Resolution on the digital agenda for growth, mobility and employment: time to move up a gear

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy on the Digital Agenda for Growth, Mobility and Employment: time to move up a gear. It notes that the European Council is planning to adopt conclusions on the Digital Agenda for Europe at its meeting on 24 and 25 October 2013. Accordingly, the resolution details a series of policy areas where the adaptation of the Digital Agenda can boost Europe's global competitiveness and employment rates, fight youth unemployment, and increase the competitiveness of Europe's SMEs.

Parliament believes that **political leadership** is required at both EU and national level to address existing barriers to the digital single market in order to create jobs and growth in the EU, recalling that the completion of the digital single market could give it a boost of EUR 110 billion per year.

A roaming-free Europe in 2015: Members regret that the telecoms market is still fragmented into national markets with artificial borders and cannot be considered as a single economic market in which competition is encouraged. They stress that in many cases roaming accounts for about 10 % of EU operator revenues, and that, on average, **industry and consumers pay double the price for roaming calls that operators have to pay in the wholesale market**. These unbalanced profit margins on roaming increase the costs of mobility within the EU, which in turn is hampering growth and prosperity, since mobility is one of the most important factors for EU growth.

Parliament reminds the Council and the Commission that according to the Digital Agenda for Europe **the difference between roaming and national tariffs should be close to zero by 2015**. It believes that the measures completing the digital single market should therefore result in the gap between roaming and national tariffs being closed by 2015, which will **lead to a roaming-free EU (for calls, text messages and data).** Members recall that the Commission is due to review the functioning of Regulation (EU) No 531/2012 and to evaluate the competitiveness of the roaming market, the extent to which consumers have benefited from real reductions in the price of roaming services, and the difference between roaming and national tariffs, including the availability of offers providing a single tariff for national and roaming services.

Infrastructure and mobility: Stressing the need for very fast internet broadband infrastructure in order to tap the full potential of the digital economy, Parliament believes that a revised forward-looking digital agenda target for 2020 should be to connect all EU households with broadband connections delivering 100 megabits/second, **with 50 % of households subscribing to 1 gigabit/second or more.** It deeply regrets the fact that many Member States have failed to meet the deadline of 1 January 2013 for allocating the ‘digital dividend’ in the 800 MHz band to mobile broadband services, as stipulated in the radio spectrum policy programme. This delay has hampered the rollout of 4G networks in the EU and Member States must take the necessary steps to ensure that the 800 MHz band becomes available for mobile broadband services.

The Commission is also asked to present a **broad review of the legal framework for the telecoms market in order to drive forward investment in fixed and mobile networks**, and to put forward proposals for a fundamental revision of the regulatory framework for electronic communications.

ICTs for youth employment: Members note that there are currently more than 4 million ICT workers in the EU, a figure that is growing by 3 % annually, and that by 2015, according to the Commission, 700 000

to 1 million high-quality ICT jobs will not be filled, despite the crisis. They stress that e-skills and digital education can consequently be of extraordinary importance in tackling rising unemployment, especially among young people. Parliament calls for the prioritisation of the acquisition of digital skills, which should be an indispensable component of professional training.

ICTs for SMEs: Parliament considers more action is needed to promote the global competitiveness of EU SMEs and establish the best possible environment for the uptake of promising new technological developments with a high impact on the EU's competitiveness, such as cloud computing.

Digitalisation of the public sector: this should be at the forefront of the next steps in the Digital Agenda, given that, in addition to the cost reductions for public administrations and the provision of more efficient services to citizens, the digital leverage effect in all sectors of the economy would be extremely beneficial. In particular, healthcare provision stands to be revolutionised, delivering more cost-efficient and personalised services to patients and professionals. Parliament considers it regrettable that national cloud computing strategies are being pursued at the expense of an ambitious and effective European strategy, and calls on the Commission to identify resources that will be sufficiently effective to put the EU in a leading position in terms of standardization.

Financing ICTs: the MFF: Parliament regrets the fact that the sum of EUR 9.2 billion proposed by the Commission for ICT investment through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for the 2014-2020 period will be drastically reduced, stressing that greater targeting of EU funding for ICT investment is needed and that the funding for ICT in the next MFF should be commensurate with the weight and economic impact of this sector. It calls for the share of ICT-related expenditure in the overall MFF to be given higher priority compared with the 2007-2013 period.