Resolution on completing the digital single market

2013/2655(RSP) - 04/07/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 587 votes to 48 with 4 abstentions a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection on completing the digital single market.

Tapping the full potential of the digital single market: the resolution stresses that unleashing the single market through the Services Directive and a digital single market could add EUR 800 billion to the EU economy, which is the equivalent of almost EUR 4 200 per household. It calls for a commitment to the development of the digital single market as an **overarching political priority requiring an ambitious strategy** encompassing both legislative and political initiatives. Members stress this will require political leadership, decisiveness, priority-setting and public funding at EU, national and regional level. The Commission is asked to **address existing barriers** to the digital single market as a matter of urgency, including by simplifying the legal framework for VAT, ensuring access to secure pan-European e-payment, e-invoicing and delivery services, and reviewing intellectual property rights in order to foster access to legal digital content across the EU.

Parliament stresses the importance of fostering innovation and investing in e-skills, highlighting the **vital role of SMEs** in overcoming unemployment, in particular youth unemployment. Members point out that 99 % of all EU businesses are small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which account for 85 % of EU employment. SMEs are therefore the driving force in the EU economy, with prime responsibility for wealth creation, employment and growth, as well as innovation and R&D. Members emphasise in the resolution: (i) the need to strengthen the governance of the digital single market, ensuring net neutrality; (ii) the importance of the European cloud computing strategy, given its potential for EU competitiveness, growth and job creation; (iii) a modernised EU data protection regime strengthens citizens' rights; (iv) encouraging new, high-quality e-government services by adopting innovative technological solutions such as e-procurement; (v) encouraging large-scale investments in fixed and mobile networks in order to put the EU at the forefront of global technological development.

Investing in human capital: Members acknowledge that new skills will be needed for tomorrow's jobs, and they call on Member States to make good use of EU funds, and to prioritise digital literacy and e-skills in the ‘New Skills for New Jobs’ flagship initiative. The resolution stresses the need to improve media and digital literacy skills, in particular among children and minors.

Trust, security and consumer confidence: Parliament welcomes the adoption of the Code of EU Online Rights. It goes on to make a **series of recommendations regarding future legislation** in order to increase consumer confidence in the digital market. It particularly asks for measures to combat the unequal treatment of consumers in the single market arising from current cross-border restrictions applied by companies involved in distance selling. Other areas of suggested improvement include the adequate financing of the Online Dispute Resolution platform, the adoption of a European services standard for trustmarks, the adoption of EU guidelines on minimum standards for comparison websites, the revision of the Package Travel Directive, and the correct implementation and application of key provisions of the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive, amongst many others. Members also emphasise the need for a high level of network and information security in order to guarantee the functioning of the single market and consumer confidence.

Creating a favourable business environment: in this regard, Parliament notes particularly the need to simplify the **legal framework for VAT and avoid double taxation**. It calls on Member States to implement swiftly the mini one-stop shops for telecommunications, television broadcasting and electronic services by 2015 and also asks the Commission to clarify the application of Article 20(2) of the **Services**

Directive, which deals with discrimination against EU consumers on the grounds of place of residence or nationality, and in particular the types of business practice that would be considered to constitute unjustified discrimination under the directive. Parliament also calls on the Commission to come forward with a legislative proposal in order **further to reduce mobile roaming charges within the EU**.

Attractive legal offers of digital content: the resolution asks the Commission to work towards creating a modern copyright framework for the digital single market. A revised intellectual property rights (IPR) regime should be based on encouraging innovation, new service models and user-generated and collaborative content in order to foster the development of a competitive EU ICT market, while ensuring that rights-holders are properly compensated.

The international dimension: Members consider that the restriction of EU businesses' access to digital markets and online consumers through, among other things, mass state censorship or restricted market access for European online service providers in third countries constitutes a trade barrier, and it calls on the Commission and the Council to include a safeguard mechanism in all future trade agreements to deal with this issue.