

Warsaw 2007 - Conclusions

EIN Summer University and European Ideas Fair

20 - 22 September 2007

EIN POLICY ROUNDTABLE ON

How to sustain the competitiveness of Europe in digital economy in 2025?

ANDREAS TEGGE, RAPPORTEUR

Conclusions

The overall theme of the session of WG Digital Economy was “How to sustain the competitiveness of Europe in the digital economy in 2025?”

Key drivers of the digital economy

Both the presentations and the discussion focused on the key drivers of the digital economy.

Innovation capacity was seen as one of the most important drivers of the digital economy where Europe has to catch against the US and Asia. To this end Europe should

- better target R&D support by focusing on interdisciplinary approaches and developing sector cluster
- apply IT to sectors where Europe has traditionally a competitive edge (chemistry, engineering) and to strategic sectors such as energy and biotechnology
- turn the public sector as innovators and create lead markets programs such as eHealth
- maintain an effective and balanced IPR regime
- become global standard setters, in particular step up work on Ipv6

Entrepreneurship was regarded as another enabler of the digital economy. In this area Europe must

- tackle market rigidities to enhance the free movement of labour, products and capital
- ensure a friendly regulatory regime that encourage new entrants
- reward risk takers, which is of particular importance in the high-risk IT industry
- encourage a entrepreneurship culture

Education was highlighted by all speakers as a key driver. In fact, skills are seen as the main differentiator in the digital economy. Unfortunately, Europe is not keeping up. Europe in particular lacks engineers and programmers to build the digital economy. To improve the situation Europe should

- re-focus on teaching key skills such as mathematics and sciences already in elementary school
- attract more women in these fields
- retain existing and attract new talent from abroad, possibly with more English based courses
- use digital learning methods to make the curriculum more attractive
- train more programmers, possibly by creating special software universities that have proven to be successful in Asia.

In addition, Europe should take other policy initiatives to fully exploit the benefits of the digital economy, including

- make high speed networks available
- liberalise radio spectrum
- foster new content delivery models through flexible rights management tools, fair balance of rights and rewards and range of revenue sources
- use IT as global development tool to promote economic growth, health and education

Conclusion: Europe must embrace the digital economy

All participants agreed that Europe must ranked top in IT in order to sustain its competitiveness in 2025. The digital economy will improve productivity and is a key driver for employment and growth, which becomes increasingly important for the EU12 as well. In particular, Europe must build a vibrant software economy alongside hardware and content and become a global innovator.

However, some participants questioned whether Europe is ready to really embrace the digital economy. To ensure full commitment by society and among policy-makers, it will be essential to build public trust in the digital economy. IT solutions must be reliable and interoperable and foremost ensure security and privacy.

Finally, strong political leadership is needed to take up the challenges and transform Europe into a digital economy.