

**Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe (COM(2015) 192 final)**

APPROVED FINAL DOCUMENT

The Committee on Transport, Post and Telecommunications and the Committee on Industry, Trade and Tourism of Italy's Chamber of Deputies,

having examined, pursuant to Rule of Procedure No. 127 of the Chamber of Deputies, the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe (COM(2015) 192 final),

*whereas:*

The Communication is part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, one of whose seven flagship initiatives is the European Digital Agenda, the objective of which is to delineate a strategy for the Digital Single Market based on ultra-fast internet and interoperable applications to ensure faster internet connection speeds by 2020 via next-generation access (NGA) networks;

The Communication aims at ensuring that neither members of the public nor businesses encounter any obstacles when connecting to the internet and carrying out online activities and that they enjoy conditions of fair competition and high standards of consumer and personal data protection;

In particular, it seeks to eliminate barriers to cross-border online activities, such as differences between Member States' contract and copyright laws, and divergent VAT rates;

In the Commission's estimation, the implementation of the strategy could boost European GDP by EUR 415 billion;

The Commission considers that over the next decade most economic activities will be done in the digital environment and that, consequently, if EU companies are to remain competitive, the digitisation of all sectors will be necessary;

The Committees concur fully with the objectives set by the European Commission, but believe they must be translated into specific and concrete measures;

The present Final Document needs to be forwarded without delay to the European Commission as part of the political dialogue, as well as to the European Parliament and the Council;

express their favourable opinion

*with the following remarks:*

- a) To improve connectivity, the European Union must promote public and private investment in digital infrastructure to develop ultra-broadband or ultra-fast internet, to which end a regulatory framework should be established encouraging competition among internet businesses and all available funds should be allocated to enhancing digital investments;
- b) The flow of data needs to take place in an environment that guarantees maximum security, especially as regards so-called big data (personal, income, financial and marketing details). Adequate protection needs to be ensured both to the data and the subjects who provide it, consciously or otherwise, as well as to the companies that use such data to build their business strategies (through social campaigns, marketing, profiling, direct email marketing, etc.). In particular, it is absolutely essential to guarantee the adequate protection of minors, whose data, according to the precepts of national legislation, may not be transferred or sold;
- c) To unleash the potential of the European single market, the security and integrity of networks must be preserved and public confidence in the use of digital services must be bolstered by facilitating cooperation and the exchange of information, and encouraging greater collaboration

and sharing between Member States until a high and uniform level of security is achieved throughout the entire European area;

- d)* To improve interoperability and derive the maximum benefits from e-commerce, investment support programmes, especially for SMEs, need to be put in place, national constraints have to be superseded, and both infrastructure and operating practices (such as shipping and delivery services) need to be optimised. To this end, a harmonised regulatory framework for the online incorporation and registration of companies, including those that operate across borders, must be put in place;
- e)* It is advisable to promote and support those European and national programmes that are already under way and to launch others as soon as possible, for which reference should also be made to the valuable experience of recent years in the use of computational linguistics as a tool that can remove language barriers retarding the growth of the digital market. There are essentially two reasons for so doing: 1) to make it easier for businesses to prepare contracts in the different languages of the countries in which they operate (or intend to operate), and to facilitate their participation in public tenders for which documentation must be provided in the language of the tendering country. These considerations apply in particular to smaller companies whose difficulties are aggravated by their lack of financial and human resources, and therefore need to be supported according to the recommendations contained in the Small Business Act; 2) to facilitate the flow of data and information (especially big data) across national borders by accelerating the process of translation and rendering concepts and contents as unequivocal as possible;
- f)* In view of the availability of services across multiple platforms, intangible goods such as e-books need to be treated on a par with tangible goods in respect of contract and copyright law, so that the rights on content may be bequeathed by the owners to their legitimate heirs or else assigned to others. The same consideration should apply with respect to the tax treatment of goods, so that the VAT rates for digital products are harmonised with those levied on their tangible equivalents;

- g)* Similarly, for the cross-border delivery of parcels, measures should be taken to align the costs incurred by consumers with best practices;
- h)* New initiatives and business activities need to be encouraged and developed by optimising bureaucratic, legal, tax and administrative procedures and formalities to further the spread of digital technologies;
- i)* The effective protection of copyright in the digital world implies finding the right balance between the right of access to knowledge and information and the right of authors and other owners of intellectual property to enjoy legal protection and receive adequate compensation from users in a manner that respects cultural diversity and fosters economic growth, to which end intermediaries/operators of electronic networks will need to take on a more incisive and responsible role. The harmonisation of copyright rules should be pursued also through contractual solutions, while encouraging technological innovation such as the system of multi-territorial licensing in the music industry. Against this backdrop the Committees call upon the European Commission to make no delay in enacting its mooted proposals for the revision of the current laws;
- j)* All necessary steps should be taken to close the considerable value gap between the remuneration, on the one hand, of service providers, search engines, aggregators and social networks and the remuneration, on the other, of content providers, with a view to ensuring adequate returns for all operators in the cultural industry.