Aeneas

*Engage in the digital future!*

Article

Paris, 8 March 2023

# AENEAS supports EU skills drive

## On International Women's Day, AENEAS stresses importance of women in STEM for European competitiveness

Paris, 8 March 2023 - AENEAS, the Industry Association for European nano- and microelectronics-based components, systems and applications, marks International Women's Day 2023 with a call to boost women's participation in STEM, including in Research, Development & Innovation. As the operator of the Eureka Clusters PENTA, EURIPIDES² and Xecs, AENEAS recognizes the major contribution of women to the Electronic Components and Systems community, and their role in the development of advanced innovation within collaborative RD&I projects.

A skilled workforce is vital to Europe's future competitiveness. So much so, the EU has designated 2023 the European Year of Skills. AENEAS supports the drive to develop skills in the nano- and microelectronics industry. It is a key theme in our strategic thinking and industry events.

European Commission figures reveal that over 70% of EU companies have difficulties "in finding workers with the necessary skills". The Commission further adds: "Europe also faces a shortage of digital experts who can develop cutting-edge technologies for the benefit of all citizens."

When announcing the EU Chips Act proposals, the European Commission similarly noted: "Demand for talent in electronics has been increasing in the last 20 years, with the microelectronics industry in Europe being directly responsible for 455,000 high-skilled jobs in 2018. One of the main challenges for the sector is to attract and retain highly skilled talent."

### Industry joins with EU to boost talent and improve gender balance

AENEAS and its partner industry associations, EPoSS and Inside, are keenly aware that skills are crucial. At their EFECS 2022 conference in November 2022, a panel session featuring leaders from industry, research and industry explored the question: *Talent shortage, gender imbalance, public defiance towards technology. Can science help us?*

The demand for talent is large and urgent, thus the EU and industry are working together on numerous programs. Among them is the Pact for Skills, which aims to support upskilling and reskilling and generate European, national and regional funding to attract new talent. Another is METIS (MicroElectronics Training, Industry and Skills), an EU-wide consortium "bridging the skills gap in the microelectronics sector."

### Gender balance – the big opportunity for skills and innovation

However, one of the key challenges is also one of the biggest opportunities – namely, increasing the number of women in the sector.

The EU's Digital Economy and Society Index shows that women are poorly represented in tech-related professions and studies, with only 1 in 6 IT specialists and 1 in 3 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) graduates being women.

Moreover, female graduates are less likely to stay in STEM careers. Known as 'the leaky pipeline' effect, this is frequently ascribed to gender pay gaps and workplace practices that prevent women rising to senior positions in digital industries.

A UN report states: "The gender gap is particularly high in some of the fastest-growing and highest-paid jobs of the future, and more specifically in innovation…" Yet as the UN points out, this is exactly where "… diversity in the workforce may strongly contribute to creativity, productivity, and innovation".

Elsewhere, Digital Europe makes an economic case for more women in tech-related careers: "Better integrating them [*women*] into the ICT job market would help Europe's economy and create a more inclusive technology industry and a more inclusive society in turn. And from an economic standpoint, improvements to gender equality would generate up to 10.5 million additional jobs by 2050. GDP per capita could increase up to nearly 10% by the same date."

## Women active in pan-European projects

Within the Eureka Clusters operated by AENEAS, many women are actively involved in collaborative projects that bring together people of diverse skills and backgrounds.

Nevin Başaran, R&D Center Manager at KEREVİTAŞ-Kurtköy (formerly BESLER) Food Ind. Co., reflects the experience of many of these woman. A project leader in the EURIPIDES² project SAP4MA, Nevin has found the project environment highly supportive.

"As a female leader, I am delighted to acknowledge the efforts of all other women leaders that have been involved in the consortium at various roles and levels, from project partners from Turkey and Portugal. Moreover, I am thankful to the consortium coordinator company KEREVİTAŞ (formerly BESLER) for enabling female members of its staff, like me, to become leaders at various levels. I extend my gratitude to AENEAS and the national funding authorities in Portugal (ANI) and Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) for ensuring women's empowerment in SAP4MA among other examples of international cooperation."

Women are active at many levels and in numerous technologies in Eureka projects: such as Dr Lena Glassmann, working with PENTA project HiPer on technologies for autonomous vehicles; Joanna Morozowska, Project Leader of the Xecs Bio-Curity project.

Dr. Lena Glassmann
Involved in the PENTA project HiPer

Joanna Morozowska
Project Leader of the Xecs Bio-Curity project

## A global shift

From individuals to governments and industry, there is growing awareness of the importance of greater diversity and gender balance – not only to address skills shortages, but also to deliver innovation that meets the needs of everyone in society.

As a result, workplace cultures across the world are changing. Here, in Europe, a wealth of skills-related initiatives have been gathered together under the EU's European Year of Skills 2023. And the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 shares the ambitions of achieving gender balance in innovation and "traditionally male-dominated professions".

As Europe seeks to build competitiveness and resilience in its semiconductor industry, the time to focus on fostering talent of all kinds is now.

*About AENEAS: https://aeneas-office.org*

AENEAS is an Industry Association, established in 2006. The purpose of the association is to promote Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) in order to strengthen the competitiveness of European industry across the complete Electronics Components and Systems (ECS) value chain. AENEAS provides unparalleled networking opportunities, policy influence & supported access to funding to all types of RD&I participants in the field of micro and nanoelectronics enabled components and systems, and its applications. Partner in ECSEL JU and the new KDT JU, AENEAS is also operating the Eureka-funded Clusters Xecs, PENTA and EURIPIDES².