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Towards a European Cloud Computing Strategy

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Normally I prefer clearly defined concepts. But when it comes to cloud computing I have understood that we cannot wait for a universally agreed definition. We have to act. That is why I am really grateful for the opportunity to discuss the issue with you today.

After two years of intensive work on cloud issues the World Economic Forum has done a great job in bringing together a lot of expertise and experience. And it is a timely exercise indeed.

The potential for a fundamental change in business computing and beyond has been widely recognised. As a result, we see that many private, and increasingly also public, organisations are developing their own approaches to the use of cloud computing.

In theory it is quite clear how the cloud computing revolution could unfold: you can already read about it in books. But it seems to me that there are a number of questions that need to be answered to make it happen in practice. These concern legal, technical and commercial issues.

This is a complex situation and nobody is likely to have all the answers. And cloud computing, in some form, will happen anyway. But the EU has a role to play: we can help make it happen smoother and faster. Before I give you a sketch of my plans, let me anticipate an important question: why should politics get involved? What is the public interest here?

The answer is manifold: just try to come up with an organisation that does not use a database or a network today. There can only be very few of this type, if any. All the others are potential users. This means that we are looking at a potentially vast new service industry. Here are great opportunities for strong European telecoms and high tech SMEs. And as cloud users, including public sector organisations, look for better value for money we can expect productivity gains across Europe's economy as a whole. A clear role of governments is also to ensure that European achievements, such as effective data protection and the EU's Single Market, do not clash with cloud computing.

To be sure, the European Commission has done preliminary work over the last few years, such as funding cloud research or analysing the security implications of cloud computing. For example, our European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) has just published a report on this.

Now is the time to bring it all together. As foreseen in the Digital Agenda for Europe, I have started work on an EU-wide cloud computing strategy. This goes beyond a policy framework. I want to make Europe not just "cloud-friendly" but "cloud-active". The first condition, strong fixed and mobile communication networks, is already fulfilled. And as you know, I am very busy improving these further and solving remaining problems such as data roaming.

We can deliver cloud computing by using research and innovation to bring about better clouds. Along the way we can modernise our computing infrastructure and give our SMEs a new platform for innovation.

Now let me briefly sketch the three broad areas for the cloud strategy:

First, the legal framework. This concerns data protection and privacy, including the international dimension. It also concerns laws and other rules that have a bearing on the deployment of cloud computing in public and private organisations. And it concerns users' rights insofar as they are provided for by law.

Second, technical and commercial fundamentals. We want to extend our research support and focus on critical issues such as security and availability of cloud services. As a mediator, the Commission can also play a stronger role in the technical standardisation of APIs and data formats, as well as in the development of template contracts and service level agreements.

Third, the market. We will support pilot projects aiming at cloud deployment. To really harness the power of public procurement we want to engage with our public sector partners on Member State and regional levels to work on common approaches to cloud computing.

Work has started in several of these areas and the deliverable is a document combining analysis and a plan of future actions. I want to have this in place no later than 2012.

To help me get there I will invite cloud providers and cloud users to Brussels for a series of intense consultations in the spring.

Conclusion

Broadband for all – every European digital – is the Digital Agenda's ICT infrastructure policy. People often ask me what will be done with all that bandwidth. I am convinced that cloud computing is an important part of the answer. If you agree and want to help us to get it right, I am the woman to talk to.