

Press release
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Leadership required

Sanjiv Ahuja, a senior telecoms executive, wrapped up the 2007 Future of Europe Summit in Andorra on Friday with a plea for leadership in Europe if the region is to embark upon an economic renewal.

“It has a simple fix, it’s like any other problem,” said Ahuja, former CEO of Orange. “It’s a question of leadership. Of political leadership, of business leadership.”

Ahuja used his keynote speech -- the last at this year’s summit -- to spell out the advances and challenges that are being made by India and China. “I do not believe that they are behind,” he said of the Asia powers. “Technically, they’re not behind, they just don’t have the business sophistication yet. But that’s just an evolution, and they’re getting there very fast.”

To meet the challenge -- and nurture a new generation of leaders and “rejuvenate” its workforce -- Europe needs a multi-faceted approach. Firstly, it needs to do away with “artificial, inappropriate and unnecessary barriers” to welcoming skilled migrant labour.

In terms of regulation, a “light touch” is required in many sectors, while in fact just the opposite is occurring in areas like telecoms, where there is often double regulation from member states and Brussels.

“Another challenge is the entitlement culture in the EU: the safety net. There’s a positive part to the safety net and a negative part.”

Finally, he called for new approaches to education, in particular teaching youths how to disseminate information and differentiate between good and bad media from a young age.

Closing the summit, Jordi Robert, the head of the bureau of Business Innovation, Government of Andorra, said that the next summit would be held at the end of November 2008 around the theme of “Economic Sustainability; New Opportunities for Europe.”