



Joint statement on the role of the telecoms sector in accelerating the European recovery

2 July 2020, Brussels – The European telecommunications industry stands ready to work with EU institutions, national governments and the broader stakeholders' community to lift the Continent out of this recession. As the German Presidency of the EU takes over, we welcome the prioritisation of digital technology as a major lever for a strong and sustainable recovery. Telecoms infrastructure and services are the backbone of our social and economic cohesion, they play a critical role in developing a strong European digital ecosystem and they support the pursuit of global leadership in tech. This will be instrumental to lift workers and businesses out of the current crisis through sustainable and lasting economic growth. The recovery plans should be an opportunity to accelerate Europe's competitiveness in key sectors, including cloud and edge computing, and an imperative for education and training.

For this reason, in the context of Europe's recovery efforts, the telecommunications industry calls on EU institutions and national governments to:

Support 5G and fibre rollout

As telecom operators roll out 5G and fibre networks, the European Commission's ambition for leadership in connectivity should not get lost in regulatory details or in the implementation phase. Our lighthouse must be to close digital divides and promote territorial inclusion. It is therefore fundamental to ensure a harmonised approach across the single market. We encourage all institutions to take stock of the socio-economic context and shift regulatory modes from "business-as-usual" to a fresh and comprehensive approach aimed at unleashing the full power of network investment, at full scale and at full pace. A new approach should ensure that:

- **Spectrum auctions are timely and conditions for spectrum assignment support network deployment.** This includes taking a long-term view to spectrum prices, rather than imposing punitive fees that hamper 5G investment. Also, access and coverage obligations should not diminish the speed and scale of investment in network roll-out;
- **Sharing agreements for Radio Access Network (RAN) are supported and incentivised**, so that they contribute to a speedy 5G deployment;
- **All fibre investment models are adequately incentivised** at the national level, including co-investment and other forms of partnerships;
- **Innovative infrastructure solutions, such as cloud, edge and quantum computing**, are given the appropriate support;
- **Future EU initiatives dramatically reduce roll-out costs for both mobile and fixed networks.** This should tackle, for example, unreasonable costs for using public ground as well as complex authorization procedures for both fixed and mobile networks;
- **Open and interoperable interfaces in the RAN are supported.** Initiatives such as Open RAN have the potential to support Europe's multi-vendor approach, while reducing deployment costs, further strengthening the security of the equipment and unleash more network innovation.

Stimulate the uptake of technology

While continuing to support private investment in 5G and fibre on the supply side, digital policies and public funding should aim at promoting a leap in the uptake of the latest technologies by both citizens



and industrial sectors. This is particularly true for Europe's ambitious climate targets, which can only be achieved through radical transformation of sectors like transportation, manufacturing and construction. Europe's funding to recover from the COVID-19 crisis should prioritise the digital transformation of public services, healthcare systems and education, among others, also through demand stimulus measures.

Fight misinformation

Misinformation around the safety of 5G networks risks hurting Europe's competitiveness and cohesion, despite clear reassurances from both the World Health Organisation and the European Commission. Across Europe, we count more than 180 arson attacks on telephone antennas in 11 countries, as of today. We call on national governments to engage in broad and sustained communication campaigns – especially across social media platforms – to ensure that both the general public and local authorities can access fact-based, scientific and authoritative information on 5G.

Focus on digital skills and education

Europe must expand digital education and training programmes and dramatically increase funding in this critical area. This should include ambitious measures to ensure all students have a high level of ICT awareness, including on health and safety, by the end of their compulsory curriculum. Finally, workers of all ages should be put in the condition to develop the necessary digital skills – both through upskilling and reskilling – to thrive in innovative and fast-paced markets.

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