



Internet
Society

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Regional Internet Development Dialogue: Internet of Opportunity for Local Communities in Europe

Format & Audience

This event will gather participants from government, local authorities, business, and civil society to discuss the development of the Internet and its relation to economic growth, digital economy and social inclusion with a focus on European regions and local communities. The event will be divided into four thematic sessions – jobs, innovation, inclusion and trust – with keynote speeches opening the panel debates. The objective is to highlight success stories from across Europe and to encourage the European regions and communities to make them most out of the Internet opportunity.

Keynotes: Setting the scene

Internet development in Europe is among the most advanced in the world. Europe has the highest internet penetration levels of any region, and the digital economy is driving growth.

The tensions between the promise of a digital economy and the threat to jobs must be addressed, while the promise of digital access and social inclusion must be realised for all European citizens.

The Internet can enable increased social and economic inclusion for all, and has been recognised as an enabler for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While the Internet is a global platform, the opportunities must be harnessed at local level. European regions and cities are in a prime position to reap the economic and social benefits that the Internet can provide.

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Session 1: The Internet as a driver of economic growth

The Internet is a motor for economic growth but also a cause for concern. **How should local decision-makers address the challenges without compromising innovation?**

The Internet must be fully harnessed as a platform for innovation

The Internet provides access to tools needed for entrepreneurship as well as a global online marketplace that can enable entrepreneurs to flourish in Europe.

Big data, cloud services, and the Internet of things all provide opportunities to European regions to participate in a data economy led by new innovative companies.

Digitisation of public service delivery in areas such as education and healthcare can create significant efficiencies to local authorities.

The impact of the Internet on the job market represents opportunities and challenges

The emerging 'uberisation' of the economy is challenging traditional jobs and changing the nature of employment, while automation is beginning to replace current jobs.

None of the top 20 largest Internet companies driving these changes and generating much-needed jobs and revenues originated in Europe.

European regions must adapt to the changing nature, and sometimes location, of employment, and create enabling conditions to generate and attract new types of jobs.

About Regional Development Dialogues

This conference is part of a global series of Internet development conferences organized by the Internet Society with the aim of furthering the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that aim at tackling the world's main development challenges by 2030. Previous Regional Internet Development Dialogues have been held in Asia Pacific, Latin America & Caribbean and Africa.

Session 2: Developing an inclusive and secure digital economy for all

The Internet opportunity can only be realised if all European citizens have access to the Internet and possess the right skills to use and create content in a secure manner. **What can local communities do to help increase digital inclusion and bridge the digital skills divide?**

Digital inclusion requires Internet access across all European territories

Internet infrastructure must be extended to unserved areas and basic broadband connections upgraded for local communities and citizens to fully benefit from the digital economy and online services.

Comprehensive digital skills provided at all ages and at all education levels are important to turn users into innovators and content creators, enabling entrepreneurship to create jobs, revenue and new services.

European regions and cities are in a prime position to promote access and digital skills for all.

Building trust in the digital economy

Trust and security are essential prerequisites for the expected higher levels of digitisation and participation.

Restoring user trust is critical to online inclusion, as transparent and ethical data handling processes encourage the use of commercial and public online services.

Digitally savvy citizens understand and embrace tools to protect their safety and privacy online, and they know how to use, create and share online content in a responsible manner.