Defining a new digital agenda for Europe: from i2010 to digital.eu

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The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Pilar del CASTILLO VERA (EPP, ES) on a new Digital Agenda for Europe: 2015.eu. The report follows the Communication from the Commission entitled 'Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report: main achievements of the i2010 strategy 2005-2009'.

Members call 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. They propose that this new digital agenda be called '2015.eu agenda'. and be based on the model of the virtuous 2015.eu spiral

The committee believes that every EU household should have access to broadband Internet at a competitive price by 2013. It 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. It 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.

The report 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. It highlights the importance of guaranteeing **disabled end-users** access at a level equivalent to that available to other end-users and urges the Commission to produce its long-awaited review of universal service without delay.

Members consider 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**.

They urge 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. They recall that **interoperability and accessibility** are interlinked and are the bricks on which an efficient information society will be built.

The committee 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. They stress 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. The report emphasises that ICT training and e-learning should become an integral part of lifelong learning activities enabling better and accessible education and training programmes and recommends introducing the notion of digital literacy into education systems, starting as early as the pre-primary level, in parallel with foreign languages.

Recognizing the importance of e-Learning, Members propose the launch of a '**Digital literacy and inclusion action plan**' at EU and Member State levels, notably comprising: (i) specific digital literacy training opportunities for unemployed people and groups at risk of exclusion; (ii) incentives for private-sector initiatives to provide digital skills training to all employees; (iii) 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; (iv) and a common EU-level ICT certification scheme. The EU institutions are invited to take further actions to create a data base for e-skills monitoring.

The report 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** .

It 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. It calls on the Commission to submit a proposal for the adaptation of the Data Protection Directive to the current digital environment and to take further action to **improve digital security**, to fight cybercrime and spam, to enhance users' confidence. They call on the Member States to take steps with a view to making secure electronic identification available to everyone in Europe.

Members call 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. It calls on the EU institutions to **remove the key regulatory and administrative obstacles to cross-border online transactions by 2013**. Member States are called upon to establish '**one-stop-shops**' for VAT in order to facilitate cross-border e-commerce for SMEs.

Underlining the importance of on-line administration, Members call 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. They underline 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 and facilitating and promoting public safety information, procedures, disaster response and recovery.

Member emphasise 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. In this context, they stress that a European digital agenda needs to promote the production and dissemination of high-quality and culturally diverse content in the EU. They recommend 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. They also underline 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**.

The report 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**. It 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.

Members consider 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. They stress 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**. They propose 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. They consider 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.

Lastly, Members consider 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. They propose in this regard that **Digital Agenda Summits** be periodically organised to review progress at Union and Member State level and to renew political impetus.