

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves is to chair the Steering Board of the European Cloud Partnership at the invitation of the European Commission; the function of the Committee is to promote the use of cross-border digital public services in European business and the public sector.

Cloud data processing stands for storing computer data (for example, text files, images, videos) and software in remote locations, with users can access via the Internet through the use of devices of their own choice.

"There is no doubt that Estonia is one of the leading countries in Europe when it comes to the provision of public digital services. Chairing the Steering Board will be an excellent opportunity for Estonia to shape the trends of Europe and co-operate with visionaries and technology leaders like Amazon, Ericsson, F-Secure and Telefónica Digital. All the stakeholders involved in Europe will win from the mutual exchange of experiences," told President Ilves, who is in Brussels at the first meeting of the Steering Board of the European Cloud Partnership.

"Cloud data processing technology represents the information technology of today. For us, it is important to establish a set of European rules and controls that will extend to all the European databases," he added.

The Estonian Head of State, who was invited to chair the Steering Board by the European Commissioner for Digital Agenda, Neelie Kroes, also stated that many Member States are very sceptical about the implementation of digital public services, including cross-border services.

"There is a risk that last generation's solutions, which are no longer safe and will diminish rather than increase the trust people have in digital services, will be implemented in Europe. For example, a user name and password solution may be preferred over trans-European electronic ID card co-operation," told President Ilves.

According to the President, regular users and politicians are also afraid that digital records are not being kept safely and that different applications may lack the co-operation capabilities.

"We must work with preconceptions like that and use cloud data processing to fend off possible threats and risks. Inactivity would inhibit the digital development of Europe," remarked President Ilves, who only recently led the European Union e-health working group, which he participated in at the invitation of the European Commission, and who was named one of the most innovative people in today's democratic world by the well-known technology portal, TechCrunch*.

Cloud data processing is faster, cheaper, more flexible and safer than local IT solutions. Many popular services like Facebook, Spotify and web-based e-mail programmes use cloud data processing technologies, but the real economic benefits and push for productivity and innovation will be reaped by the extensive use of cloud solutions in European businesses and the public sector.

According to President Ilves, the extensive implementation of cloud services, combined with the required modification of data security and digital content rights, would provide the real foundation for the development of a common market and e-trade in Europe for digital services.

"The main beneficiaries would be the citizens of the European Union, small and medium size enterprises, and governmental institutions of every level. Also, service providers and data centre networks as well as software enterprises would gain from this solution," told the Estonian Head of State.

He admitted that this may involve cheaper and more flexible information and communication technology services for companies, while citizens will gain immediate access to the information they require and governments can offer their citizens better and more integrated services at lower prices.

According to the European Commission, institutions will save at least 10-20% of their costs by adopting cloud technology, and by the year 2020 European GDP could increase by 160 billion euros (approximately 1% of GDP) annually.

To contribute to such changes, the Steering Board established two large specific goals for the

next two and a half years at their meeting today in Brussels.

First, the establishment of a common European cloud data processing framework. Cloud data processing is global and Europe can promote the more extensive use of cloud services and only compete successfully at a global level if the extension of the reach of the common market by adding e-services, licensing digital contents and data security measures is a success.

Secondly, by promoting the transition of public sector IT into cloud (and, as the result, further promoting the use of the services in the private sector, particularly with small and medium size enterprises). It is important to promote both the establishment of the required infrastructure and the provision of services in spheres that may contribute to the internal re-design of the IT sector, while being beneficial for citizens.

The Steering Board, chaired by President Ilves, includes a number of spokespersons and experts from their respective spheres, including Lèo Apotheker (former CEO of Hewlett-Packard), Christian Fredrikson (President and CEO of F-Secure Corporation), Hans Vestberg (Ericsson's President and CEO), Werner Vogels (Vice President of Amazon), Thierry Breton (CEO of ATOS), Bernard Charles (President and CEO of Dassault Systèmes).

* "The 20 Most Innovative People In Democracy 2012": <http://techcrunch.com/2012/11/03/the-20-most-innovative-people-in-democracy-2012/>

[Members of the European Cloud Partnership Steering Board](#) (PDF).

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