

COMMUNICATION

**pursuant to Article 23 f (4) of the Austrian Constitutional Act
from the European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council
to the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament**

22 July 2015

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**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions:
A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe**

The goal pursued by the European Commission with its Digital Single Market Strategy is to make EU legislation fit for the digital age. The creation of a Digital Single Market is expected to result in a significant increase in efficiency and to advance the necessary process of structural change. Thus, the European Union is to be enabled to catch up in numerous fields and its global competitiveness is to be increased.

The objective of the Digital Single Market is to eliminate barriers and to bring about the convergence of 28 national markets in a digital single market.

A total of sixteen specific measures are to be taken over the coming two years, which will have an impact on the telecommunication sector, Internet broadband technology, the provision of broadband services and the continued upgrading of networks.

The Digital Single Market Strategy is based on three pillars:

- Improved online access to goods and services throughout Europe
- Improved conditions for well-functioning digital networks and services
- Best possible utilization of the growth potential of the European digital economy

As a matter of principle, the Federal Council welcomes the idea of a European strategy and stresses the importance of a general legal framework that provides a high degree of legal certainty, respects fundamental and human rights, but also eliminates unnecessary bureaucratic burdens in order to diminish the administrative workload.

The Federal Council also wishes to underline the great importance of data security. At the same time, the Federal Council refers to the potential of the digital agenda in making an essential contribution to an innovative procurement system.

Some of the individual measures envisaged will have a major influence on Europe as a business location and on its competitiveness. Their impact will also be felt at regional and local level. The development of online trade, for example, will strongly influence traditional trade and conventional retail stores. Towns and villages will be affected by three of the envisaged sixteen legislative projects. An impact assessment of the measures proposed, especially with a view to the implications for established economic and business models, would therefore be desirable. Information regarding the role to be played by the regional and local levels in this context would also be welcome.