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**ELIG.** 63, rue Rambuteau, 75 004 Paris – France. Tel & Fax: +331 4028; Web [www.elig.org](http://www.elig.org)

**ELIG calls upon the European Commission for stronger content-related policy actions to promote high quality learning resources for Europe**

In our society, where knowledge and learning are so important, the publishing sector are core to the provision of codified content on which most knowledge and learning are built. At the same time Web 2.0 tools combined with the social networking mindset have resulted in the significant growth in user-generated content. Euphoria over the possibilities of these democratised processes obscures the danger of content being made available which is neither quality assured nor from trusted sources. The publishing sector has a key role in re-establishing a balanced perspective between user-generated content and codified content; in particular there is a need for new business models to be encouraged that support both user-generated and published content enabling continued access to content that is both of a high quality but which also draws on the ‘wisdom of crowds’.

This was one of the key recommendations made by a cross-industry working party of eLearning providers, content and media companies as well as infrastructure players. The recommendations are now being published as the **DECOM Declaration**, a document resulting from the European Learning Industry Group’s (ELIG) DECOM event held last October, in Sestri Levante, Italy and hosted by Giunti Labs, a leading provider of online and mobile learning content management solutions. Attended by over 100 delegates representing all aspects of Europe’s learning industry , there was a keen awareness of the challenges currently facing their sector not only as a result of the increasing digitalisation of content but also in the face of the growing economic crisis. The DECOM debate focused around three themes of increased openness towards new learning content publishing business models, the need for more funding for research into innovation of learning content and the promotion of learning technologies standards.

Included amongst the sixteen recommendations of the **DECOM Declaration** is recognition that education and workforce up-skilling are major issues which need to be addressed actively and within a short time horizon. The financial crisis is leading to shifting policy factors – with great challenges arising for social cohesion in Europe and the preservation of competitiveness. The European learning technology and educational publishing industry recognises it has a role in driving this process and aims to engage with European policy makers to agree on lines for action.

Further recommendations from the DECOM event relate to the need to prioritise learning research, in particular research into content aimed at maximizing the different characteristics of mobile devices and classroom tools such as Digital Boards, eBooks and all other e-educational tools. Such content should enable student engagement, allow teachers to act as facilitators, coaches and mentors as well as instructors as and when necessary and be delivered at a cost level that ensures wide adoption.

Of particular concern during the DECOM debate was the question of learning technology and standards. A number of recommendations focus on this aspects, including standardization work better adapted to the fast pace of technological evolution and ensuring inclusion of learning technologies both in current and emerging use. A further recommendation calls for harmonization

between American and European standards; international consensus is critical and should not only extend to include new European Union member states but should also enable other European countries to adopt harmonized standards. The European Union can and should play a central role in this global harmonization due to the unique European multi-cultural and multi-lingual background and expertise in standardization.

Launching the **DECOM Declaration**, **Fabrizio Cardinali**, CEO of Giunti Labs and Co-Chair of ELIG said, "In a world of increasing financial pressure and global competition, education is experiencing a heightened need for innovation and creativity in the way we manage knowledge assets, secure content archives and distribute engaging learning resources and experiences effectively to the world's communities of lifelong learners, who need to keep up to speed with rapidly evolving labour markets and competences.

"Publishing and e-learning technology companies need to evolve rapidly towards new cost-effective distribution means and media, such as addressing Digital Marketplaces and Web 2.0 communities using eBooks, mobile devices and digital boards. They must continue to add value by adopting innovative standards and technologies that are able to turn raw assets into adaptive experiences. These experiences must be tailored to the users' specific needs based on media, location, interest, portfolio and skill gaps".

**Richard Straub**, Secretary General of ELIG, added "ELIG is the only European Industry grouping where all aspects of the knowledge and learning value chain are represented. With new Information and Communication technologies there is an opportunity to provide unprecedented access to users to high quality content while engaging them at the same time as contributors as well as in collaborative learning activities. ELIG will contribute to create a standards-based environment where providers, tutors and learners can interact in new ways and where lifelong learning becomes a reality."

The **DECOM Declaration** will support the formulation of policy actions and public-private partnership programmes that have the potential to enable the transition towards digital content marketplaces for Europe's learning industry and ensure its most advantageous positioning in the emerging digital marketplaces for online content. **The DECOM declaration** can be downloaded from the ELIG web site at <http://www.elig.org/node/17> whilst full details of the DECOM event can be found at [www.decom2008.com](http://www.decom2008.com).

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### **About ELIG**

The European Learning Industry Group (ELIG) is an open industry group which explores, researches and promotes 'innovation in learning' throughout the EU. It aims to offer thought leadership in this field, a communication channel to the learning market and a network within which its members collaborate rather than compete. ELIG's membership encompasses those operating in the areas of technology infrastructure, media, learning content, publishing, learning platforms, software, learning services providers and research, involving a wide variety of associations and user organisations.

Further information from: **Matty Smith**, ELIG Senior Advisor. [Matty.smith@elig.org](mailto:Matty.smith@elig.org). +44 (0)1491 573031.