



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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C(2017) 3416 final*

*Mr Pietro Grasso
President of the Senato della Repubblica
Piazza Madama, 1
IT – 00186 ROME*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) No 283/2014 as regards the promotion of Internet connectivity in local communities {COM(2015) 589 final}.

The Commission welcomes the generally positive opinion expressed by the Senato della Repubblica, while noting its specific concerns relating to Article 2(6) of the proposal.

The Commission shares the view that the promotion of access to very high capacity broadband Internet access and advanced digital services is a key objective for the completion of the Digital Single Market under the Digital Single Market Strategy¹. This is why it has proposed the "WiFi4EU" initiative which, despite a relatively modest budget, has the potential to serve as a showcase for the benefits of connectivity in the context of the wider Connectivity Package.² This package comprises a range of policy and regulatory measures that aim at incentivising connectivity development, to ensure that Europe can meet its strategic objectives set for 2020 and 2025.

¹ COM(2015) 192 final.

² Beyond the Regulation cited footnote 1, the Connectivity Package includes the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Connectivity for Competitive Digital Single Market – Towards a European Gigabit Society, COM(2016) 587 final; the Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 5G for Europe: An Action Plan, COM(2016) 588 final; the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Electronic Communications Code, COM(2016) 590 final/2; and the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC), COM(2016) 591 final.

In response to the observations related to Article 2(6) of the legislative proposal, notably the allocation of the vouchers according to the 'first come, first served' principle, this will significantly accelerate the identification of projects to be financed by the initiative. The Commission would like to reassure the Senato della Repubblica that it is equally and firmly committed to ensuring geographical balance in the disbursement of the funding available, which can best be achieved at the level of the Connecting Europe Facility work programme, following a consultation of the Member States.

All municipalities applying in the first pilot call for projects in 2017 will be treated on an equal footing and have the same chance to obtain a voucher, regardless of their administrative capacity. The Commission will also assess the results in full transparency with national governments and other stakeholders, so that corrective measures may be taken, if necessary, for the following calls.

The Commission will bear in mind the views of the Senato della Repubblica in its contribution to the ongoing legislative process involving both the European Parliament and the Council, where your government is represented.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Senato della Repubblica and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours sincerely,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Andrus Ansip
Vice-President*