

6.5 PUBLIC POLICY REFORMULATION

Technological developments in the ICT sector and the convergence of technology that has been facilitated by the increasing use of IP has dramatically changed the nature of the telecommunications industry by reducing the cost of entry and the ability to use one network platform to provide data, voice and video services. These changes have provided the opportunity in developing countries to obtain services that were previously not available and in advanced economies to obtain access to increasingly more sophisticated applications.

The major challenge to the realisation of the potential of these developments lies with the ability of Governments to respond by reformulating their national regulatory policies to encourage rather than discourage the use of these technologies. This is particularly relevant in recognising the potential that Local Open Access Networks can have on facilitating the provision of services in both emerging and advanced economies.

The development of many Local Open Access Networks has been a response by local Governments and voluntary groups to provide telecommunications services that are not being provided by incumbent carriers. As exemplified by experiences in a number of countries, the development of these networks often represent the only way that broadband services will be provided in disadvantaged areas, and as such, national policies should seek to encourage their development. It is recognized that there may be issues when these networks are publicly funded and seek to compete directly with existing carrier networks that may be providing the same range of services.

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