilling and training for jobseekers) and the use of ICT in everyday life (digital literacy/digital competences). The latter refers to the necessary critical skills and competences to make use of ICT in a knowledge society (*European Com-*

¹ Lifelong learning refers to all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences.

10 TOWARDS BUILDING AN ELEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN POLAND

mission Classification of learning activities – Manual, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 2006).

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