

Intervention at the public hearing on post i2010: 23 September 2009, Brussels
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ECTA represents more than 100 pro-competitive telecoms operators across the EU.

Our members have contributed nearly half of Europe's fixed investments and its first fibre access lines. What we need most is stability. We cannot afford to spend another three years debating where we are going with the sector. We need to start delivering. Competition across the single market is meant to be one of Europe's primary objectives. But how far have we really progressed? Why do incumbents still have around 50% share of the broadband market, a share which is increasing in some countries? Why are incumbents far more profitable than anyone else in the market 10 years after liberalisation and despite extensive consolidation? Is everybody else in the market less efficient? Why are consumers in some countries forced to pay more for inadequate services? Why can't multi-national businesses receive fit-for purpose services across the single market? And why are services provided over vDSL in Belgium more expensive and slower than services provided over ADSL in France?

We need investment in next generation access networks, but it has to be smart investment. If it costs €300bln to build across Europe we will not have multiple lines and we cannot afford to make mistakes. We need to invest in networks which will last for the next 50 years, which can be upgraded to provide ever-increasing bandwidths and which are open to competition in all kinds of services and content. We cannot allow one or two infrastructure providers to control everything that is offered over the lines – to control the speeds, the price, the types of entertainment services and even the way we receive content.

Control over bottlenecks affects not just telecoms services themselves but beyond in areas such as the 'open' Internet and in business productivity.

As concerns 'net neutrality', consumers should have a right to expect the Internet to be 'open', but regulating retail services is intrusive and is probably not the best solution. If bottleneck at network level are addressed, no single company or collective group of telecoms providers could in practice restrict services in an anti-competitive way, because consumers would switch to an alternative provider

Meanwhile the potential economic gains from providing effective broadband for business are enormous – up to 2 million jobs and €1,000bln according to a study for the European Commission. Just ask businesses if they want to be held hostage by one supplier. Open 'next generation' networks are all the more important if we want to realise the European dream of a truly single market for all our industry and services.

Investment in open networks is good business for operators too. KPN – the Dutch incumbent is according to a recent WIK study one of the best performing incumbents financially in Europe and is investing in NGA. BT's Openreach business has also been a very solid performer through investing in open networks including now NGA.

Europe can make positive choices for its future and focus on smart investment in open networks which guarantees competition and consumer choice. Our objective should be not 'deregulation' for its own sake but actually to achieve the central objectives of the Telecoms Framework and EU policy of ensuring a vibrant and competitive market. If we need regulation to secure this, then that is what we must do.