

Subject: Fair contribution of the largest traffic generators to reach Europe's Digital Decade connectivity targets

Brussels, 14 September 2022

Dear President Von der Leyen,
Dear Executive Vice-President Vestager,
Dear Commissioner Breton,

We were very pleased to read in the latest Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) report¹ that EU Member States have made significant progress in their digital transition. According to DESI, basic broadband infrastructure is by now available to all Europeans and 70% of households are covered by Gigabit networks. We welcome this positive trend, which should benefit all EU citizens including those living in remote and rural areas.

At the same time, network traffic patterns have increased dramatically over the past years and have been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a massive move to telework and a video streaming surge. The lockdown period has highlighted the importance of telecommunications network resiliency and reliability for the user. This surge in data traffic has required massive investments in ensuring that Gigabit connectivity networks are up to the task, which has enormously benefited those online platforms that have driven most of such traffic. According to some estimates, the top six tech giants account for over 55 percent of all network traffic in Europe².

While we are stepping up all the efforts to meet the Digital Compass³ targets of covering all European households with a Gigabit network and all populated areas with 5G by 2030, it is time to assess whether and how the major providers of online content should contribute to the costs of digital networks that have allowed them to thrive. It has been noted that today the costs of digital infrastructure are not fairly shared by all the market players⁴. The debate on this issue is not unique to Europe, but it is emerging in many other geographies. Each area is looking at its own solutions, as non-EU markets have very different characteristics. In the EU, the limited growth of telecom markets should be a reason for concern.

The Commission proposal of a Declaration on digital rights and principles⁵ already commits the EU to *“developing adequate frameworks so that all market actors benefiting from the digital transformation assume their social responsibilities and make a fair and proportionate contribution to the costs of public goods, services and infrastructures, for the benefit of all Europeans”*.

We understand that the Commission might launch a public consultation to investigate the possibility for the largest online platforms to contribute to the costs of Gigabit networks; in this context, we welcome the potential legislative initiative announced by Commissioner Breton to

¹ [Digital Economy and Society Index \(DESI\) 2022 | Shaping Europe's digital future \(europa.eu\)](#)

² [Sandvine, Mobile Internet Phenomena Report 2022](#)

³ [Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ [Should Google, Meta and Netflix help pay for telecoms networks? Why not, says EU's Vestager | Euronews](#)

⁵ [Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles | Shaping Europe's digital future \(europa.eu\)](#)

address the identified shortcomings. In a time when climbing inflation puts pressure on consumers and businesses, a fair and transparent contribution from all the relevant market players, i.e. the largest traffic generators, to the Digital Decade connectivity targets has become all the more urgent.

We therefore call on the Commission to swiftly gather information from all stakeholders that will help the Commission take action to effectively ensure all the relevant market players, such as the largest traffic generators, contribute in a fair and proportionate manner to the development and sustainability of Gigabit networks in Europe as a matter of priority. The new measures should ensure full consistency with all the core principles of the Open Internet Regulation that would remain fully applicable, and should fit within the broader regulatory framework for telecommunications and online digital markets such as the European Electronic Communications Code and the Digital Markets Act. This fairer contribution should not be discriminatory against specific companies, but reflect the role and impact of those generating the most traffic in the network. Finally, to benefit the whole internet ecosystem and its users, this additional contribution should clearly serve the goal of improving the quality and the capacity of digital network infrastructure to the benefit of all European users in the connected society of tomorrow.

2030 is tomorrow: there is the urgent need to act based on our shared commitment to the twin transition and to Europe's digital sovereignty. We parliamentarians stand ready to work with you to continue promoting fairness in digital markets and sustainable investment in high-speed networks, so that Gigabit connectivity becomes a reality for all European citizens and businesses.

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