Second Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy

5th October 2017, Tallinn, Estonia

DECLARATION

The Ministers in charge of 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 (hereafter collectively referred to as "EaP partners" or "EaP partner countries"), the representatives of the European Union (EU) and Ministers or representatives of its Member States have met in Tallinn, Estonia on 5 October 2017 to affirm their shared commitment to the digital economy and underline its importance for social and economic development, and for creation of growth and jobs in the Eastern Partnership (EaP).

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

Recalling that, in the Declaration of the May 2015 EaP Summit in Riga, the participants recognised the digital economy as "an area with yet untapped potential for both the EU and partners". They looked forward to "holding the first EaP Ministerial meeting on the digital economy" and "the planned establishment of a Panel on Harmonising Digital Markets (HDM)".

Recalling that, since May 2015, the European Commission has been implementing an ambitious Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy aiming to provide better access to goods and services and fair conditions for all market participants by tackling key barriers, including regulatory fragmentation, discriminatory practices and outdated legislation. The Communication on the Mid-Term review of the implementation of the DSM strategy (May 2017) calls for the focus to stay on the big things that require a common response, notably data, cybersecurity and online platforms, and substantial investments in infrastructures and skills.

Recalling that, in the Declaration of the first EaP Ministerial meeting on the digital economy, held in Luxembourg on 11 June 2015, the participants affirmed the importance of a comprehensive list of topics for the digital economy in the EaP. They agreed to share best practices and deepen their cooperation on these topics. They called for the establishment of an EaP HDM Panel and for further work by the IFIs in promoting the digital economy in the EaP.

Recalling that, in the Joint Statement of the Ministerial level meeting on the Digital Community with the EaP partner countries, held in Brussels on 18 October 2016, the participants affirmed their vision of a Digital Community where the benefits of the DSM could be extended to the EaP partner countries and possibly to other EU neighbours. They welcomed the establishment of the HDM Panel in October 2015 and the completion of the first HDM study. The participants agreed to focus their digital cooperation on six priority topics: telecom rules and infrastructure; trust and security in the digital economy; eTrade including eCommerce, eCustoms and eLogistics/Digital Transport Corridors; digital skills; ICT innovation & startup ecosystems and eHealth. They called for the establishment of thematic EaP networks on these topics that would develop harmonisation roadmaps for 2020, including milestones for the 2017 EaP Summit. In this occasion, the European Commission announced EU4Digital as the vehicle to support roadmaps' implementation.

The participants have adopted the following Declaration:

1. Electronic communications rules and infrastructure

The participants reaffirm the importance of the electronic communications sector to the digital economy, to innovation, investment and trade. In particular, they stress the following:

- **Supporting the independence of National Regulatory Authorities** (NRAs) for electronic communications ensures proper functioning of the corresponding electronic communications markets by encouraging competition, attracting investments and safeguarding consumer rights. This benefits both the economy and the citizens/consumers who can enjoy a wider choice of innovative electronic communications services at lower prices.

- **Broadband** development is of vital importance for the digital economy, not just in terms of its potential to boost GDP growth but also in terms of providing the essential connectivity-platform for the deployment of eServices for businesses and citizens.

- **Radio spectrum policy** requires a coordinated approach, to avoid harmful interference along country borders and to allow innovative services such as connected cars or remote health care to work across borders. Within the EU, the date for freeing the 700 MHz part of the spectrum from terrestrial TV broadcasting in order to let the band be used for wireless broadband electronic communications is set for 30 June 2020, with possibility for EU Member States to extend this timeline up to two years. Effort should now be put on a coordinated approach with countries neighbouring the EU, notably the EaP partners.

- **International mobile roaming** services play an important role in facilitating economic and social interactions, both for trade and travel. Reducing retail roaming charges among the EaP partners (and possibly, at later stage, with the EU), will contribute to increased citizens' welfare.

The participants agree to implement further actions in this area that will enable EaP partners to establish an independent NRA for electronic communications where applicable, and to promote spectrum coordination, notably on 700 MHz, among EaP partners and with the EU. They also agree to launch further actions to enable EaP partners to develop national broadband strategies (if not in place), and adopt relevant EU *acquis* and best practices facilitating broadband development. The participants welcome the preliminary 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, and agree to work further towards a common international roaming space (including work towards a roaming agreement) among the EaP partners.

Efforts in this area should aim to achieve by 2020: independent NRA for electronic communications in place in at least five EaP partner countries; roll-out of national broadband strategies by all EaP partners, in line with similar EU strategies; coordinated national spectrum strategies among the EaP partners and with the EU; and harmonised roaming pricing and reduced roaming tariffs among the EaP partners - roaming discussions with the EU[1] launched.

2. Trust and security in the digital economy

The participants reaffirm the importance of trust in the digital economy and cybersecurity as a means to preserve the openness of Internet and online freedom, and they stress the following:

- **Trust services** (electronic signatures, electronic seals, electronic time stamps, electronic registered delivery services and website authentication), which are interoperable and legally recognised across borders, enable companies to operate online in a more convenient and secure manner, benefitting from less administrative costs and higher productivity, whether it

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[1] Roaming discussions with the EU could start in spring 2018 at the earliest, after the first market reactions to the EU's Roam-Like-At-Home (RLAH).

comes to conducting business transactions or dealing with various national administrations. Furthermore, as more and more people live or travel frequently abroad for business and leisure, it is important that they have trusted and convenient tools to conduct electronic transactions across borders.

- **Cybersecurity** ensures improved resilience of the critical infrastructure in different key sectors of the economy such as telecom, energy, transport, banking etc. for the benefit of citizens, businesses and public administrations.

The participants agree to implement further actions in this area in order to promote the adoption (if not in place) by EaP partners, of the Trust Services part of the eIDAS Regulation, in full compliance with relevant EU *acquis*, notably the principles related to citizens' rights, data protection, security and confidentiality and the General Data Protection Regulation. They also agree to launch further actions to promote the development (if not in place) of national cybersecurity strategies and national Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs) / Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) at EaP partner countries, in line with EU best practices.

Efforts in this area should aim to achieve by 2020: a) pilots in place, for interoperable cross-border eSignature and regional framework for cross-border eServices for businesses, where appropriate, among EaP partners and with the EU and b) in all EaP partner countries, well-developed and implemented national cybersecurity strategies, fully operational national CSIRTs/CERTs in place with established cooperation links to CSIRTs/CERTs of EU Member States, and enhanced public-private and international cooperation in this area.

3. eTrade including eCommerce, eCustoms and eLogistics/Digital Transport Corridors

The participants reaffirm the importance of electronic trade (eTrade) and its components - eCommerce, eCustoms and eLogistics/Digital Transport Corridors - for improving the competitiveness of the digital economy. In particular, they stress that harmonised cross-border eTrade: increases the security and transparency of trade operations; cuts administrative costs and revenue losses through fraud and non-compliance; reduces delays and costs at the border; and improves digital services offered to businesses and citizens.

The participants welcome the preliminary results of the study on "eTrade and eLogisitics in the EaP", notably the regional recommendations issued and national roadmaps proposed for harmonised eTrade systems among the EaP partners, in line with EU norms, as well as the feasibility analysis and the recommendations for implementing a Digital Transport Corridor between the Baltic and the Black Sea, to be extended for all EaP partner countries. They agree to implement further actions, for promoting the adoption by EaP partners, of eCommerce, eCustoms and eLogistics-related EU *acquis*, as well as for developing interoperable eTrade systems, where relevant, among EaP partners and with the EU.

Efforts in this area should aim to achieve by 2020: harmonised legislation for eCommerce, eCustoms and eLogistics/Digital Transport Corridors among EaP partners and with the EU, implemented where applicable; import-export processes re-engineered for eTrade, in all EaP partner countries; pilots in place for cross-border eTrade among EaP partners and with the EU; and pilot in place for a Digital Transport Corridor between the Baltic and the Black Sea, to be extended for all EaP partner countries.

4. Digital skills

The participants reaffirm the importance of digital skills in today's increasingly digital economies and societies. They stress the imbalance between the skills available in the economy and those that are increasingly in demand. Developing a digital talent pool is crucial for European competitiveness and for Europe's digital society to remain inclusive. Harmonised digital skills

strategies in the EaP should aim to bring together national authorities, companies, social partners, non-profit organisations and education providers in joint action to address the growing need for digital skills.

The participants welcome the progress made in the establishment of national coalitions for digital jobs in EaP partners, based on the EU's digital skills & jobs coalition. They agree to implement further actions for EaP partners to develop and implement (if not in place) national digital skills strategies, in line with similar EU strategies. This includes the establishment (if not in place) of national coalitions for digital jobs, based on the EU's digital skills & jobs coalition.

Efforts in this area should aim to achieve by 2020: a) national digital skills strategies formulated and implemented by all EaP partners, in line with similar EU strategies and b) national coalitions for digital jobs established by all EaP partners, based on the EU's digital skills & jobs coalition.

5. ICT innovation & startup ecosystems

The participants reaffirm the importance of ICT innovation & startup ecosystems for the digital economy; these ecosystems facilitate the creation of new ICT-enabled businesses and provide a much more supportive environment for existing businesses to thrive and grow.

The participants note the preliminary results of the study on "ICT innovation & startup ecosystems in the EaP", notably: the needs assessment for all EaP partners; the regional recommendations and national roadmaps proposed for promoting ecosystem development in the EaP partners; the mapping of stakeholders in the EaP partners' ecosystems; and the incorporation of stakeholder information in relevant Startup Europe networks and online platforms. They also welcome the progress made with EaPConnect, the high-capacity broadband internet network for research and education being established across all EaP partner countries. They agree to implement further actions in this area in order to promote, for all EaP partners, well-structured ecosystems for ICT research, innovation & startups, connected among them and to similar ecosystems in the EU, including via the EaPConnect infrastructure and services; to extend existing and/or develop new platforms as deemed appropriate.

Efforts in this area should aim to achieve by 2020: a) well-structured ICT research, innovation & startup ecosystems in place for all EaP partners; b) established connections among EaP partners' ecosystems and with similar EU ecosystems; and c) for all EaP partners, national research and education data networks (NRENs) integrated with the pan-European data network GÉANT, eduroam deployed and integration towards GÉANT services stimulated.

6. eHealth

The participants recognise the importance of eHealth for transforming healthcare systems in the context of the digital economy. They stress that eHealth can benefit citizens, patients, health and care professionals but also health organisations and public authorities. When applied effectively, eHealth delivers more personalised 'citizen-centric' healthcare, which is more targeted, effective and efficient and helps reduce errors, as well as the length of hospitalisation. It facilitates socio-economic inclusion and equality, quality of life and patient empowerment through greater transparency, access to services and information.

The participants welcome the preliminary results of the study on "eHealth in the EaP", notably the regional recommendations and national roadmaps proposed for harmonised eHealth systems among the EaP partners, in line with EU standards and guidelines. They agree to implement further actions in this area for promoting the adoption (if not in place) by EaP partners, of eHealth-related EU *acquis*, standards and guidelines, and the development of interoperable eHealth systems among EaP partners and with the EU, in line with the new EU initiative on digital transformation of health and care.

Efforts in this area should aim to achieve by 2020: a) harmonised legislation for eHealth among the EaP partners and with the EU and b) pilot in place for cross-border eHealth services among EaP partners and with the EU, taking into account the specifications under the eHealth Digital Service Infrastructure (eHDSI).

7. EU support for HDM

The participants welcome the preparatory work done for the first EU-funded regional Action under the EU4Digital brand, in the field of the digital economy and society, covering all the EaP partner countries (EaP region) and expected to be adopted by the November 2017 EaP Summit. The Action 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 among the EaP partner countries and with the EU. The participants look forward to the adoption of this Action.

They also stress the necessity to complement and build on this first Action in the coming years, through additional European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) regional funds, as well as through the ENI bilateral envelopes (for each EaP partner) and possibly, the use of ENI blending instruments (with IFI contribution).

8. Next steps

The participants invite the HDM Panel to continuously review the progress of the digital cooperation, as well as future 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. The participants propose this Ministerial Declaration as a contribution to the November 2017 EaP Summit.

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