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Conclusions and way forward

FIRE and Living Labs – Future Internet by the People

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

Luleå, Thursday, 2 July 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was a real pleasure for me to attend these two days conference in this charming region of North Sweden. This conference was titled "**Future Internet by the People**", and after these two days I believe that this name was fully appropriate.

We have heard a lot of very interesting speeches and presentations in these two days, I will not summarise each and every of them. I just wish to remind that yesterday morning, the National and Regional authorities welcomed the event and explained us that "**Great ideas grow better below zero**". But looking around I now understand that great ideas can well grow also at 30 degrees!

The main messages

It is difficult, if not impossible, for me now to summarise all the important messages that have been delivered in these two intense days. I will just mention a few, which I consider the most important ones. You may correct me if I missed some!

One is that **the Internet Economy is changing**. We all know that ICT contributed to some 40% of overall productivity growth in the economy in the last years. The networking effect has made possible an accelerated and global diffusion of innovation. The ensuing changes to our economy as well as to the life of our citizens have been remarkable.

Related to this, is the **growing need for research** on the Future of the Internet. Whether the Internet has already become a mature infrastructure, or if it needs radical changes to support new services, is still being debated. But what is clear is that there is still a lot of potential for internet driven innovation and growth, and a coordinated research is key to unleash this potential.

This effort is even more necessary in times of economic trouble. Our world is currently suffering a dramatic coincidence of multiple crisis: not only an economic and financial crisis, originated by expectations of an "endless growth" of values and profits, but also an environmental crisis, due to the over-exploitation of natural resources; an energy crisis, accelerated by the increasing population and industrial development; and a social crisis, rooted in uneven economic growth.

These crises can be seen as "drivers" of new developments in Internet Technologies, which can play a **key role in implementing a more sustainable way forward**, in the same way as they have insofar increasingly contributed to the current societal and economic development.

As we have heard in several talks these days, the Future Internet can enable epochal changes towards an environmentally-friendly way of living, a sustainable economic development, even towards a more sound global governance.

A **new economy** of Internet-based services is already flourishing, characterised by new trends in content creation and delivery. From an economic perspective, all these new applications and services are creating new opportunities and even more structural market changes. The emergence of Web 2.0, which empowers individuals to create and share their own content through the network, also as a business tool and as a way of delivering government services, will further accelerate this trend.

Another revolution is expected which will see **people more and more cooperating and sharing opinions and knowledge across borders** of any kind (geographical, cultural, linguistic, social), thus enabling this **global governance**.

Indeed, to get out of the economic downturn we need to stimulate a solid and sustainable business growth in high value goods and services that respond to real market needs. And we in Europe need to make full use of the economic potential of the single market that is still locked up in our fragmented national markets. This should apply primarily to **services based on the internet**, which has by nature a cross-border dimension.

We have also heard about several key issues, at different levels, which are crucial to ensure an harmonic and effective development of a free and innovative Future Internet. They have names which you have heard several times, also from my initial speech, so I will just quickly remind them. They are:

- **Openness**, for any service, to any application or user, to ensure there are no constraints to innovation; open standards are also a need to ensure full interoperability and low final costs.
- **Network neutrality**, to ensure a competitive environment giving to everybody the same opportunities of benefiting from what the Future Internet can offer in terms of business opportunities or freedom of expression;
- **Trust and privacy**, to ensure that the end users can safely and confidently use the innovative services and applications of the Future Internet, enjoying the same rights everyone would expect in a free and democratic society.
- In terms of research methodology, there is a need for **large scale experimentation** of any new concept, in realistic environments, so to test beforehand the possible long-term implications of radical changes to the Internet structure, especially as for their social or economic impacts.
- An effective **innovation policy** is also necessary, to facilitate the emergence of markets with clearer demands from users, allowing for shorter innovation cycles, faster responses to socio-economic challenges and opening new opportunities for industry in Europe. Europe should become more attractive to investors, companies and researchers.

The way forward

We have heard about the plans for a possible **Public-Private Partnership** on the Future of the Internet. Its main goal is to create a critical mass of research and actors at European level, addressing all the Future Internet research aspects in a holistic approach, so to ensure that the European efforts have a global impact.

The FIRE initiative is not only an important part of this huge effort, but can also be seen as a **precursor** of this methodology, as it has successfully put together visionary research and experimentation of these new concepts in large scale environments. And, especially in this attention given to experimentation, you can clearly see the links with Living Labs, due to its consideration of real world impacts.

In conclusion, I can then say that **in Luleå, two communities, the FIRE Future Internet research and experimentation community and the Living Labs community, have come together to discuss how experimentation using advanced innovation methodologies can bridge between technological research on the Internet of tomorrow and the needs of the "people" potentially using it.**

I think these this FIREweek can be considered as a milestone towards a "Future Internet by the People".

I wish to thank you all for having attended this conference. I wish to thank in particular Åsa Torstensson Minister for Communications, Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, for sharing with me now the pleasure of wrapping up this day. Tack so mycket!

Thank you for your attention, and have a safe trip back home.