Rules patchwork 'threatens cloud computing growth'

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This file photo shows a passenger of Bay Area Rapid Transit working on his laptop as he waits for a train in San Francisco, California. A global patchwork of conflicting laws and regulations could hobble the growth of the cloud computing market, according to a new study.

A global patchwork of conflicting laws and regulations could hobble the growth of the cloud computing market, according to a new study.

The study, commissioned by the Business Software Alliance (BSA), urged governments to move to harmonise the rules to ease the flow of information across borders and allow the full benefit of advances to be realised.

The technology involves storing massive amounts of data and applications on an Internet "cloud" spread globally instead of the

traditional method of installing information on users' machines or company servers.

It enables easy access to and sharing of information anywhere, even while on the move.

But the study, carried out for BSA by IT consulting firm Galexia, said some countries were "placing geographic restrictions on data and considering other limits on outsourcing of work."

A customs official is seen checking a laptop computer at the San Francisco International Airport. A global patchwork of conflicting laws and regulations could hobble the growth of the cloud computing market, according to a new study.

It cited the European Union's proposed "Data Protection Regulation" which it said "has the potential to undermine its benefits with new,

overly prescriptive rules".

It said the regulations "threaten to undermine the economic advances that a truly global cloud can provide."

Although developed countries are better prepared individually to support the growth of cloud computing than developing nations, "obstacles remained... due to the lack of alignment in the legal and regulatory environments", it said.

In China, the country's Internet filtering schemes "appear to include a strong political element, in that they regularly block sites that expressed political dissent", the study said.

"Countries that wall themselves off are doing real harm," BSA president and chief executive Robert Holleyman said in a statement.

"The true benefits of cloud computing come with scale," he added.

"In a global economy, you should be able to get the technology you need for personal or business use from servers located anywhere in the world. But that requires laws and regulations that let data flow easily across borders," he said.

"Right now, too many countries have too many different rules standing in the way of the kind of trade in digital services we really need."

The Washington-based BSA is an industry group that works for copyright protection and counts among its members some of the world's biggest technology companies, including Apple, Microsoft, Symantec and Adobe.

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