Europe 2020: Bridging the Digital Divide
Securing Equal Access to High-Speed Internet

Wednesday 21st January 2015
Thon Hotel Brussels City Centre
Brussels
Overview

As part of the Europe 2020 strategy, fast and ultra-fast Internet access is a priority of the Digital Agenda for Europe. The Agenda has set ambitious objectives for broadband infrastructure development, specifically to provide basic broadband to all Europeans by 2013 and to ensure that by 2020 all EU citizens have access to much higher internet speeds and 50% or more of European households subscribe to internet connections above 100Mbps. In October last year, thanks to the pan-EU availability of satellite broadband, the EU Commission's targets for broadband coverage in Europe were met, with fixed line services available to 96% of EU population, mobile broadband bringing coverage to 99.4% and satellite bringing it to 100%.

Although much progress has been made over the past few years to improve European connectivity, there is still work to be done until every citizen and business is connected to sufficient broadband infrastructures. For the EU, the next and ultimate step will be to close the digital divide, deploy ultra fast broadband everywhere in Europe and bring the digital single market by 2015 in order to fully enjoy the benefits offered by ICT and keep up with international competitors.

To overcome investment barriers, infrastructure deployment costs must be lowered across the EU and Member States investment plans should be facilitated. The economic benefits of broadband are now undeniable, with the rise of new online services such as the cloud and connected TV which require high speed coverage, and figures showing that a 10% increase in broadband penetration can result in a 1-1.5% increase in the GDP annually and 1.5% labour productivity gains.

Obstacles remain, however, with the majority of broadband funding from Connecting Europe Facility being reduced from over €9bn to €1bn to support pan European digital projects. The European Commission has adopted revised guidelines (December 2012) for the application of EU state aid rules to the broadband sector, which will assist Member States in achieving the objectives of the EU Digital Agenda.

In order to provide better and open access to the internet for all Europeans, further development of broadband policy also needs to take into account not only the absorption of the digital divide, but the protection of the net neutrality principle. Therefore, it is necessary to tackle proposals which prevent users from freely accessing content online, and to ensure transparency and regulatory certainty for citizens, operators and all key stakeholders.

This timely international symposium provides an invaluable opportunity to discuss how to overcome existing barriers to secure equal access to high-speed broadband across Europe. Public Policy Exchange welcomes the participation of all key partners, responsible authorities and stakeholders. The symposium will support the exchange of ideas and encouraged delegates to engage in thought-provoking topical debate.

Why Attend?

- Gain insights into EU initiatives and latest developments to meet the Digital Agenda for Europe targets
- Explore innovative projects providing EU citizens with better, faster broadband coverage
- Analyse existing solutions to tackle the digital divide between urban and disadvantaged areas, and share new strategies
- Discuss the need to ensure maximum protection of the net neutrality principle and the removal of all free access barriers to online content

Who Should Attend?

- Local Authorities
- Internet Providers
- Mobile Broadband Providers
- Licensing Officers
- Programme Managers
- Project Managers
- Cable Companies
- FTTP Companies
- IT Experts
- ICT Companies
- ICT Consultancies
- Authors
- Executive Directors
- IP Law Experts
- Copyright Law Experts
- Net Neutrality Experts
- FTTP Experts
- Media Experts
- Internet and E-Commerce Experts
- National Governmental Organisations
- Legal Advisers
- Local and Regional Government Departments and Bodies
- Regulatory Bodies
- Third Sector Practitioners
- Private Sectors Employers
- Public Sector Employers
- Campaigning Organisations
- Sensory-Disabled People Associations
- Academics

Venue and Accommodation

Thon Hotel Brussels City Centre
Avenue du Boulevard 17
1210 Brussels
Belgium

Access to reliable and affordable higher broadband speeds of 30Mbps and 50 Mbps are essential for Europe's economic development and for the next generation of digital products and services like Connected Television, eHealth, Cloud Computing and Connected Cars.”

- EU Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes, October 2013
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Programme

09:15  Registration and Morning Refreshments
10:00  Chair’s Welcome and Opening Remarks
10:10  Providing Equal Access to High-Speed Internet in Europe – Success and Challenges
  • Digital Agenda for Europe 2020: Fast and Ultra-Fast Broadband Internet Connection for All European Citizens and Businesses
  • Assessing the Positive Impact of High-Speed Broadband on Competitiveness, Productivity and Growth
  • Lessons Learnt from the 2013 Targets: Satellite-based Broadband Coverage and Upgrade to Fibre-Optic Broadband
10:40  First Round of Discussions
11:10  Morning Coffee Break
11:30  Responding to Europe's Broadband Investment Needs
  • Discussing Current Figures and Needs at European Level
  • The Economic Case for Fostering Innovation and Investment in Broadband Infrastructures
  • Ensuring Smart Financial Support for Broadband Development at National Level
  • Keeping up with New Services: Cloud Computing Connected TV and Internet of Things
12:00  Second Round of Discussions
12:30  Networking Lunch
13:30  Broadband Coverage in Disadvantaged Areas - Bridging the Divide
  • Broadband For All: Has Europe Closed the Divide?
  • Ensuring Faster Network Growth in Disadvantaged Areas
  • Insights from ENGAGE Project: Delivering High Speed Broadband Networks and Services Throughout Rural Europe
  • Promoting the Benefits of Broadband Services in Rural and Suburban Communities
14:00  Third Round of Discussions
14:30  Afternoon Coffee Break
14:50  Net Neutrality and Broadband Access - Guaranteeing Transparency and Quality
  • Meeting Standard Transparency Requirements in Traffic Management
  • Distinguishing Network and User Protection, and Deliberate Traffic Congestion Practices
  • Tackling Blocking Practices- The Cases of P2P, Streaming and VOIP Bandwidth Throttling
  • Consumer Protection - Eliminating the Discrepancy Between Advertised and Actual Delivery Speeds
15:20  Fourth Round of Discussions
15:50  Chair’s Summary and Closing Comments

Event Details

Date:  Wednesday 21st January 2015
Time:  10:00am – 4:30pm
Venue:  Thon Hotel Brussels City Centre, Brussels

Speakers Include

- Anna Krzyzanowska, Head of Unit, DG CONNECT, European Commission
- Jean-Dimas Malot, Deputy Director, Nièvre Numérique
- Clive Peckham, European Project Manager, Nièvre Numérique
- Dr. Harald Gruber, Head of Division, Digital Economy and Education, Projects Directorate, European Investment Bank
- Raegan MacDonald, European Policy Manager, Access
- Jens-Henrik Jeppesen, Director, European Affairs, Center for Democracy & Technology
- Maryant Fernández, Advocacy Manager, EDRi
- Bernd Becker, President, EuroCloud Europe a.s.b.l.

Forthcoming Events

- Free from Fear, Free from Pain: Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation in Europe
  20th January 2015
- eHealth in Europe: Empowering Patients and Offering Better Connected Healthcare Services
  27th January 2015
- Occupational Health and Safety in Europe: Fostering Healthy Workplaces for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth
  24th February 2015

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