

Joint statement of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on the first Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy

On 11 June 2015 the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in close cooperation with the Commission organized in Luxembourg the first Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy. The meeting was co-chaired by the Minister of Transport of Latvia Mr Anrijs Matīss, and Commission's Vice President Andrus Ansip.

The EU Ministers responsible for Digital Economy and their representatives met their Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belarus, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian counterparts in the afternoon of 11 June to discuss the achievements of the Eastern Partnership in the area of Digital Economy, as well as the opportunities and challenges to the further development of a strong Digital Economy in the Eastern Partnership.

Representatives of European Financial Institutions, the network of Eastern Partnership regulators for electronic communications (EaPeReg), the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC), as well as representatives of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) industry and civil society were also present.

In light of the recent formulation by the Commission of an ambitious Digital Single Market (DSM) strategy, the recent Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga and the ongoing European Neighbourhood Policy review, Digital Economy Ministers exchanged views on the current state of relations between the EU and the eastern European Partners. The Ministers also discussed the possibilities of further cooperation, taking into account the largely common interests of the Partners in the area of Digital Economy.

The Presidency and the Commission stressed the importance of Digital Economy as a core element of the Eastern Partnership policy and underlined the need to strive for Harmonisation of Digital Markets (HDM) between the Partners and with the EU. The participants affirmed their shared commitment to the Digital Economy, including HDM and underlined its importance for social and economic development and for creation of growth and jobs.

Through the adopted Declaration, the participants welcomed past and ongoing efforts in this area, notably the setting up and establishment of EaPeReg, the Eastern Partnership network of regulators for electronic communications; the launching of EaPConnect project which will link the Partners' research and academic communities to the pan-European research and education network GÉANT; the successful development of the emerging initiative for Harmonising Digital Markets (HDM) between Partners and with the EU and, as part of it, the completion of the HDM Study.

The participants looked forward to intensified cooperation between the Partners and with the EU on a wide spectrum of Digital Economy topics. As regards electronic services, cooperation will focus on eGovernment (including eHealth and eCustoms), eCommerce for SMEs and eLogistics. As regards key enablers for electronic services, cooperation will focus on: electronic identification and trust services; network and information security, cybersecurity and cybercrime; ICT-based infrastructures for eTrade; ICT-based

infrastructures for research and education; and digital skills. Cooperation will also focus on telecommunications rules and Internet governance principles.

As a next step, the participants called for the creation of an Eastern Partnership HDM Panel in the second half of 2015, with a mandate to discuss opportunities and challenges regarding HDM, explore funding possibilities and synergies with ongoing projects and programmes, formulate HDM strategy, coordinate actions and projects related to HDM, assess progress and ensure consistency and coherence at national, bilateral and regional level. The HDM Panel should bring together all relevant stakeholders from EU Member States and Partner countries.

The Presidency and the Commission confirmed their readiness to work on strengthened and intensified mutually beneficial Digital Economy relations with the eastern European Partners.