

The Digital Agenda

Published by the European Commission on 19 May 2010, the Digital Agenda aims to contribute significantly to economic growth in the European Union and to spread the benefits of the digital age across all strata of society. A European vision of information and communication technology (ICT) is critically important to the European economy since half of Europe's productivity growth in the last 15 years can be attributed to the use of ICT. Furthermore, this trend will almost certainly continue to grow and strengthen in the future.

The European Digital Agenda (EDA)

The EDA aims to harness a digital single market to create sustainable, economic and social benefits based on fast and ultra-fast web applications. The Digital Agenda should yield many benefits, including smoother electronic payments and electronic invoicing, swift distribution of telemedicine and energy-efficient lighting.

7 priority action areas are outlined in the European Digital Agenda:

- the completion of a digital single market
- the enhancement of inter-operability
- reinforcement of confidence in and security of the Internet
- improvement in the speed of Internet access
- an increase in investment in research and development
- an improvement in digital awareness
- the use of ICT to tackle social problems such as climate change and the ageing population

These seven priority action areas will be shaped and implemented via some 100 follow-up activities (including 31 legislative items). Developing the Digital Agenda action items is one of the activities the Belgian EU Presidency will pursue, with a particular focus on two legislative initiatives:

- approval of the European radio spectrum strategy
- the regulation on network and information security, coupled with a new mandate from ENISA (the European Network and Information Security Agency)

The European Digital Agenda (EDA) and the Europe 2020 strategy

The Europe 2020 strategy, which aims to deliver better prospects for the European economy, builds on the results of the Lisbon strategy and indicates how recovery can be stimulated following the crisis and how a new crisis can be prevented. There are three central points to this: knowledge as added value, opportunities in a society which does not exclude anyone and the creation of a competitive, greener network economy.

The Europe 2020 strategy for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth is built around seven core initiatives, including the European Digital Agenda, which was launched as the first initiative.

ICT and the European Economy

The EU needs a European Digital Agenda in order to create a true single market for the Internet, so that consumers can benefit from competitive prices in other Member States and SMEs can reach larger markets. Internet access and Internet skills are now becoming essential to a full everyday life. Preventing people from missing out on the digital world is a key aspect of a non-exclusionary society.

The ICT sector already directly creates 5% of European GDP, with a market value of €660 billion, but it contributes even more to the general growth in productivity (20% directly from the ICT sector and 30% from ICT investments). This is primarily due to the high levels of dynamism and innovation inherent in the sector and the role played by the sector in influencing other sectors and their working methods. At the same time the social effect of ICT has become significant. The lifestyle of European citizens has changed significantly as a result of the fact that over 250 million people in Europe use the Internet daily and own a mobile phone.

Calendar of events

27-29 September 2010

ICT Conference (Brussels)

28-29 October 2010

European Council (Brussels)

2-3 December 2010

Telecommunications Council (Brussels)

16-17 December 2010

European Council (Brussels)