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A new Digital Agenda for Europe: 2015.eu

European Parliament resolution of 5 May 2010 on a new Digital Agenda for Europe: 2015.eu (2009/2225(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘Europe’s Digital Competitiveness Report. Main achievements of the i2010 strategy 2005-2009’ (COM(2009)0390),
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘Cross-Border Business to Consumer e-Commerce in the EU’ (COM(2009)0557),
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2006 on a European information society for growth and employment¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 February 2007 - Towards a European policy on the radio spectrum²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 19 June 2007 on building a European policy on broadband³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 21 June 2007 on consumer confidence in the digital environment⁴,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the opinions of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Culture and Education (A7-0066/2010),
- A. whereas Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) permeate virtually all aspects of our lives and are inextricably linked with our desire for a prosperous and competitive economy, for the preservation of our environment, and for a more democratic, open, inclusive society,
- B. whereas Europe should play a leading role in creating and applying ICT, bringing more value to its citizens and businesses; whereas the use of ICT contributes to underpinning current structural challenges, achieving a sustainable economic growth,
- C. whereas Europe will only reap the benefits of this digital revolution if all EU citizens are

¹ OJ C 291 E, 30.11.2006, p. 133.

² OJ C 287 E, 29.11.2007, p. 364.

³ OJ C 146 E, 12.6.2008, p. 87.

⁴ OJ C 146 E, 12.6.2008, p. 370.

mobilised and empowered to participate fully in the new digital society and the person is placed at the core of the policy action; whereas this digital revolution can no longer be thought of as an evolution from the industrial past but rather as a process of radical transformation,

- D. whereas the development of the digital society should be inclusive and accessible to all EU citizens and should be supported by effective policies aiming at closing the digital gap within the EU, empowering more citizens with e-skills to fully use the opportunities offered by ICTs,
- E. whereas, while broadband is available to more than 90% of the EU's population, take-up occurs in only 50% of households,
- F. whereas competitive communications markets are important in ensuring that users receive maximum benefits in terms of choice, quality and affordable prices,
- G. whereas Europe's potential is indissolubly linked with the skills of its population, its workforce, and its organisations; whereas without skills there can only be limited economic and social added value from ICT technologies and infrastructures,
- H. whereas ICT can be an extremely powerful enabler in efforts to bring positive and sustainable development to countries around the globe and to fight against poverty and social and economic inequalities,
- I. whereas citizens will refrain from interacting, expressing their opinions freely and entering into transactions if they do not have sufficient confidence in the legal framework of the new digital space; whereas the guarantee and enforcement of fundamental rights in this context is an essential condition for confidence on the part of citizens; whereas the guarantee of protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) and other rights is an essential condition for confidence on the part of business,
- J. whereas cybercrimes, such as incitation to commit terrorist attacks, hate-based criminal acts, and child pornography, have increased and are endangering individuals including children,
- K. whereas Europe's cultural and creative industries not only play an essential role in promoting cultural diversity, pluralism of the media and participative democracy in Europe, but also constitute a major engine of sustainable growth and economic recovery in the European Union; whereas particular attention must be paid to cultural and language specificities in the debate on the establishment of a single market in the creative content sector;
- L. whereas European democratic society, the participation of citizens in public debate and access to information in the digital world depends on a vibrant and competitive press sector as the fourth pillar of democracy,
- M. whereas the lack of progress in creating, disseminating and using ICT is responsible for a delay in growth and productivity, and whereas young businesses with high growth potential working in the area of ICT innovation are hard pressed to establish a sustainable market position,

- N. whereas the private and public sectors need to invest in new innovative platforms and services such as, for example, cloud computing, e-health, smart meters, smart mobility, etc; whereas strengthening the single European market will increase interest in investments in the European economy and markets, and lead to further economies of scale,
- O. whereas we have not yet achieved a fully functioning digital single market for online and communications services in Europe; whereas the free movement of digital services and cross- border e-commerce is today severely hindered by fragmented rules at national level; whereas European companies and public services will gain economic and social benefits from the use of advanced ICT services and applications,
- P. whereas, whilst the Internet is the fastest growing retail channel, the gap between domestic and cross-border e-commerce in the EU is widening; whereas a considerable potential for substantial savings exists through cross-border e-commerce for EU citizens, as identified by the Commission Communication on cross-border business to consumer e-commerce in the EU (COM(2009)0557),
1. Calls on the Commission to come forward with a proposal for an ambitious digital agenda and action plan enabling Europe to progress towards an open and prosperous digital society offering all citizens economic, social and cultural opportunities; proposes that this new digital agenda be called ‘2015.eu agenda’ and be based on the model of the virtuous 2015.eu spiral;
 2. Stresses the importance of continuing efforts towards ubiquitous and high-speed access to fixed and mobile broadband for all citizens and consumers, including by safeguarding competition to the benefit of consumers; emphasises that this requires targeted policies that promote competition and efficient investment and innovation in new and enhanced access infrastructures and consumer choice in delivering access, on fair terms and at competitive prices for all citizens, irrespective of location, thereby ensuring that no European citizen faces exclusion;
 3. Believes that every EU household should have access to broadband Internet at a competitive price by 2013; calls upon the Commission and the Member States to promote all available policy instruments to achieve broadband for all European citizens, including the use of the European Structural Funds and of the digital dividend for extending mobile broadband coverage and quality; calls, furthermore, on Member States to impart new impetus to the European high-speed broadband strategy, notably by updating national targets for broadband and high-speed coverage;
 4. Notes that there are some ambiguities in the State aid rules that may affect Community-supported broadband services, particularly as regards the ability of public authorities to consolidate their own network requirements as the basis for new investment; asks the Commission to deal with these problems urgently;
 5. Recalls that particular attention should be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, in particular the outermost regions; considers that an appropriate solution to ensure the effective supply of and access to broadband Internet by the citizens of these regions within an acceptable timeframe and at a reasonable cost is through wireless technologies including satellite which enable an immediate ubiquitous connectivity to the Internet backbone;

6. Recalls that the universal service obligations correspond to the minimum set of services of specified quality to which all end-users should have access at an affordable price without distorting competition and imposing an additional burden on consumers and operators; urges the Commission to produce its long-awaited review of universal service without delay;
7. Highlights the importance of guaranteeing disabled end-users access at a level equivalent to that available to other end-users, as urged by the European Parliament in its review of the Universal Service and Users' Rights Directive; asks the Commission to take the utmost account of disabled users' needs in the '2015.eu agenda';
8. Calls on the Commission to carry out an impact assessment to examine how an EU-wide number portability can be realised;
9. Underlines the importance of maintaining Europe as the 'mobile continent' in the world and ensuring that 75% of mobile subscribers are mobile broadband users with access to high-speed wireless services by 2015;
10. Recalls the necessity to accelerate the harmonised deployment of the digital dividend spectrum in a non-discriminatory manner, without compromising existing and enhanced broadcast services;
11. Calls on the Commission to address through the Radio Spectrum Committee practical and technical requirements to ensure the timely availability of spectrum, with sufficient flexibility, to enable the deployment of new technologies and services such as mobile broadband; calls on the Commission to report on competition and spectrum market developments;
12. Underlines the need for further assessment and research into potential interference between existing and future users of the spectrum so as to mitigate potential negative consequences for consumers;
13. Considers that, as Internet access rates are increasing, Member States should strive to achieve the connection of 50% of EU households to very high-speed networks by 2015 and 100% by 2020 enabling a reliable and improved end-user experience in line with consumer expectations and needs; recalls that for achieving these objectives an appropriate policy framework is vital to enable private investment, while safeguarding competition and boosting consumer choice;
14. Urges Member States to transpose the new electronic communications regulatory framework before the established deadline and to fully enforce it and to empower national regulators accordingly; emphasises that the new framework provides for a predictable and consistent regulatory environment which stimulates investment and promotes competitive markets for ICT networks, products and services contributing to an enhanced single market for information society services; insists that any guidance on the application of the telecoms package to Next Generation Access needs to give full effect to the concepts introduced in the directives to foster the deployment of these networks;
15. Considers that it is necessary to increase the effectiveness of regulatory coordination by ensuring that BEREC is fully operational as soon as possible;

16. Calls on stakeholders to adopt open models for communications network deployment to help boost innovation and drive demand;
17. Recalls the need for transparency and predictability of regulation and calls on the Commission to continue to integrate Better Regulation principles in the preparation of legislative and non-legislative initiatives, in particular through targeted and timely impact assessments;
18. Recalls that interoperability and accessibility are interlinked and are the bricks on which an efficient information society will be built in order for products, infrastructures and services to interoperate with each other so that Europeans can access services and data independently of which software they use;
19. Insists that digital competences are crucial for an inclusive digital society and that all EU citizens should be empowered and have the incentives to develop the appropriate digital skills; stresses that digital competences could help disadvantaged people (i.e. elderly people and those on low incomes) to be included in society; calls on the Commission and on the Member States to tackle the disparities between the different groups in society in terms of digital literacy and Internet use, the so-called emerging second digital divide; emphasises the essential commitment to reduce digital literacy and competence gaps by half by 2015;
20. Calls for respect for transparency, accessibility and equality of opportunity in the use of ICT systems, with a view to improving their user-friendliness for the largest possible number of European citizens;
21. Stresses that all primary and secondary schools must have reliable, quality Internet connections by 2013 and very high-speed Internet connections by 2015 with the support of the regional and cohesion policy where appropriate; emphasises that ICT training and e-learning should become an integral part of lifelong learning activities enabling better and accessible education and training programmes;
22. Recognises the importance of e-learning as a method of education adapted to ICT innovations which can meet the needs of people who do not have ready access to conventional educational methods, but underlines that the need for the exchange of information between teachers, students and other interested parties is an essential prerequisite; takes the view that international exchanges must also be encouraged in order that educational establishments may regain their important role in promoting understanding between peoples;
23. Recommends introducing the notion of digital literacy into education systems, starting as early as the pre-primary level, in parallel with foreign languages, with the aim of producing skilled users as early as possible;
24. Notes the importance of equipping EU citizens with digital skills in order to help them fully exploit the benefits of participating in the digital society; reaffirms the need to ensure that the knowledge, skills, competence and creativity of the European workforce meet the highest global standards and are constantly updated; believes that digital literacy and competences should be central aspects of EU policies as they are the main drivers of Europe's innovation society;
25. Proposes the launch of a 'Digital literacy and inclusion action plan' at EU and Member

State levels, notably comprising: specific digital literacy training opportunities for unemployed people and groups at risk of exclusion; incentives for private-sector initiatives to provide digital skills training to all employees; a European-wide 'Be smart online!' initiative to make all students, including those engaged in life-long learning and professional training, familiar with the safe use of ICT and online services; and a common EU-level ICT certification scheme;

26. Calls on the Member States to take all necessary measures to inspire young professionals to choose ICT as a career; calls on Member States in the meantime to place more emphasis in their national education programmes on natural science subjects, such as maths and physics, for primary school pupils; takes the view that, as there is a real and urgent need for action to meet the demand for ICT skills in Europe in even the short to medium term, a better data base for e-skills monitoring will be needed; calls on the EU institutions to take further actions to create this data base;
27. Emphasises that all EU citizens should be made aware of their basic digital rights and obligations through a European Charter of citizens' and consumers' rights in the digital environment; believes that this Charter should consolidate the Community acquis including, in particular, users' rights relating to the protection of privacy, vulnerable users and digital content as well as guaranteeing adequate interoperability performance; reaffirms that rights in the digital environment should be considered within the overall framework of fundamental rights;
28. Believes firmly that the protection of privacy constitutes a core value and that all users should have control of their personal data, including the 'right to be forgotten'; urges the Commission to take account not only of data protection and privacy questions as such, but especially of the specific needs of minors and young adults with respect to these questions; calls on the Commission to submit a proposal for the adaptation of the Data Protection Directive to the current digital environment;
29. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take further action to improve digital security, to fight cybercrime and spam, to enhance users' confidence and to secure the European Union cyberspace against all kinds of crimes and offences; calls on the Commission and the Member States to effectively engage and enhance international cooperation in this area; reminds Member States that almost half of them have still not ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime and urges all Member States to ratify and implement this Convention;
30. Calls on the Member States to take steps with a view to making secure electronic identification available to everyone in Europe;
31. Insists on safeguarding an open Internet, where citizens have the right and business users are able to access and distribute information or run applications and services of their choice as provided for by the new regulatory framework; calls on the Commission, the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) and the National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) to promote the 'net neutrality' provisions, to monitor its implementation closely and to report to the European Parliament before the end of 2010; considers that EU legislation should preserve the 'mere conduit' provision established in the e-Commerce Directive (2000/31/EC) as a crucial way of enabling free and open competition on the digital market;

32. Stresses that pluralism, freedom of the press and respect for cultural diversity are core values and end goals of the European Union; calls on the European Commission therefore to ensure that all proposed EU policies comply with these values and goals;
33. Welcomes the rapid implementation of the legislation on roaming; underlines the further need for constant monitoring of EU mobile roaming prices, including those of data roaming; calls on BEREC to carry out an independent analysis on methods other than price regulation which could be used to create a competitive internal market for roaming; calls on the Commission on the basis of the analysis of BEREC and of its own review, to propose before 2013 a long-term solution to the problem of roaming in order to ensure a well-functioning, consumer-oriented and competitive roaming market thereby leading to lower prices;
34. Stresses that digital services can contribute to Europe making full use of the internal market; calls for an effective policy for a digital single market that makes online services in Europe more competitive, accessible, cross-border and transparent providing the highest possible level of consumer protection and putting an end to territorial discrimination; calls on the EU institutions to remove the key regulatory and administrative obstacles to cross-border online transactions by 2013; calls on the Commission to further its ongoing assessment of the Community acquis affecting the digital single market and to propose targeted legislative action on key impediments;
35. Calls for a study on harmonised rules within the EU to promote a common market in cloud computing and e-commerce;
36. Calls on the Commission to consider measures to further increase the transparency of terms and conditions of cross-border online trade and the effectiveness of cross-border enforcement and redress; underlines that a successful development of online trade requires efficient distribution of products and goods, and therefore highlights the need for a rapid implementation of the 3rd Postal Directive (2008/6/EC);
37. Believes that Member States should ensure the necessary digital environment for enterprises, especially SMEs; calls on Member States to establish 'one-stop-shops' for VAT in order to facilitate cross-border e-commerce for SMEs and entrepreneurs and calls on the Commission to support the wide use of e-invoices;
38. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that, by 2015, at least 50% of all public procurements are carried out through electronic means, as established by the Action Plan agreed to at the Ministerial Conference on e-government, held in Manchester in 2005;
39. Takes the view that, almost a decade after their adoption, the Directives constituting the legal framework for the information society appear out of date due to the increased complexity of the online environment, the introduction of new technologies and the fact that EU citizens' data are increasingly processed outside of the EU; believes that, while the legal issues arising from some Directives can be resolved through an incremental update, other Directives need a more fundamental revision and that the adoption of an international framework for data protection is needed;
40. Emphasises the potential value for citizens and businesses of the digital switchover of public services (e-government) in order to enable a more efficient and personalised provision of public services; calls on Member States to seize ICT tools to improve

transparency and accountability of government action and to contribute to a more participative democracy involving all socio-economic groups, raising the awareness of new users, and building up trust and confidence; calls on Member States to develop national plans for the digital switchover of public services, which should include targets and measures for getting all public services online and accessible to persons with disabilities by 2015;

41. Underlines the importance of broadband for European citizens' health in enabling the use of efficient health information technologies, enhancing the quality of care, extending the geographic reach of healthcare to rural insular, mountainous and sparsely populated areas, facilitating in-home care and reducing unnecessary treatments and costly patient transfers; recalls that broadband can also help protect European citizens by facilitating and promoting public safety information, procedures, disaster response and recovery;
42. Points out that ICTs are particularly important to people with disabilities, who have a greater need than most for technological assistance in their day-to-day activities; considers that people with disabilities have a right to share, on equal terms, in the rapid development of products and services derived from new technologies, since this will enable them to participate in an inclusive information society without barriers;
43. Emphasises the need to develop a 'Fifth Freedom' that enables the free circulation of content and knowledge and to achieve, by 2015, a convergent, consumer-friendly legal framework for accessing digital content in Europe, which would improve certainty for consumers and achieve a fair balance between the right-holders' rights and the general public's access to content and knowledge; urges the EU, in view of the pace of technological development, to accelerate the debate on copyright and to analyse the impact of an EU copyright title under Article 118 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU to provide uniform protection of intellectual property rights throughout the Union, both online and offline;
44. Recognises that Europe's creative and cultural industries not only play an essential role in the promotion of cultural diversity, media pluralism and participatory democracy in Europe, but are also an important engine for sustainable growth in Europe and thus can play a decisive role in the EU's economic recovery; acknowledges the need to foster an environment that will continue to encourage creative industry; calls in this respect on the Commission to implement the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in all policy initiatives relating to the Digital Agenda;
45. Stresses that a European digital agenda needs to promote the production and dissemination of high-quality and culturally diverse content in the EU in order to incentivise all EU citizens to adopt digital technologies such as the Internet, and to maximise the cultural and social benefits EU citizens can derive from those technologies; recommends that an EU-level information campaign be initiated in order to achieve a higher level of awareness, notably by the development and dissemination of digital cultural content; calls on the Commission to consider, within its legislative work programme, the possibility of allowing Member States to apply a reduced VAT rate to the distribution of online cultural goods;
46. Underlines that the Internet, which offers many new opportunities for the circulation of and access to the products of creative work, also poses new challenges to securing the European Union cyberspace against new kinds of crimes and offences; notes that sanctions, as one of the possible tools in the field of copyright enforcement, should be targeted at commercial

exploiters before individual citizens, as a point of principle;

47. Believes that, in the light of new technologies, new digital delivery means and changing consumer behaviour, the EU needs to promote supply-side policies and to consider the further development of copyright licensing and clearance rules; calls for an improved, more efficient, and more consistent transparent rights management and clearance system for both musical and audiovisual works and for more transparency and competition between collecting rights management organisations;
48. Underlines that greater attention must be paid in the new Digital Agenda to the digitisation of, and improving citizens' access to, Europe's unique cultural heritage; urges Member States to provide adequate financial support for the EU digitisation policy, while encouraging both the Commission and the Member States to find appropriate solutions to the current legal obstacles;
49. Expresses its deep concern regarding the future of the European digital library project unless radical changes take place in the fields of the digital format of the library, management, efficiency, practicability, usefulness and large-scale mediatisation of the project;
50. Considers that, alongside consistent deployment of ICT, it is essential to promote ICT research excellence and foster public and private investment in high-risk, collaborative ICT research and innovation; stresses that Europe should be at the cutting edge in the development of Internet technologies, cloud computing, intelligent environments and supercomputers, and ICT low-carbon applications; proposes that the EU ICT research budget be doubled and that the budget for ICT take-up be multiplied by four in the next Financial Perspective;
51. Regrets the fact that, with respect to attracting, developing and keeping academic talent in ICT, Europe continues to lag behind other leading marketplaces and suffers a substantial brain drain due to better working conditions in the US for academics and researchers; stresses that, to address this problem, Europe needs to work with academia, along with industry, to develop a vibrant career development programme that supports the vital role of the scientific research community in a broad-based world-class ICT innovation strategy;
52. Considers that by 2015 all European research institutes and infrastructures must be linked by Gbps ultra-high speed transmission networks, creating a European research community intranet;
53. Calls for greater investment in the use of open source software in the EU;
54. Calls for new investment in research in order to improve implementation of existing digital instruments, so as to guarantee access to cultural products for all citizens;
55. Is concerned about red tape in the EU Framework Programme (FP); calls on the Commission to eliminate red tape by re-engineering FP processes without jeopardising the programme, and by creating a users' board;
56. Calls on the Commission to assess with the Member States in what way Directives 2004/17/EC et 2004/18/EC on public works contracts and the transposition thereof support research and innovation and, where appropriate, to identify best practices; calls on the

Commission and the Member States to consider developing public works contract innovation indicators;

57. Recalls that the future competitiveness of Europe and its capacity to recover from the current economic crisis largely depend on its ability to facilitate the general and effective deployment of ICT in undertakings; notes, however, that SMEs are still lagging far behind large undertakings and draws special attention to the guarantees which micro and small undertakings should be given to ensure that they are not deprived of the benefits of the development of ICTs; calls on Member States and the Commission to step up support for SMEs as regards the use of ICT tools to increase their productivity;
58. Calls on the Commission to come forward with a digital plan to promote on-line business opportunities, aimed primarily at offering alternatives to those people recently made unemployed in the context of the financial crisis; takes the view that this plan should consist of making available affordable software and hardware alongside free Internet connection and free-of-charge consultancy;
59. Considers that the 2015.eu agenda should aim at mainstreaming ICT for a low-carbon economy; calls for exploitation of ICT technologies to meet the 20-20-20 objectives of the Climate Change strategy; considers that the implementation of applications such as smart power grids, smart metering, smart mobility, smart cars, smart water management and e-health should be key initiatives of 2015.eu; points out also that the ICT sector footprint should be reduced by 50% by 2015;
60. Considers that international commerce should be driven by the principle of fair trade, with the aim of achieving a proper balance between the opening-up of markets and the legitimate protection of the various economic sectors, with a particular focus on working and social conditions;
61. Considers that the ownership of the 2015.eu agenda by all political and geographical levels (EU, national and regional), in the spirit of multilevel governance, as well as political visibility, are essential prerequisites for effective implementation; proposes in this regard that Digital Agenda Summits be periodically organised to review progress at Union and Member State level and to renew political impetus;
62. Draws the attention of the Commission specifically to the necessity to set smart (specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and time-based) objectives and targets and adopt an Action Plan mobilising all appropriate EU instruments: funding, soft law, enforcement and, where necessary, targeted legislation across all relevant policy fields (i.e. electronic communications, education, research, innovation, cohesion policy); calls on the Commission to carry out a regular review of the 2015.eu strategy's achievements on the basis of a broad set of indicators enabling a quantitative and qualitative analysis of social and economic impacts; calls upon the Commission and the Member States to ensure appropriate coordination among EU and national and regional programmes in this field;
63. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.