



A digital agenda for Europe

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The digital economy is growing seven times faster than the rest of the economy, it is adding 100,000 jobs each year. If not for the digital economy then the EU would be in recession. So we have to take our digital opportunities. That is why I am pushing forward with a 10 point plan for better broadband in 2013, and a blueprint for a telecoms single market.

The overriding theme is that we need to take risks and push ourselves. There is too much risk-avoiding in Brussels and in national capitals and that has to stop or Europe has no future.

I refuse to just tick off the list of actions we created in 2010. I don't want that, that is lazy and Europe can't afford laziness. This is a personal challenge for me. I am 71; I don't have to do the job I do but I do it because I want to! I want to because I am inspired by the young generation, and I want them to see the value of Europe too.

Europe needs this. The seven actions we proposed at the end of last year revolve around broadband and getting the economy moving and these are the areas I want to focus on in the next couple of years:

- My first priority is creating a new and stable broadband regulatory environment. Some of it we have already started - like stabilising regulation for broadband through to 2020. Later this year we will make that concrete, with a package of 10 actions just on broadband. It needs to be seen as a package, and it's a balanced package. The markets have given positive reactions so far.
- Secondly I want to speed up the roll out of digital services, especially their cross border interoperability, in areas such as eIDs and eSignatures, business mobility, eJustice, electronic health records and cultural platforms such as Europeana. eProcurement alone could save €100 billion per year and eGovernment can reduce the costs of administration by 15-20 %.
- Thirdly, we need to work together with Europe's digital businesses, governments and our training and education sectors to address the skills gap in the ICT sector. The *Grand Coalition on Digital Skills and Jobs*, which was launched earlier this month, aims to take practical steps to try and fill the estimated 900,000 ICT jobs going unfilled by 2015 due to a lack of skilled personnel.

- Cyber security is another key issue. People have to trust the networks they use in this digital era. A Proposed EU cyber-security strategy and Directive adopted earlier this year aim to establish a common minimum level of preparedness at national level, including an online platform to prevent and counter cross-border cyber incidents, and incident reporting requirements.
- We also need to address the EU's copyright framework. Modernising copyright is key to achieving the digital single market and the Commission will work towards a solution to copyright-related issues through a structured stakeholder dialogue in 2013.
- Another priority for me is to accelerate cloud computing through public sector buying power, through pilot actions in the *European Cloud Partnership*. This partnership harnesses public buying power to help create the world's largest cloud-enabled ICT market, dismantling current national fortresses and negative consumer perceptions.
- Lastly, I want to launch a new electronics industrial strategy and the Commission will propose an industrial strategy for micro- and nano-electronics, to increase Europe's attractiveness for investment in design and production as well as growing its global market share.

But instead of just spending more money or writing more laws, in most cases in the digital world, you can do more and quicker by just bringing people together. This is why we run so many dialogues - like with copyright - or build coalitions - like for kids online.

You need to see the *Digital Agenda* as a network of networks. Like the web entrepreneur conferences, the village broadband companies, the 'Campuseros' from Campus Party, the Digital Champions, the open source community, my 60,000 followers on Twitter.

You will see why I think the digital world is limitless and why I think that we can create industrial success in Europe by thinking across borders.

When it comes to jobs, I want you to know that the internet creates jobs. Probably four million if we implemented the whole *Digital Agenda*. But more than that, I want Europeans

to see that creating your own job is sexy - and the internet makes it possible. We need more people brave enough to take that opportunity. I don't have the words to describe the energy I get working with Europe's web entrepreneurs and the activists in the digital world and I am determined to bring their voices into European debates and to share that energy. We are all looking for reasons for hope at the moment. If you want hope, go look at these entrepreneurs.

Their ideas for policy too can be excellent. France's *'Les Pigeons'* group told me, and rightly so, that we shouldn't be talking about cutting the Erasmus programme at Council summits - we should be adding an "*entrepreneur's Erasmus programme*" instead!

Whatever the specific ideas, we need to pay attention to the momentum of this movement. This energy is what Europe needs, and what the *Digital Agenda* works to provide.

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I will work with every breath in 2013 and 2014 to give our young people, our entrepreneurs, the conditions and incentives they deserve, so we can all share in their achievements. ■