

IBM Welcomes European Union's "Trade for All" Strategy

Brussels, Belgium (14 October, 2015) — IBM today issued the following statement applauding the European Union's newly unveiled trade strategy:

"IBM welcomes the prominent role digital trade is set to have in Europe's new approach to trade. Digital trade is at the core of value chains in today's global economy, and impacts all sectors of the economy. The EU Trade Strategy recognizes this new reality and is now fit for the 21st Century.

With the expansion of the Internet, more and more services can be delivered electronically giving enterprises of all sizes instant access to new markets. It is therefore time for leaders to establish smart policies to promote innovation and investment in the digital economy. Europe's trade strategy to harness data-driven economic growth and innovation is therefore a step in the right direction.

The global expansion of the digital revolution has also meant that new types of trade barriers have been created, such as data localization requirements, limitations to data flows and new non-tariff barriers to information and communication technologies.

It is positive to see the EU recognize the importance that trade has for the international competitiveness of Europe's digital businesses; we have witnessed an increasing number of barriers to the expansion of the digital economy and appreciate that the EU will now address these as a matter of priority.

On May 6, the EU published its Digital Single Market Strategy (DSM) which already had an important reference to the "international dimension" of the DSM. Today's EU Trade Strategy is in line with the EU Digital Single Market and will help make it global. In this regard, it is more important than ever that the European Commission, the US and other leaders work quickly to address the legal uncertainty created by the invalidation of the EU-US Safe Harbor by the European Court of Justice. A "Trade for All" strategy can only work if there are clear, reliable mechanisms to facilitate international data flows.

Trade flows create value. The new EU trade strategy sends a clear signal that data too needs to flow if it is to create value and foster growth. In this regard IBM also fully supports the importance of the flow of data in compliance with data protection rules.

We look forward to supporting important trade negotiations, such as the TTIP and TiSA agreements that support the free flow of data and oppose the forced localisation of data."

— Liam Benham, Vice President, IBM GRA Europe