Bridging the Digital Divide:
Ensuring High-Speed and Quality Internet in Europe Beyond 2020

Tuesday 19th January 2016
Thon Hotel Brussels City Centre, Brussels
Overview

In the era of fast and ultra-fast internet, the European Union has set ambitious objectives in order to keep pace with world leaders such as South Korea and Japan. As part of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Digital Agenda drafted by the European Commission aims at providing download rates of at least 30 Mbps for all its citizens across Europe as well as to reach a target of 50% of European households subscribing to internet connections above 100 Mbps by 2020. The Commission's Communication on a Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe (May 2015) reinforces the role of high-speed, secure and affordable digital networks as the main driver for digital products and services to flourish.

Much progress has been made over the last decade and important targets have been reached – such as ensuring basic broadband access to the entire EU area by 2013. However, several key issues still need to be addressed until every citizen and business is connected to sufficient broadband infrastructures. To overcome investment barriers, infrastructure deployment costs must be lowered across the EU and Member States investment plans 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.

On September 2015, the European Commission launched a Public Consultation on the ‘Needs for Internet Speed and Quality beyond 2020’ to assess and comprehend the existing barriers better and determine ways to develop policies helping the investors to deploy connectivity networks and to ensure that all users can take advantage of the digital economy and society. The Commission also adopted new instruments for a future oriented broadband policy with President’s Juncker announcement of an ‘Investment Plan for Europe’ – around 315 billion Euros over the next three years (2015-2017) – which will strongly focus on digital infrastructures and broadband. Furthermore, Juncker’s plan encompasses the creation of a new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), designed to finance speed broadband and other digital networks in 2014-2020 including rural areas.

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 encourage delegates to engage in thought-provoking topical debate.

Why Attend?

- Assess achievements and persisting challenges of the EU’s Digital Agenda targets
- Evaluate the need of investments in broadband services to fully exploit the potential of the European Digital Economy
- Analyse existing solutions to tackle the digital divide in rural and disadvantaged areas
- 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

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## Programme

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<tr>
<td>09:15</td>
<td>Registration and Morning Refreshments</td>
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<td>10:00</td>
<td>Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks</td>
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| 10:10 | Europe's Digital Agenda Targets – Evaluating Successes and Future Challenges  
• Digital Agenda for Europe 2020: Assessing Broadband Roll-out Progress  
• Discussing the EC's Consultation on the Needs for Internet Speed and Quality  
• Evaluating the Potential of High-Speed Broadband on Competitiveness, Productivity and Growth  
• Recommendations for Future Policy Action |
| 10:40 | First Round of Discussions                                               |
| 11:10 | Morning Coffee Break                                                     |
| 11:30 | Investing in High Speed Broadband and Digital Infrastructures             
• Discussing Current Figures and Needs at European Level  
• Connecting Europe Facility: Promoting an Efficient Flow of Private and Public Investments for Broadband Networks and Digital Service Infrastructures  
• Ensuring Smart Financial Support for Broadband Development at National Level  
• Maximising the Potential of the Digital Economy: Investing in Cloud Computing, Big Data Tools and Internet of Things |
| 12:00 | Second Round of Discussions                                              |
| 12:30 | Networking Lunch                                                         |
| 13:30 | Bridging Europe's Digital Divide: Ensuring Coverage in Rural and Disadvantaged Areas  
• Current State of Affairs: Has Europe Closed the Divide?  
• Promoting the Benefits of Broadband Services in Rural and Disadvantaged Areas  
• Rethinking Structural and Rural Development Tools  
• Sharing Knowledge and Best Practices |
| 14:00 | Third Round of Discussions                                               |
| 14:30 | Afternoon Coffee Break                                                   |
| 14:50 | The Net Neutrality Debate: Striking the Right Balance between Consumers Protection and Broadband Carriers Investment Returns  
• Tackling IP Address and Peering Discrimination: Promoting Anti-Blocking Practices  
• Should Broadband Carriers act as the Internet Gatekeepers? |
| 15:20 | Fourth Round of Discussions                                              |
| 15:50 | Chair's Summary and Closing Comments                                     |
| 16:00 | Networking Reception                                                     |
| 16:30 | Close                                                                    |

* Please note that the programme is subject to change without notice *

## Event Details

**Date:** Tuesday 19th January 2016  
**Time:** 10:00am – 4:30pm  
**Venue:** Thon Hotel Brussels City Centre, Brussels

## Speakers Include:

- **Harald Gruber**, Head of Division, Digital Economy and Education Projects Directorate, European Investment Bank  
- **Benedikte Tryhou**, Project Manager International Trade & Innovation at Voka, Chamber of Commerce West-Flanders  
- **Anna Krzyzanowska**, Head of Broadband Unit, DG CONNECT, European Commission  
- **Ana Pesovic**, Vice President, FTTH Council Europe  
- **Frederic Donck**, Director, European Regional Bureau, Internet Society  
- **John Chevers**, Chief Business Development Officer, GEANT  
- **Olivier Braet**, Senior Researcher at iMinds-SMIT Research Centre, Vrije Universiteit Brussels  
- **Arthur van der Wees**, Managing director of Arthur’s Legal, Member of the European Committee Cloud Select Industry Group, Member of the EC’s Alliance IoT Innovation (AIOTI)

## Forthcoming Events

- **Unlocking the Potential of Mobile Health in Europe: Removing Barriers to the Empowerment of Citizens**  
  20th January 2016  
- **Cultural and Creative Industries in Europe: Promoting Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth**  
  21st January 2016  
- **Free from Fear, Free from Pain: Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation in Europe**  
  27th January 2016

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