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From: Presidency  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Draft Council conclusions on the future of a highly digitized Europe beyond 2020 : "*Boosting the digital and economic competitiveness and the digital cohesion*"

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1. Delegations find the draft Council Conclusions on the future of a highly digitized Europe beyond 2020: "*Boosting the digital and economic competitiveness and the digital cohesion*" in the Annex.
2. The Presidency asks the Delegations to provide their written comments and proposals with the intention to discuss the document in the Working Party on Telecommunications and Information Society first on 6 May.
3. After the examination of the Council conclusions in the Working Party, the Presidency intends to invite the Permanent Representatives Committee to endorse the draft Council conclusions and transmit them to the TTE Council for adoption at its forthcoming meeting on 7 June 2019.

**DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE FUTURE OF A HIGHLY DIGITIZED  
EUROPE BEYOND 2020: BOOSTING THE DIGITAL AND ECONOMIC  
COMPETITIVENESS AND THE DIGITAL COHESION**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

- The European Council Conclusions on jobs, growth and competitiveness of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2019.
- The Bucharest Informal Ministerial Meeting of 1st of March 2019 on the future of a highly digitised Europe beyond 2020.
- The Council Conclusions on the coordinated plan on artificial intelligence of 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2019.
- The Commission's communication on the Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and its annex entitled "Coordinated Plan on the Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence Made in Europe - 2018".
- The Commission's Communication of 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 on Artificial Intelligence for Europe.
- The Commission's communication on A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe.
- The Commission's communication on the Mid-Term Review on the implementation of the Digital Single Market Strategy A Connected Digital Single Market for All.

1. EMPHASISES that digitalisation is essential for the competitiveness, economic development, cohesion, security, sustainability of Europe. Digitalisation should ensure that European citizens can widely benefit from this process and that all European businesses, irrespective of their size, location and type can grow and compete globally, that no one is left behind in the digital transformation and that gender balance is taken into account.
2. CALLS on the Commission and Member States to put in place an integrated approach addressing the current and emerging challenges, in particular by further developing the digital economy, while protecting and empowering consumers, enabling cross-border innovation and trade, competitiveness, upscaling of key technologies, including space and quantum communication, and promoting the opportunities for SMEs and start-ups to scale up and take part in global value chains.
3. CALLS on Member States and the Commission to strengthen the ability of European businesses to scale up in view of creating opportunities for smaller innovative companies to grow in the single market and for digital businesses to operate globally. Obstacles for innovation and growth should be removed, while health, safety and other general interests should be safeguarded. HIGHLIGHTS the need to ensure the conditions for fair competition and effective freedom of choice in digital matters, guaranteeing a competitive and innovative digital market and a fair and effective use of taxation, adapted to the challenges of digital (notion of "presence or digital footprint").
4. ENCOURAGES Member States and the Commission to continuously identify relevant initiatives for sharing of and implement best practices and to facilitate collaboration between relevant parties to ensure access to digital skills in Europe, with particular emphasis on emerging structural skills gaps.

5. RECALLS the intensive efforts of the Member States to build a real Digital Single Market. EMPHASIZES the crucial importance of creating the premises for ensuring competition, the best possible connectivity, digital and data infrastructure, trust and security, innovative services, inclusiveness, digital literacy, interoperability, digitised public services, take-up of the research results in Europe, boosting e-commerce and European start-ups and SMEs, while ensuring the efficient implementation and enforcement of the new rules.
6. STRONGLY EMPHASIZES that Europe's cybersecurity capacity should be reinforced in order to protect its digital infrastructures, products, services and users, and its strategic autonomy. STRESSES the need to fully implement and enforce existing rules ensuring a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of developing cybersecurity excellence centres at regional, national and European level open to the private and public sectors, increasing cyber resilience and strengthening technological and industrial capacity and transforming cybersecurity into a competitive advantage for European companies.
7. RECOGNISES that Artificial Intelligence and other new technologies can contribute to solving key societal challenges, such as ageing societies, achieving a sustainable welfare system, food security and combating climate change. SUPPORTS the application of the ethical guidelines so that Europe can boost consumer confidence and become a world leader in “trustworthy” artificial intelligence.
8. STRONGLY CALLS for a European policy that supports innovation so that Europe becomes a world leader in digital and artificial intelligence, while protecting the European strategic digital technologies, stimulating thus the development of European leadership in this sector. STRESSES the necessity for investments in research and innovation in order for companies to be able to successfully deploy artificial intelligence on a global scale.

9. HIGHLIGHTS the crucial role of enhancing EU, international and multi-stakeholder cooperation, of exchanging best practices, adopting a human centric approach, respecting the ethics, data protection and commercial confidentiality, adopting the appropriate approach when it comes to data sharing and supporting the European businesses, including SMEs as well as assisting the public sector to take up the artificial intelligence solutions, and enhancing trust between users and companies.
10. STRONGLY UNDERLINES the outstanding need to overcome the digital divide and promote social and economic inclusiveness, efficiency and innovation, to connect, where needed, the unconnected regions, industries, administrations and citizens, including the low-income and rural communities, while ensuring greater empowerment, inclusion and a higher take-up of advanced digital technologies by businesses and public services.
11. STRESSES the importance of further improving the digital skills and continuous upskilling and reskilling, preventing thus the digital divide and digital exclusion and creating conditions for a more inclusive digital economy in the benefit of all. UNDERLINES that Europe has to further prepare its society for the socio-economic challenges derived from the digital transition, while respecting its cultural and linguistic diversity, taking into account local specificities.
12. RECOGNIZES that digital development for the benefit of all must be ensured. In particular, workers affected by the digitalisation of their jobs must be accompanied, in particular by ensuring that new forms of employment that emerge do not deprive workers of their social rights. Education, vocational training and the social protection of new forms of work are first-class concerns.

13. SUPPORTS the continued promotion of the European data economy, including, if needed, through a strengthened European data strategy, taking into account the need for respecting the rights of users. ENCOURAGES the Commission and Member States to develop, based on the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation and the free flow of non-personal data Directive, a coherent European framework for secure, interoperable and trustworthy data sharing, to promote voluntary data sharing and reuse of data enabling new key digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Cloud, High Performance Computing and blockchain.
14. RECOGNISES the importance of enabling infrastructure such as 5G, for example through the establishment of test beds as well as the promotion of use in different sectors of society. IS AWARE of the recently adopted Commission Recommendation on cybersecurity of 5G which sets out a number of concrete actions that have to be implemented in a short timeframe, including in relation to risk assessments.
15. STRESSES that combined and coordinated investments at EU level are the best way to achieve state of the art innovation in Europe that no Member State can achieve on its own and in this context RECOGNISES the importance of the sectoral proposals within the Multiannual Financial Framework, in particular the Digital Europe Programme, the Connecting Europe Facility and the Horizon Europe package.
16. ENCOURAGES Commission to continue to bring together stakeholders, in public private partnerships and ecosystems, and develop long-term European action plans that aim to promote Europe's future competitiveness and innovation.
17. RECOGNISES the need for effective digital public administrations to ensure better access to services for people, consumers, organizations and businesses across Europe. CALLS on Member States and the Commission to develop a new eGovernment Action Plan as an effective tool for EU digital public sector. HIGHLIGHTS the need to further consolidate the European digital infrastructure with common digital building blocks (so-called Digital Service Infrastructures (DSI), eg CEF eDelivery, eID and eInvoicing).

18. CALLS on Member States and Commission to adopt a horizontal and looking forward integrated digital policy, bearing in mind the need to safeguard digital trust and security and avoid fragmentation on the Single Market, aiming at a European regulatory framework that provides simple, transparent and coherent rules that are easy to apply.
  19. SUPPORTS the development of the Internet of trust, the prevention of the spread of hate, violent and illicit content on Internet and the combat of disinformation and manipulation of information.
  20. RECOGNISES that there is a need for setting out more broadly the principles of transparency, fairness and responsibility in the use of algorithms as defined in the Regulation on promoting fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services.
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