

Abstract: E-BUSINESS STRATEGIES TO FACE THE EUROPEAN UNION STRUCTURAL CRISIS

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Moving out from the Big Recession, the European Union was the only world region to show an unexpected double dip decline with dramatic evidence in 2012-2013 and an uncertain recovery perspective in the second part of the decade.

The question: is the EU suffering a negative economic cycle, or has it entered into a deep structural crisis related to socio-political imbalance?

When it appears that even strong economies like Germany or France have moved from 2 or 3% growth rate in 2010-2011 to zero growth in 2012-2013, the second point has to be taken into serious consideration.

Compared to other world regions, the European Union shows political constraints, less freedom to change, a low political unification, a common currency (15 members) without a common fiscal and banking policy and an overwhelmingly heavy budget regulation.

Europe is facing zero growth *vis-à-vis* 8% in China and India, 5% in Latin America and in sub-Saharan Africa and between 2%/3% in the USA.

This means zero growth or minus 3 or 4% also for the ICT markets for Europe, where computers are falling, software and services are weak, telecommunications services are declining, not being able to invest and take advantage of new opportunities coming from an exciting phase of the digital revolution.

There is an increasing relation between investing in new digital technologies and economic development.

Countries unable to take active part to the new digital scenario will be marginalized with increased unemployment and reduced competitiveness and quality of life.

Europe is facing such a risk if no action is taken.

The road to follow is to apply digital technologies and eBusiness diffusion to renew the European Union, maximizing the intersectoral ICT applications and

utilization across all citizens, all education systems, all public institutions, all private companies.

The eBusiness language should become the European common language, which could permit the building of a real European federation, the United States of Europe, from North to South, from West to East.

This requires the capacity to permanently adapt to change at a speed imposed by technological development and by global competition; to refuse conservatism in organizations, in government, in public and private services.

Also a dramatic change in education, jobs and careers is needed. We have only to imitate what is happening in new emerging areas.

Wide diffusion of eBusiness driven by new digital technologies and applications, like Cloud applications, Big Data, Analytics intelligence, Application Data-warehousing, advanced Security could permit Europe to face the dramatic structural crisis and restart a new life.

Security systems are an absolute requirement for the growing network interconnections, the data/privacy protection and against the increasing risk of data hacking, considering the widening of network access through mobile devices and wide diffusion of any form of apps.

Virtualization of all documents, no paper transmission, though the public administrations and citizens of various European countries will impose full harmonization/standardization of procedures and a common language and rules.

We are in the middle of a revolutionary change in eBusiness providing new forms of interactive relations based on mobile devices in a mix of online transactions, online banking, online value chains and online information and entertainment.

It is an extraordinary opportunity for Europe to change old models. The European Digital Agenda, Horizon 2020 could represent a useful frame if it could be considered by the European Commission and national member states as the most strategic priority on the table and not only a list of prescriptions and obligations.

At country level, the Digital Agenda should be under the responsibility of prime ministers as main driver of social and economic development, efficiency and cost saving.

The digital target is often focused only on broadband communication infrastructures, but it should require more investment in "human infrastructures", new cultural attitudes, new business models, new open innovation approaches.

There are good examples in CEE countries where some of them appear to understand better than others the way out of the crisis.

I feel that real change in Europe can only come through a bottom-up approach; this means that organizations like IT STAR, AICA and CEPIS, representing the fundamental needs of people and firms, have a major role and responsibility to play.

We need to diffuse an open learning and interconnecting approach to learn each other and to harmonize our efforts toward a common project.

eBusiness and new digital technologies are here to help us. We should not miss them.