



NEELIE KROES

# Digital Agenda for Europe -

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are no longer luxuries and the policy that supports them is no longer a special niche for experts. Today ICTs and ICT policy is for everyone. ICT investments are the backbone of wealth creation - contributing to half of Europe's productivity growth. They are used to improve how we do business, banking, shopping and how we travel. They save us time and money and offer us new ways to connect and grow. ICT is also an €850 billion a year industry for Europe - on which millions of jobs now depend and where many more could be created in future years.

“ ICT is also an €850 billion a year industry for Europe - on which millions of jobs now depend and where many more could be created in future years ”

This is an amazing situation - ICT has delivered all of this without us exploiting its full potential. Just imagine if we could really harness that potential.

For example, did you know that only about one third of Greeks have access to a broadband connection? This is barely half the EU average. Greece could and should have better access. This means two things - firstly, Greeks stand to gain a lot from the Digital Agenda for Europe, the European Commission's plan to maximise the social and economic impact of ICTs,

and secondly Greek industry and Greek authorities must make greater efforts to reverse this situation.

If even half the Greeks who have never been online went online, another 3 million people would be connected, giving them new opportunities to improve their daily lives and helping the Greek economy as they do it.

But apart from getting more people to start using better internet networks, what are the main priority areas of the Digital Agenda for Europe??

## Digital Single Market

We have spent decades building up Europe's Single Market - and now it's time to ensure that this fully includes the concept of the digital Single Market. We have to move on from the patchwork of 27 national digital markets. This situation holds back e-commerce, limits our online music and TV and film markets and much more! The internet is borderless and our rules and support for our digital market need to match that. To help deliver this, the Commission intends to open up access to legal online content by

simplifying copyright clearance, making electronic payments and invoicing easier by completing existing projects like the Single European Payment Area, and creating an EU-wide online dispute resolution system for eCommerce transactions, so that consumers and providers know where to go if things go wrong.

## ICT standards and interoperability

The internet is a great example of the power of technical interoperability. We should make sure that all future ICT products and services have these advantages built-in. This is the most effective way to encourage people to create, combine and innovate. Good and open standards give consumers the best choices and help others to innovate so that we keep on getting these choices. Indeed, the Digital Agenda can only take off if its different parts and applications are interoperable and based on open standards.

## Trust and security

In Scandinavian countries more than 80% of the population use online banking whereas only 13% of Greeks do so. One third of all Europeans think that their payment may not be secure and that prevents them from buying online.

All Europeans need to feel confident and safe online to embrace technology and the possibilities that it offers. This ranges from protecting against identity theft to large-scale cyber-attacks, including a network of Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs).

# the road to our wealth



We will also strengthen the rules for individuals' privacy and personal data protection. The Commission will boost its efforts against offensive and harmful content online to make sure that children are safe.

## **Fast and ultra fast internet**

As I mentioned earlier, all of Europe needs to have access to broadband internet. This is essential to Europe's economic and social well-being. These connections can create educational and employment opportunities, can improve living standards and give

“ The Commission intends to open up access to legal online content by simplifying copyright clearance, making electronic payments and invoicing easier ”

everyone better access to online public services. So our goal is the first class internet that Europeans deserve. Greek businesses have to compete against Asian businesses with internet access 100 times faster. Greek students shouldn't miss out on opportunities because they don't have the same access to knowledge as others. Greek people living on islands and in remote areas should not suffer because of a lack of investment. These are all the reasons why we need to take action now on faster broadband connections.

NEELIE KROES

## Digital Agenda for Europe - the road to our wealth



“ We also invite EU countries to double their annual total public spending on ICT R&D by 2020 to €11 billion ”

The European Commission wants to ensure that by 2013 all European citizens can have basic broadband access and that by 2020 everyone can

have access to high speed internet of 30 Mbps or above. By 2020 50% or more of European households should also be subscribing to ultra-

fast internet of above 100 Mbps. On 20 September the Commission made three complementary announcements to achieve these targets, including a recommendation on how to encourage ‘next generation’ access a new radio spectrum policy to allow technologies like wireless broadband the chance to develop and how best to encourage private and public investment in fast and ultra-fast broadband networks.

## Research and innovation in ICT

ICTs have completely changed the way we live and this progress has often been possible because of detailed and risky research. To continue making progress we must continue investing, even in times of limited resources.

Indeed, that is exactly what our competitors are doing, meaning that Europe is now spending only 40% of what the US does on ICT R&D. We will seek to maintain the pace of yearly increases of 20% of the ICT R&D budget, at least until 2013. We also invite EU countries to double their annual total public spending on ICT R&D by 2020 to €11 billion. Finally we will simplify bureaucratic procedures to make it easier for young researchers and small and medium-sized businesses to access R&D funding.

## Digital skills and accessible online services for all Europeans

I want the 150 million Europeans who have never used the internet - including about 5 million Greeks - to have the skills and competence they need to be part of the digital era. In addition, Europe is suffering from a growing professional ICT skills shortage and could lack the competent practitioners to fill as many as 700,000 IT jobs by 2015.

The Digital Agenda proposes a series of actions to increase the ICT skills and competences of Europeans. We want to bridge the skills gap through greater coordination of ICT skills initiatives at Member State level,



“ We want to bridge the skills gap through greater coordination of ICT skills initiatives at Member State level, especially by proposing digital literacy and competences as a priority of the European Social Fund ”

especially by proposing digital literacy and competences as a priority of the European Social Fund.

Finally, for the people already using their ICT skills in the technology sector, the Digital Agenda will help recognise the competences of ICT practitioners EU-wide.

## Using the potential of ICT to benefit society

We need to invest in the smart use of technology to find solutions to some of Europe's biggest problems: high energy consumption, pollution, ageing citizens. The Digital Agenda aims to boost the use of energy saving ICT technologies, such as highly efficient lighting systems and smart meters, to help Europe meet its 2020 climate and energy goals and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2050.

## Creating a real Digital Movement

No one government or company or community that can achieve these results on their own. It will take the joint efforts of all of us - citizens, businesses and public authorities. We need to work together to achieve the results that we want, thus contributing to the competitiveness of our economy and brighter future for all of us. I hope you will join me in this effort. Share your ideas, your energy and your investment today! 

Ms. Neelie Kroes is Vice President of the European Commission and European Digital Agenda Commissioner.