Third Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy

28th February 2019, Bucharest, Romania

DECLARATION

The Ministers responsible for the Digital Economy and the representatives of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, the representatives of the European Union and the Ministers and representatives of its Member States met in Bucharest, Romania, on 28th February 2019 to discuss the progress of the digital cooperation within the Eastern Partnership (EaP) framework and registered since the second Ministerial meeting in October 2017.

In this third Ministerial meeting and in view of the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership due in May, the participants also addressed the challenges and opportunities of the digital economy in the EaP region. The participants reaffirmed the shared commitment to the digital economy, including the Harmonisation of Digital Markets (HDM) among the EaP partners and with the European Union.

Representatives of International Financial Institutions, regulatory authorities for electronic communications, research and education data networks, the EU4Digital project consortium, as well as representatives of the private sector and the civil society were also present.

Recalling the latest Ministerial Declaration of 5th October 2017 in Tallinn, which provided input to the Joint Declaration of the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit of 24th November 2017 in Brussels, the participants affirmed their commitment to deepen the cooperation in six joint priority topics (electronic communications and infrastructure, trust & security, eTrade, digital skills, ICT innovation & startup ecosystems and eHealth) and defined specific targets for 2020 as part of a roadmap for their digital cooperation, in the context of the 20 deliverables for 2020 and in order to ensure concrete benefits for citizens and businesses.

The participants have today adopted the following Declaration:

The participants reaffirm their commitment to the objectives stated in the Joint Staff Working Document "Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020 - Focusing on key priorities and tangible results" of June 2017, in particular regarding Deliverable no. 7: "Harmonisation of Digital Markets".

The participants welcome the launch by the European Commission, of the first Eastern Partnership wide Action, under the EU4Digital brand, to support swift and effective implementation of reforms in the EaP partner countries for further developing the digital economy and society, in line with European Union norms as appropriate, including legislation, standards and best practices.

EU4Digital will contribute to eliminate existing obstacles and barriers for pan-European online services for citizens, public administrations and businesses, including through the harmonisation of the digital environments, such as broadband infrastructure, among the EaP partners and with the European Union.

The participants recognise that the effective implementation of these actions represents common interest for all parties and reaffirm their commitment to share best practices including lessons learned from implementation. This includes strengthening the independence of national telecom regulators, harmonising spectrum allocation and roaming pricing, implementing national strategies for broadband development, e-Government enabled via digital trust services, cybersecurity, digital innovation, interoperable eHealth services and digital skills and piloting cross-border e-Signatures, eTrade and Digital Transport Corridors.

International mobile roaming services play an important role in facilitating economic and social interactions, both for trade and travel. In this context, the participants welcome the progress made since 2017 and agree that reducing retail roaming charges increases the use of roaming services and contributes to increased citizens' welfare, choice and mobility.

In this context, the participants welcome the final results of the [study on "a harmonised approach to roaming pricing and reduced roaming tariffs among the EaP partners"](), notably the options and measures proposed, while recognising the need for their update.

The EaP Ministers reaffirm their commitment to sign by the end of 2020 a Regional Roaming Agreement, in order to reduce the roaming tariffs. To this aim, they adopt the joint roadmap for the six countries prepared by the Roaming Expert Working Group of their national regulatory authorities for electronic communications and endorsed by the HDM Panel on 7th February 2019.

The EU and EaP Ministers also agree to explore the possibility of a common international roaming space, including the economically sustainable reduction of roaming tariffs between the EaP countries and the EU Member States. The participants agree to launch discussions and to conduct a study to support that process - the study shall be launched in 2019 and be completed by the end of 2020.

The EU Ministers also encourage the Ministers of the EaP countries to align their priorities for spectrum coordination, including for 694-790 MHz ('700 MHz band') and 3.5 GHz, in order to free these bands for 5G deployment.

In the context of the 10th anniversary of the EaP and the ongoing reflection on the EaP agenda beyond 2020, the Ministers invite the HDM Panel to prepare and present by the autumn 2019 their suggestions on possible further objectives of EaP cooperation in the area of the Digital Economy. These objectives shall also include their respective targets and milestones.

The EaP and EU Ministers invite the HDM Panel to continue monitoring and reviewing the progress of the cooperation on the Harmonisation of Digital Markets, as well as plans in this area and report as necessary to the corresponding EaP Multilateral Platform. They stand ready to meet again at Ministerial level to provide further political steering, including on emerging issues, to cooperation in this area.

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