

EU eyes a cloud computing heaven

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People crowd at a cloud computing exhibition at the CeBIT IT fair in Germany. With the cloud computing business still in its relatively early days, the European Union has moved to secure a toehold in a potentially lucrative market it says could deliver 2.5 million new jobs.

With the cloud computing business still in its relatively early days, the European Union moved on Thursday to secure a toehold in a potentially lucrative market it says could deliver 2.5 million new jobs.

"We want to make Europe not just cloud-friendly but cloud-active," said the EU's commissioner for digital affairs Neelie Kroes, announcing plans to develop European standards and certifications to get business to join the cloud.

"Cloud computing" consists of storing data and software on remote servers accessed over the Internet by e-mail, social network or video-

game users without having to invest in added software.

Using remote servers in centres that can be the size of football fields is popular with services such as [Facebook](#) and Spotify but as an economy of scale, the system cuts IT costs for businesses by 10 to 20 percent.

Kroes estimated a speed-up in the use of cloud computing both in the [private sector](#) and by public services could add 160 billion euros (\$206 billion) to the EU economy—or around 1.0 percent—by 2020.

"But this can only happen if we get the policies right," she said. "Today many potential users think it is too complicated, too risky or too untrustworthy."

The EU needed to set standards by 2013, approve EU-wide certification schemes and help develop contracts to reassure users, she said.

Europe must reconquer its lost technological edge, Kroes said. "We were in the driver's seat in the 1990s. We should come back."

With cloud-computing currently one of the fastest growing sources of [carbon emission](#) as centres leave servers running 24/7, the EU also is funding a scheme to "green" the cloud through the use of new, more efficient technology.

The Eurocloud project aims to reduce power needs by 90 percent in conventional data centres by adapting low-power microprocessor technologies commonly used in mobile phones.

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