

**European Ideas Network - Summer University  
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**EIN POLICY ROUNDTABLE ON  
THE DIGITAL ECONOMY**

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**Conclusions**

**"Global Leadership in the Digital Economy – Can Europe meet the challenge?"**

**Lachlan Mackinnon**, Professor of Information and Knowledge Engineering at the University of Abertay, Dundee, kicked-off the discussion by outlining the key drivers of global leadership in the digital economy.

**Joachim Schaper**, Vice President EMEA at SAP Research, talked about the challenges and opportunities of the next generation of the Internet for Europe.

**Otto Vitous**, Member of the Board of Management at Unicorn, outlined the bottlenecks for growing a software company in Central and Eastern Europe.

**Liz Bacon**

, Head of Computing, University of Greenwich, then addressed the skill shortages in the IT sector in Europe.

**Rudolf Strohmeier**

highlighted the role of policy-makers in creating a digital Europe.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

The next generation of the Internet will define European Competitiveness in the next decade. The main drivers in the digital economy are nano-technologies, broadband mobile networks, business intelligence and software. The so-called Internet of Things (driven by RFID devices) and Services (including platforms like Google, Amazon, e-Bay) will transform all areas of the economy and enhance productivity. Rapid adoption of these new technologies will be essential for leadership in the Digital Economy.

While Europe can point to some successes in these areas, almost all major large-scale services platforms for the Future Internet are being developed in the US. Asia is catching up quickly as well. Unless Europe takes a leadership role by developing global IT Service Platforms we will fall behind other knowledge-based economies.

**Policies to help Europe meet the Challenge**

Create a fully functioning internal market for next generation technologies, including setting European standards; raise awareness among political leadership about the dramatic impact of ICT; foster the transformation of R&D into marketable products; agree an EU governance for data privacy and security for the next generation Internet; encourage public administrations to become early adopters of new technologies; ensure effective IPR protection (reconsider scope

of protection, ensure enforcement, adapt business models); incentivise inventors and innovative companies and improve availability of project funding, including venture capital.

### **The skills gap – the key bottleneck!**

Talents and skills are the key enablers for Europe to establish global leadership in the Digital Economy. Alarmingly, Europe is facing a widening skills gap for IT professionals. Moreover, postgraduate IT programs are increasingly dominated by students from Asia who then return to their home countries. Europe is exporting IT education to our competition!

Basic computer skills are no longer enough - IT needs many more talented men, and especially women, who understand the technology and can apply it in new applications. It needs to be promoted to young people, in the media and by peer groups, as a vibrant industry with exciting opportunities, Educators must develop more attractive curriculums, start IT programmes from primary school onwards, provide better career advice and upskill IT teachers. There is also a need to enhance cooperation between educators, policy makers and industries, and engage more IT professionals in educational projects.