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## Skilling Europe to innovate in the cloud

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Tags: cloud computing, education, ICT skills

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Can Europe use cloud computing to stimulate economic growth? If so, what skills will be needed to make most advantage of this technology trend?

These questions generated discussion at our roundtable event on 8 June, "Creating Economic Opportunities in Europe with Cloud Computing," a discussion that helped to identify the various aspects of the issue that would interest any policy maker interested in economic growth. Cloud computing is not only about technology and innovation, but about business models, about access to markets, about availability of increasingly efficient resources, about productivity, about change management.

Two speakers run their own small businesses and gave a refreshing perspective about both the disruptive nature of cloud computing and the opportunities such disruption presents. Nigel Gibbons of [Unitech](#) (UK) and Anders Trolle-Schultz of [SaaS-IT](#) (Denmark) both pointed out that the impact of current trends is more about business evolution than technology evolution. The technology evolution itself is significant, even dramatic in some ways, but the drivers of growth will be the business processes and business models that are enabled by the technology.

The potential for lower costs of computing is the reason many organizations are looking closely at adopting it, and actual adoption will depend on both awareness, for larger organizations, management skills. The reduced fixed costs of computing will help stimulate the creation of new businesses, as Federico Etro, Professor of Economics of the University of Milan, explained. Small organizations, as users of technology in many different sectors, are likely to be the principal beneficiaries of cloud computing. Read [Professor Etro's paper](#) for more information.

Jonathan Liebenau, Professor in the School of Management at the London School of Economics, discussed his research showing that management differences explain much of the variation in the ability to benefit from ICT-led productivity growth, and there needs to be more focus in Europe on both management and basic skills to be able to exploit cloud computing. If you want to get a full view of the challenges and opportunities associated with skilling Europe for cloud computing, link here to a webinar which outlines the research being conducted by Prof Liebenau in association with Microsoft.

Net job creation and growth over the long term is the interest driving the desire to exploit cloud computing, and the discussion acknowledged the inevitable transition and shifts in the labour force as some job roles change. Resistance to change is a constant factor, but what is needed is recognition of where the opportunities are and how to help workers find new specializations, expand management skills, and start new businesses that cloud computing enables.

The European Commission's interest and role in ICT skills training is a subject central to the work of André Richier, in DG Enterprise and Industry. Skills training is, he pointed out, a non-controversial topic, one in which more cooperation is needed to take advantage of the business evolution that is now available for Europe. As the current trend unfolds, more research is needed alongside action to equip SMEs and the European workforce to get the most out of the innovation stemming from cloud computing.