
Preface

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In recent years, the world has witnessed the power of information and communication technologies (ICT) in revolutionizing the business and economic landscape. With the advent of Web 2.0 and related technologies, the world is also seeing how ICT empowers individuals while fostering social networks and virtual communities, with profound impact on business, politics, and society.

What is equally evident is the increasing role that technology plays in accelerating economic growth and promoting development. The diffusion of mobile telephones, for example, has made a huge difference for remote rural communities, providing relatively cheap and easy access to new markets. Likewise, greater Internet access and more affordable computers are radically changing the way education is provided in many countries, offering students virtual and enhanced resources while facilitating cooperation and exchange.

Now, more than ever, policymakers and business leaders recognize the need to create an enabling environment to support the adoption of technologies and spread their benefits across all sectors of society. The importance of networked readiness, especially at the national level, has achieved prominence on the public policy agenda, with the realization that the tools provided by ICT can help countries fulfill their national potential and enable a better quality of life for their citizens.

Recognizing the key role of ICT as a driver of growth and prosperity, each year since 2001—and jointly with INSEAD since 2002—the World Economic Forum has produced *The Global Information Technology Report*. This *Report* series assesses the progress of networked readiness in countries, revealing the obstacles that prevent governments, businesses, and individuals from fully capturing the benefits of ICT. Beyond providing a yearly snapshot of networked readiness, the *Report* has evolved into an authoritative benchmarking instrument and an invaluable tool for facilitating public-private dialogue, whereby policymakers, business leaders, and other stakeholders can evaluate progress on a continual basis.

The Global Information Technology Report 2006–2007, the sixth in the series, presents the latest findings of our research and highlights the best policies and practices for promoting networked readiness. In line with past editions, the *Report* offers a comprehensive snapshot of the state of

networked readiness of the world, this year covering a record number of 122 economies. Also included in the *Report* is an extensive section of data tables with global rankings covering over 60 indicators as well as a number of essay contributions looking at different aspects of networked readiness.

We commend the contributors to this *Report* for their thought leadership and for helping this volume to serve, once again, as a platform for dialogue and reflection for both government and business. We especially wish to thank the editors of the *Report*, Soumitra Dutta at INSEAD and Irene Mia at the World Economic Forum, for their energy and their commitment to the project. Appreciation also goes to Fiona Paua, who leads the Global Competitiveness Network, and the other members of the team: Jennifer Blanke, Ciara Browne, Margareta Drzeniek, Thierry Geiger, and Aviva Rajczyk. Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to our network of Partner Institutes around the world, without whose dedication and hard work the 2007 Executive Opinion Survey and this *Report* would not have been possible.