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The recent EU2020 Strategy has laid out clearly the challenge we face as a result of the recent unprecedented crisis in which GDP fell by 4% in 2009, industrial production has dropped to the levels of the 1990s and 10% of active population is now unemployed. The EU2020 Strategy, currently under discussion at Heads of State level, calls for a European Digital Agenda as an essential step to getting Europe onto the road to recovery. This shows a recognition that ICT is a key enabler of economic growth and job creation in the EU and that the ICT sector has been one of the first sectors to start to show growth again after the crisis.

The European Digital Agenda should be the roadmap to the "digital road to recovery," that sets out the right foundations for smart and sustainable (green and inclusive) growth to reinforce Europe's global position as an outward-looking technology leader and partner with the rest of the world.

The crucial elements needed for the Digital Agenda are:

- a) for Europe to invest in its information infrastructures to enable it to retain its position at the top of the global league tables for high speed internet;
- b) by taking concrete steps to establish a 100% digital society in which not only is there 100% broadband coverage but digital literacy and skills are promoted so that there can be participation for all;
- c) to establish a true digital single market for content and services to unlock the benefits of the internet-enabled growth;
- d) to reinforce the growth of on-line commerce and services by enhancing trust, confidence and data protection;
- e) to make sure that telecom and internet users can get the full benefits of their rights on-line by adopting a clear and accessible Charter of User Rights;
- f) by shifting from a focus on e-government to open government emphasising the efficiency, accessibility and user centred potential of digital public services and of public sector information;
- g) by reinforcing research and innovation in ICT especially to stimulate the high growth SMEs but also to reinforce Europe's industrial position in emerging markets such as health and green mobility; and
- h) by reinforcing the coherence of Europe's voice on the international stage in fora such as the WSIS and Internet Governance Forum.¹

Infrastructures

Europe is a world leader in broadband penetration but, as fast internet access becomes the bedrock of innovation and growth, it is essential that over the coming three years to 2013 all **Member States should take practical steps to achieve the agreed target of 100% coverage of broadband to all citizens, to allow the digital economy to flourish and for all citizens to participate in the Digital Society.**

¹ Many of these items were called for in the December 2009 TTE Council Conclusions on the 'Digital Agenda for Europe'

In particular, broadband plans could be developed through public financing and other measures such as co-ordination of infrastructure works, mapping infrastructure and upgrading in-building wiring.

At the same time, although Europe is leading on the first generation broadband, with over 70% of subscribers receiving services of 2 Mbps or higher, it is falling behind on the transition to very high speed networks. Both fixed and wireless network need to be upgraded to higher speeds to allow all Europeans to stimulate access to innovative services. **The Digital Agenda should therefore make it a priority to catch up, so that by 2020 Europe has the high speed broadband infrastructure it needs to compete in world markets.**

On the 3rd March 2010, the European Commission adopted the EU2020 Strategy that contained the targets to achieve 30mbps coverage for all and 50% take-up by households at 100mbps by 2020. Do these targets sufficiently guide an ambitious short term broadband strategy? Perhaps, specific coverage and penetration objectives shall be specified so that by 2015 the majority of the population has access to and make effective use of high speed networks. European guidelines could be adopted, for example, setting the objectives of 70% of population with access to networks at speeds higher than 30 Mbps, 60 % of population with access at speeds higher than 100 Mbps, and a minimum of 90 broadband (fixed and mobile) active lines per 100 inhabitants.

This calls for the full use of all policy tools – pro-innovation and competition implementation of the new EU e-communications rules, attracting capital into the sector for long term passive infrastructures, the judicious use of financing support in areas where the market is not investing quickly enough and a strategic planning and coordination of radio spectrum policy that opens the way to a wide roll out of high speed wireless broadband through a flexible and optimized use of new spectrum made available for communication services should all be prominent features of the Digital Agenda.

Advanced use of the internet, security and trust

The internet has shown a remarkable capacity to adapt as it has evolved rapidly from its early technocratic and academic origins to become a vital medium of economic and societal action: for doing business, working, playing, communicating and expressing ourselves freely.

To make sure that the internet can continue to play this role it is essential that all Europeans have the capacity and opportunity to access an internet that is affordable, safe and open. All stakeholders have a part to play, service providers and users as well as regulators and other public authorities. To this end the new provisions in the **e-communications framework set the basis for an European approach to network neutrality by guaranteeing the availability of transparent and competitive access networks of an adequate quality allowing end-users to access and distribute information or run applications and services of their choice, as well as to enjoy adequate levels of security and confidence with respect to their personal data. These provisions must be fully implemented at national level in a way that is consistent across the EU and which promotes transborder competition and markets.**

Equally important is **to promote digital and media literacy amongst citizens** so that people are able to participate fully in the online society, to make informed choices and to protect themselves from the hidden risks of life-on-line (such as malicious spam and cyber fraud). Digital literacy for all is essential for a high performing digital economy, but higher level

skills are needed so that all businesses and administrations can go for smart growth and so that Europe can lead the way towards new markets in areas such as Green technologies and e-health. This also calls for measures to **proactively foster the emergence of new small businesses and self-employment based on ICT, especially in the fast growth areas such as web-based applications.**

While the internet is "resilient by design," the increasing economic and social dependence upon it means that concrete steps are needed to make sure that individual networks and end users are better shielded from the increased threats from cyber attacks and cybercrime. In particular, e-authentication in the form of electronic identity (eID) technologies and services are needed so that users can have greater trust that when they are doing transactions on-line and not be exposed to fraudsters on the web. **Member States should therefore work together to establish a European framework for e-ID and authentication, based on internationally agreed standards and practices and improved international coordination against cyber attacks, supported by a reinforced European Network and Security Agency.**

With the rise of Web 2.0 and new techniques such as behavioural profiling, it is important that the laws protecting personal data and privacy are **effectively enforced and backed up by dissuasive sanctions.** Therefore the **EU's revised framework for electronic communications which clarifies responsibilities of service providers, in areas such as the obligation to notify personal data breaches, should be implemented effectively throughout the EU.**

Charter of User Rights for electronic communications and Online services

Access to electronic communications networks and services and, in particular, to the internet is now recognised as necessary to take part fully in society, **in particular as an increasingly important vehicle for the exercise of fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and information.** EU citizens enjoy today under EU law a series of specific digital user rights, requirements for transparency and data protection, universal telephone and functional internet service and minimum quality of service. However, these rights are scattered across various laws and not always easy to grasp. Therefore, **it is necessary that users can find the relevant information in a transparent and understandable way in the form of an EU Charter of User Rights for electronic communications and Online Services.**

Digital Single Market (Digital Content and Services)

The main constraint on Europe's ability to benefit from the growth potential is its fragmented internet economy. Despite having the largest consumer market in the world, online businesses rarely extend their business across borders because each Member State operates a different set of rules. The most prominent example of this fragmentation concerns content markets: almost all the recent successful media or content distributive online platforms have taken off in the United States, because of the economies of scale that having access to one market place provides. In Europe national level licensing regimes means that not only are many market sub-critical but that Europeans do not have access to legal offer of European cultural content.

The Digital Agenda should set as its central priority the establishment of a fully open EU digital content and service market by 2020, ranging from telecommunication services (which are still fragmented into 27 national markets - which inhibits the efficiency of the

market, slows innovation and raises prices), through markets for digital content (requiring simplification of rights clearance and multi-territorial licensing) to online retailing (requiring clarifications of consumer protection and redress).

Access to digital content is also crucial. Three main actions areas are needed. First, the **Europeana, the European digital Library, should be put onto a sound financial and legal footing** so that Europe's cultural heritage is made available online to all for the benefit of Europeans. Second, the storehouses of **data that are generated by public administrations and utilities should be made available in open data formats over the internet**. As the internet of the future, based on smart infrastructures and sensor networks, emerges, the use and re-use of this public generated information for commercial purposes will become a key source of new service growth. Data, such as traffic data or energy use, can provide the base for many new application that can generate growth, jobs and new services for consumers, city management, tourism and mobility. Third, the existence of a legal supply of quality contents on the Internet, responding to the existing and technological reality, should be ensured.

At the same time, **the protection of information about individuals (privacy) and for rights holders (intellectual property) needs to be adapted to keep pace with fast technological and societal developments**. The easy of transmission of digital content means that detection and response to the abuse of information has become a key political issue that requires efforts to define common approach in Europe so as to avoid distortions of the single market and to make sure that an appropriate balance is struck between economic and social objectives.

Public Digital Services

The Malmo Declaration on eGovernment calls for the development by 2015 of online public services that are more user-centred, that emphasise open and transparent government and active participation, that promote the reuse of public sector information, that increase the efficiency of government and that lead to a measurable reduction in administrative burdens on citizens and businesses.

The Commission has undertaken to propose appropriate actions to further these objectives in the forthcoming eGovernment Action Plan 2010-2015 and to benchmark the provision and take-up of these services by citizens and businesses. The **eGovernment Action Plan proposals should be ambitious as regards stepping up the effort:**

- a) **on making e-Government services attractive to end users (all Member States should set explicit targets for the take-up of services by businesses and citizens);**
- b) **providing systematic evidence of the economic efficiencies achieved through e-Government (through the implementation of transparent accounting and reporting systems);**
- c) **modernising public service processes (key performance indicators such as response times, the full online availability of key electronic documents, systematic user of e-procurement should be agreed and reported).**

Public administrations should also take a lead role in promoting innovation and cost effectiveness into Government by the systematic promotion of open standards and interoperable systems and proactive development of pre-commercial procurement to foster research and European technology leadership. In particular, and in addition to e-Administration promotion,

- d) **eHealth systems should be rolled out in an interoperable way across the EU so as to stimulate Europe's health technology sector with explicit monitoring of the impacts of reducing costs while raising efficiency and the quality of care ;**
- e) **eLearning courses ought to be necessary in order to improve digital skills not only specific for employees in the Digital Content sector but also all citizens; and**
- f) **eJustice systems will make a faster and more efficient response to the changing needs of citizens through the use of ICT.**

Strengthening the Competitiveness of Europe's ICT sector

ICT remains the most innovative and research-intensive sector in the economy, yet Europe is still behind on ICT R&D investment, lagging our major competitors by as much as 50%. **A proactive strategy for leadership in ICT in which Europe must increase, target and pool its investments in ICT research is more than overdue.** This cannot be achieved alone through Community level efforts and leadership but requires a systematic search for synergies between national efforts and private funding and the leveraging of public spending by pre-commercial procurement.

Certain **strategic fields such as web-based services, green mobility, energy efficient buildings or ICT for ageing should be identified as areas in which Europe must concentrate its forces in order to lead the world.** In addition, it is remarkable that so few of the ICT giants that have emerged in the past 25 years have been "born in the EU". Thus programmes for stimulating the growth of innovative high potential SMEs are needed; at EU level this should be converted into **"low-bureaucracy" funding schemes for smart entrepreneurs that are backed up by better opportunities for access to risk capital.**

International dimension of the Digital Agenda

ICT is a global technology and the internet is the global communications infrastructure "par excellence". If it is to remain industrially competitive and to influence the development of the digital era, **Europe needs to act on the world stage with authority born of solidarity. It needs to speak with one voice in international arenas such as trade, standards and intellectual property rights, cybersecurity, internet governance, freedom of expression and digital rights and inclusion.**

In some areas this has been successful, for example Internet Governance under auspices of the European influence in the WSIS (World Summit on Information Society) has continued to emphasise principles of transparency, multilateralism and democracy. This is why the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), as an open place for meeting, dialogue and exchange of best practices between governments, civil society and the private sector, should be maintained and developed.

Overall, therefore the European Digital Agenda should pay more explicit attention to building a more co-ordinated and coherent external dimension European ICT policy

Measuring progress

Evidence based policy needs to be more than just a slogan. The Information Society by definition should be in the lead in generating performance data that can be used to track

progress, compare performance – not least internationally – and help in the adjustment and assessment of policy impacts.

To that end, adequate ICT performance indicators and methodologies should be defined, based on consensus between Member States and European institutions. These indicators should be periodically reviewed to better fit to the evolving situation of the ICT sector.

Thus, the Digital Agenda should be accompanied by a demanding set of performance indicators and a clear annual scoreboarding of progress at the EU level and by each Member State, based upon robust and comparable measures of ICT use and impact on sustainable economic growth and social welfare.

Additionally, Member States and European institutions should dedicate appropriate efforts, including efficient financing and provision of adequate resources, to the national entities responsible to analyze and produce IS indicators.

Questions for Discussion

- 1. What are the crucial steps needed to establish a full digital single market in Europe by 2020?**
- 2. High speed broadband networks are crucial to economic performance; what further steps should Europe take to avoid being left behind on the transition to high speed broadband, of 30 Mbps and above?**
- 3. Which ambitious common targets for the delivery of citizen-oriented e-society services such as e-government and e-health should drive EU policy?**
- 4. On what major international ICT challenges should Europe seek to gain importance by increasing the coherence of its policy messages and actions?**