Top executives from many of the world's leading telecoms and mobile phone companies recently met with IESE faculty and other experts to discuss the key issues facing the telecommunications industry. Held at IESE's Madrid campus, the two-day gathering brought together senior representatives from several of the major players in the sector, numerous academics and experts from all across Europe and the United States.

Over the last decade, the annual IESE Meetings of the Telecommunications Sector has become a reference point for understanding key developments in this rapid growth area. In this year's forum, among the principal issues discussed were the impact of deregulation in Europe, the lessons to be learned from the deregulation process in the United States, 3G, WiFi, and wireless technology.

While some pundits suggest that the new generation of terminals only concern and result in some new features, most speakers agreed that these changes in fact signal that much more is at stake within the entire industry itself. The latest terminals, they noted, are setting standards that will establish the sector's future competitiveness. A group of panelists discussed where they believe this sector is heading as a result of these important technological advances.

At the same time, others observed that demand is growing for greater mobility within virtually all sectors. A number of technologies are competing to meet this demand, they added, each with their own business model. Speakers emphasized that it is important to try and understand these different business models in order to better anticipate the capacity each technology will have in establishing a presence in different sectors.

Another important aspect discussed was the future role of regulations within the sector, which many say will increase competition, instead of merely limiting the actions of more established players. Finally, the speakers analyzed the problem of creating demand in order to maintain sustainable growth within the sector, something that translates into stronger growth in today's information and knowledge societies.

Among those who attended the event were Carlos Bustelo, President of the Telecommunications Market Commission; José Montilla, Spain's Minister for Trade and Industry; Bernd Langeheine, Director of Communications Services for Policy and Regulatory Framework at the European Commission; Greg Sidak of the American Enterprise Institute and Criterion Economics; Rafael Díez-Vega, General Director of Services for Operators at Telefónica; Jesús Sánchez Ríos, General Director of Albura;
Professor Rajit Gadh of the Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science; Javier Aguilera, CEO of Telefónica Móviles España; Ingemar Naeve, CEO of Ericsson; and Luis Álvarez, General Director at BT España.

The annual conference, held on the IESE Madrid campus, is led by IESE Professors Jordi Gual and Joan Enric Ricart.