

**Introductory remarks for the European Parliament hearing of
Commissioner-designate Neelie Kroes (Digital Agenda)**

14 January 2010

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Introduction

Thank you Chairman Reul, and committee members, for this opportunity to outline my ideas to you and indeed to the many Europeans watching this hearing live on their computers.

The web streaming of these hearings is a powerful symbol of how significant Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become to so many parts of European life. They affect every European every day. They are a driver for growth and employment, they improve our quality of life, and they connect our communities. In other words, ICTs help to improve our daily lives and make us more prosperous. The Digital Agenda should maximise those returns; and I seek your support to work to ensure those returns across the European policy spectrum.

Europe has many ICT successes to its credit, but we can do better.

We cannot afford a complacent attitude. Instead, we need a mindset that embraces the creation of new markets and new ways of working and living.

To support that we must invest smartly to exploit our strengths; creating the conditions for *the Digital Economy in Europe to flourish*. As Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, I would aim to create the environment in which the new Nokias, Skypes and GSM standards can emerge in Europe.

By getting the right ambitious agenda in place now, **we will contribute to a generation of growth and jobs in Europe.**

Building blocks of the Digital Agenda

In my view there are six building blocks for this agenda.

1) Research and Innovation

First, a deeper commitment to research and innovation.

At around 1.7 billion euros per year, the Community R&D and innovation budget for ICTs is substantial. But let me put it in perspective: this is **smaller than Google's annual R&D budget**. So we cannot waste a cent. This money must finance R&D that would not take place without it, and we must leverage it with as much private and national spending as possible. We must build on the talent of our researchers to deliver an innovation ecosystem where European ICT companies of all sizes can develop world-class products.

I am pragmatic about the means - it can be through our traditional instruments of the Framework Programmes; it could equally be through various forms of Public-Private Partnerships, or pre-commercial procurement. Whatever the means, the end should be technologies that really improve lives, such as:

- 1) technologies allowing older Europeans to live independently
- 2) technologies that reduce health care costs
- 3) technologies making transport greener and more secure.
- 4) networks that connect people and businesses in faster, innovative ways

2) Infrastructure

Second, infrastructure: citizens and businesses want, and increasingly need, to be **connected anytime, anywhere**. For this to happen, we must invest in dense, open high-speed broadband networks - and better wireless applications which use the radio spectrum efficiently. This requires the right incentives to stimulate private investment, without re-monopolising our networks, and carefully targeted public investments that improve market functioning. With this infrastructure we need competitive markets so that communication services are available at fair prices.

3) Trust and Security

Third, ICTs must be trusted. If Europeans fear for their privacy, worry about fraud or are concerned about threats to their children, then ICT is held back.

We should also have trust in, and public accountability for, governance of the internet.

4) Access and Skills

Fourth: to be fair and competitive our citizens and businesses must have the access and skills needed to take advantage of ICTs. **ICTs are nothing if we forget people.** We can build networks and devices, but if older and less advantaged Europeans cannot use them, or businesses cannot find skilled staff, then we miss our objective.

5) Practising what we promote

Fifth: Digital society depends upon open standards and interoperability. With this in mind public organisations should practice what they promote. If they don't use open standards - why should citizens? I will pursue this from local authorities up to the European Institutions. If public data such as maps, weather information and health advice is not interoperable, how can it be exploited in new ways? For such reasons I want to explore new ways to develop ICT standards in Europe.

6) Online Single Market

Sixth and finally, our European online market is an uneven patchwork of national markets. They are divided by differing regulation, creating a 'strait-jacket' that frustrates consumers and limits businesses. I would work with you, Member States and my Commission colleagues to champion a truly single online market: for goods, for both commercial and cultural content, and for services not yet imagined.

In fleshing out the Commission's Digital Agenda on this basis, I would of course draw upon the European Parliament's 2015.eu report, being prepared by Mrs del Castillo. And I think you will agree that **these building blocks are only a means to an end**. Whether it is with projects like *Europeana* that preserve our history, or securing Europe, or closing the digital divide, the end is the same: **European solutions that enable better and more prosperous daily lives for all Europeans**.

My approach

How would I implement such ideas?

The European Parliament can take much credit for the final form of the Telecoms package and the Audiovisual and Media Directive. We must now convert the potential of opportunities like multiannual spectrum programming into good practice. To get there I favour strong support to Member States, but also tough responses to those who breach or ignore EU law and implementation deadlines. I have the ambition to work with industry and stakeholders to come up with consensual and innovative contributions to the digital agenda, because I think that is how we get the best results. But let me assure you: if that does not produce solutions, the public authorities have to take their responsibilities in order to achieve our common objectives.

What I bring to the portfolio

Finally, I should mention what I bring to the portfolio. *I am personally thrilled by the prospect of tackling the Digital Agenda.*

As Competition Commissioner I have a *proven track record of bringing people together and making things happen*. On interoperability, open standards, consumer choice, broadband networks, broadcasting and online markets - I delivered real progress for both citizens and businesses. From generating ideas to the heavy lifting of implementation – I am able to do both.

With this record and vision for the Digital future, I will listen to your advice, I seek your support, and I offer my close cooperation.