

Global Forum 2018 Opening Speech of Rasmus Jarlov, Minister of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs, Denmark

Ladies and gentlemen. Dear colleagues. Distinguished guests from near and far. It is my pleasant duty today to bid you all a warm welcome to Global Forum 2018. And a warm welcome to Denmark.

Many of you have travelled long distances and have made a quite an effort to join us here today. So thank you very much for being here.

Also a special welcome to our speakers – I am sure your contributions will inspire the debates the coming two days.

Now, it is a great honor to host Global Forum 2018 in the city of Copenhagen.

And I would like to start out today by asking you the same question Steve Jobs said to Pepsi executive John Sculley to lure him to Apple:

***“Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life?
Or do you want to come with me and change the world?” he said.***

Now, there’s no doubt that technology changes the world. Until now only to the better.

And in Denmark we consider digitalization a decisive factor for the further development of both the public and private sector in a broad variety of fields: From digital education, over digital infrastructure to data ethics.

When looking at a map of the world, you have to look closely to spot Denmark that is squished in between many great countries. But when things get digital, we are not a tiny country. In that perspective Denmark is a big digital playground.

And this makes us able to lead by example because we are the most digitalized country in Europe according to the EU’s digitalization index.

We are the proud owners of this title because:

- The Danish people have embraced digitization: More than 97 pct. Of the Danes communicate with authorities via digital channels and receive their pay checks, health data and tax payments digitally.
- Our companies are the most digital in Europe, not least due to their use of technologies to automate tasks as for example accounting, administration and operation. Additionally, Danish companies embrace e-commerce and digital technologies such as cloud and social media.
- Finally, we have a well-developed infrastructure and a public sector that has come far in digitalizing services for both companies and private citizens. For instance, the registration process for companies is fully digitalized, which means that the administrative burden of starting and running a business is minimized. And as mentioned, we have largely succeeded in shifting our

citizens to digital channels, thanks to our user-friendly framework for eGovernment services.

Combined, these factors make Denmark a perfect country for testing new digital solutions.

And a good example of new Danish digital entrepreneurship is the wine app Vivino. The company was founded by two Danes who – in their own words – did not know the first thing about wine.

As this was somewhat of an inconvenience to them, they got the brilliant idea to tap into and make use of the experiences of other wine consumers.

Today, with data from millions of users, Vivino is the company most knowledgeable of wine in the world. And it is the app that many of us go to for assistance and guidance when we stand perplexed before the shelves in the supermarket, unable to make a qualified decision for the weekend.

Hence, with a large, digitalized consumer base in a small country, Vivino grew rapidly in just a short period of time. And it turned into a platform-driven enterprise like the ones that many of us dream of fostering many more of.

It is the vision and the clear goal of the Danish Government that Denmark will continue to be a digital frontrunner.

However, we are increasingly facing strong competition in the global arena. And we must acknowledge that we are losing ground. Asian countries, in particular, are gaining ground in the global competition on advancing new technologies.

And please allow me to underscore that we are NOT on a mission to limit their possibilities and their growth.

Instead our mission is to foster a successful climate for innovation in Denmark and in Europe that makes us able to come forward with solutions and thereby create growth and businesses in our country.

Meanwhile, Denmark has world-class universities, a high level of digital skills and innovative start-ups. But to my regret Danish companies are not frontrunners in terms of utilizing the new digital technologies.

For instance, Danish companies make less use of artificial intelligence and Big Data than those in comparable countries. Furthermore, they do not develop new business models to the same extent.

That is why the Danish Government launched 38 initiatives with the Strategy for Denmark's Digital Growth January this year.

With these initiatives we seek to enhance the digital competencies of small- and medium sized companies and to improve access to digital skills, resources and essential knowledge about the use of data.

The goal is clear: The industry and the educational sector should work together in order to motivate people for this line of work. And to unlock the potential in new technologies.

Digital technologies, however, do not just pose the questions of how we are to gain from it. Or what we can achieve with the right competencies. It also poses a series of fundamental, ethical questions:

- ***“How do we obtain sufficient transparency?”***
- ***“How do we avoid discrimination and bias in our decision-making based on data?”***
- ***“And how do we ensure that both businesses and regulators handle data responsibly?”***

As a temporary answer to these questions, the government has established an Expert Group on Data Ethics. Which in just a few days' time will present its recommendations on responsible handling of data in the private sector.

The group has examined what good data ethics is. How companies can work with data in a responsible way. And how sound ethical behavior may develop into a competitive advantage for companies.

The purpose is not to create further burdens or restrictions for the companies. I want to make that very clear.

Rather the purpose is to create incentives for businesses to go beyond the letter of the law. And to drive change because they see the competitive advantage in being ahead of the curve.

I personally believe, that data ethics holds a great potential of becoming a competitive advantage that businesses can use to distinguish themselves positively from their competitors on the global market.

And with efforts from both the public and the private sector, it should be possible to create a framework that will enable us to harness the value of the data economy. As well as ensuring that our citizens may trust in the new digital solutions.

Rest assured that the Danish government is committed to the agenda. And that we believe that it is essential to keep data ethics at the top of the global policy agenda.

I am pleased to see all of you committed to the agenda here as well today. We have participants from authorities, the private sector and the scientific community from all over the world here today.

If we are to reap all the benefits of the digital transformation, we need to find new solutions – and we need to find them together.

In the European setting, we are striving to create a true Digital Single Market. The ambition is to break down national silos to ensure that the leading digital companies of the future will be European.

Therefore the European Digital Single Market should be:

- Open to digital innovation.
- Have low entry barriers for innovative start-ups.
- And ensure clear legal requirements that reduce unnecessary burdens for businesses.

Take my case example, Vivino. The case shows how we have succeeded in making Denmark a digital playground.

But to my concern, the case also shows that the start-up felt Denmark became too small to grow their business even further and ended up moving their headquarters to Silicon Valley.

Luckily for us, Vivino continued its journey and eventually decided to move its development division back to Denmark, where they could acquire highly-skilled engineers at an affordable salary. This indicates that also in this regard, Denmark may still have a competitive edge.

But the take-away from the Vivino example – and the ambition for the Danish Government – is that we should be able to accommodate these new digital successes within the borders of Europe and the Digital Single Market.

At the same time, the Danish Government is convinced that the EU has a very important global role in terms of promoting a middle ground in the global digital economy representing a responsible and ethical approach.

That is why we support a European framework that ensures a high level of consumer and personal data protection. And we will work hard to ensure that data ethics become a competitive advantage for businesses.

In the coming days here at Global Forum you will, hopefully, acquire new relations, share experiences and learn from each other. You are in for two very interesting days, I can say.

“So do you want to sell whatever it is that you are selling for the rest of your life? Or do you want to join me and The Danish Government and change the world?”

Thank you for your attention.