

Poland seeks competitive edge through new technology

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Poland, which is expected to post the European Union's highest growth this year, is hoping to further boost its competitive edge by investing in new technology, the country's e-government czar said Wednesday.

"In competitiveness rankings, (IT) infrastructure is part of what has for years now lowered our position," Michal Boni, Poland's digital affairs minister in charge of ushering his country into the digital age said at a forum Wednesday.

Speakers at the Central and Eastern European Competitiveness Forum held in Warsaw focused on how ex-communist CEE countries could harness technology to improve their competitiveness.

Poland placed 41st out of 142 on the World Economic Forum's 2011-2012 Global Competitiveness Index, while the region's top-scoring IT savvy Estonia came in 33rd.

Boni cited Estonia as a model for the kind of e-government -- an integrated digitisation of [government services](#) -- Poland hoped to introduce in the coming years to boost its efficiency.

Estonia, a Baltic state of 1.3 million people which earned the nickname "E-Stonia" for being one of the world's most wired nations, became the first country to use online voting in [parliamentary elections](#) in 2007.

Boni added that Poland wants to hone its residents' [computer skills](#) and

give them more reason to go online, as Poles of all ages now access the Internet much more frequently at home rather than at work, school or elsewhere.

And 15 percent of Polish households, or 2.4 million, stay offline not due to financial constraints, but because they simply see no need to go on the Internet.

"The number of services offered online for all residents is not yet large enough to convince everyone," Boni said.

Poland, which was the only EU country to register growth during the [global financial crisis](#), has seen its economy flourish since leaving communism behind in 1989 and joining the EU in 2004.

According to the European Commission's latest growth forecast, Poland is set to top the 27-member EU with a 2.7 percent rise in output this year.

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