European Commission: The Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe

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On 6 May 2015, the new European Commission published its Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe. Following the pre-election political guidelines of the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, the Strategy refers to the Digital Single Market - a free movement of goods, persons, services and capital in the online environment - as one of the Commission's key priorities.

The Strategy elaborates on 16 high priority interdependent actions, outlined in the Annex, to be completed by the Commission in 2015-2016. These actions build on three pillars: (1) better access for consumers and businesses to digital goods and services across Europe, (2) creating the right conditions and a level playing field for digital networks and innovative services to flourish and (3) maximising the growth potential of the digital economy.

To improve access to digital goods and services (the first pillar) the Strategy proposes to: (i) create trustworthy cross-border e-commerce rules for consumers and business, (ii) ensure affordable high-quality cross-border parcel delivery, (iii) prevent unjustified geo-blocking, (iv) modernise the European copyright framework and (v) reduce VAT related burdens and obstacles in cross-border sales.

Actions based on the second pillar focus on (i) the reform of the European telecoms regulatory framework, (ii) the review of the regulatory framework for audiovisual media services, (iii) the assessment of the regulatory environment for platforms and intermediaries and (iv) the initiatives in the area of cyber security.

Within the framework of the third pillar the Commission plans to (i) propose a European 'free flow of data' initiative, (ii) launch an integrated standartisation plan with a focus on the technologies and domains critical for the Digital Single Market and (iii) present a new e-Government Action Plan 2016-2020.

In order to modernise the European copyright framework, the Commission plans by the end of 2015 to develop legislative proposals harmonising national copyright regimes and providing wider cross-border online access to works in the EU. The proposals will address the portability of and cross-border access to legally purchased online content services (especially video content), harmonised

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exceptions for the cross-border use of works for, in particular, research, education, text and data mining and clarification of the rules for online intermediaries in the copyright enforcement regime.

The Commission intends to improve the copyright enforcement system further in 2016. It will focus on commercial scale infringements through a "follow the money approach" and on the cross-border applicability of the enforcement system.

Review the Satellite and Cable Directive is also in the Commission's plans for 2015-2016. The Commission will consider, in particular, the possibility of including broadcasters' online transmissions in its scope of application.

Actions concerning the audiovisual media services framework primarily touch upon the review of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive in 2016. This review will affect: (i) the scope of the Directive (possible broadening of the definition of "audiovisual media services" and the Directive's geographical scope) and (ii) rules on the promotion of the European works, protection of minors and advertising applicable to all market players.

To fulfil the Strategy the Commission will engage in cooperation and dialogue with the European Parliament, the Council and stakeholders. The Commission will develop the Digital Economy and Society Index indicator and will regularly report on progress for the Strategy.

The Digital Single Market will be on the agenda of the European Council meeting on 25-26 June.

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, "A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe", 6 May 2015

http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market/docs/dsm-communication_en.pdf

European Commission, "A Digital Single Market for Europe: Commission sets out 16 initiatives to make it happen", press release, 6 May 2015

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4919_en.htm

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