



Google CLO: ‘EU needs to complete digital single market initiative’

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Drummond was speaking at an event focusing on digital single market reform

Europe needs to complete its ambitious digital single market initiative if it wants to help citizens and local technology businesses thrive, according to David Drummond, Google’s senior vice president of corporate development and chief legal officer.

Speaking at a Lisbon Council event in Brussels this week, Drummond said European policymakers can better support local technology startups by concluding the digital single market initiative, which aims to harmonise rules across the 28 member states and improve the flow of digital goods and service across European borders.

The digital single market launched in 2010, which contains seven ‘pillars’, focuses on the introduction of harmonised technology interoperability standards (including cloud computing), data protection and privacy laws, high-speed broadband access improvement, digital literacy skills development across the EU, and the introduction of e-government services in all areas of the public sector. The reform process is due to conclude by 2020.

“I speak to many entrepreneurs who struggle with 28 different rule books. The Internet is in many ways borderless and yet there are many borders still within Europe, even within the single market. With over two dozen frameworks, many of which are inconsistent, entrepreneurs stumble when they seek to grow or hire across borders or trade goods and services,” Drummond said.

“The biggest step the EU can make is to complete the formation of the digital single market, a goal the European Commission rightly recognizes as critical to the Continent’s growth,” he said.

Drummond also stressed the importance of intellectual property rights within the broader market reform strategy, as well as the importance of encouraging the development of digital literacy and technical skills among young boys and girl.

“Anyone who’s in need of talent talks about the importance of encouraging our youth to acquire the digital and scientific skills of the future, both in Europe and the US. By 2020, nearly 90 per cent of all jobs will require some technical information and communications skills. At current rates, the EU predicts a shortfall of 900,000 jobs that will go unfilled because students—especially young women—are lacking these skills. In the US, 57 per cent of bachelor’s degrees are earned by women, but only 12 per cent of computer science degrees.”

While many of the initiatives contained within the digital single market package enjoy broad support, some items, like the goal of eliminating telecoms roaming fees in Europe, or certain proposals on the regulation of digital creative content have drawn their fair share of controversy and have threatened to stall reform.