IS Plans: beyond the market
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Just like businesses, states, as the huge public companies they are, can benefit from Information Communication Technology (ICT) to speed up their growth and improve their productivity. In the current global environment, these advantages make the difference between the countries at the head of the table and those at the bottom.

States have traditionally created all the conditions to guarantee their economic and social development by constructing public infrastructures (such as transport, water and energy networks) and by laying down basic working norms. In order to erect the future Information Society (IS) building different foundations will be needed (networks, technologies, qualified personnel, a market receptive to innovations etc.), which must be supplied by the states when they are not directly promoted by the states themselves. In this new phase, the role of the states is essential: it is their responsibility to make up for the deficiencies of an immature market, which will not develop itself unless somebody provides the means. This “public service” vocation is the only thing that will prevent the so-called “digital fracture” which separates those integrated in the development from those anchored in the analogical past, the new form of illiteracy. With this purpose in mind, over the last five years most governments (the Spanish government among them) have introduced policies aimed at promoting the development of IS. However, many of the governments’ plans lacked realism and/or means to carry them out. Inspired by the boom of the technology sector at the end of the nineties, they trusted that the private sector would be able to develop a non-existent market. The most serious fact was that they damaged the “revolution” and the “change of attitude” components that belong to the introduction of IS. Since then things have changed quite a lot. The Internet and its applications have been widely disseminated but there is still much to do to completely integrate the Net in all the economic and social processes. For their part, the governments have accepted that there is a new generation of measures to promote IS. For these to be effective this time the new plans must be tackled from a transversal but measurable perspective that takes into account the idiosyncrasy of each country and that has a bearing on education as a driving force that makes the Great Changes possible. Yet, above all, and as highlighted by the “Soto Commission” report, the government must provide strong leadership. More than ever, the Administration must go where private initiative cannot reach.