

Press release | 23 February 2023 | Brussels

Commission presents new initiatives, laying the ground for the transformation of the connectivity sector in the EU

Today, the Commission has presented a set of actions aimed to make Gigabit connectivity available to all citizens and businesses across the EU by 2030, in line with the objectives of [Europe's Digital Decade](#), and to enable the transformation of the connectivity sector in the EU.

Today's initiatives on Connectivity consist of:

- First, the Commission has adopted a **proposal for a 'Gigabit Infrastructure Act'**, a regulation that will put forward new rules to enable faster, cheaper and more effective rollout of Gigabit networks across the EU.
- Second, it has published a **draft Gigabit Recommendation**, which seeks to provide guidance to National Regulatory Authorities on the conditions of access to telecom networks of operators with significant market power, in order to incentivise faster switch-off of legacy technologies and accelerated Gigabit networks deployment.
- Third, the Commission has **launched an exploratory consultation on the future of the connectivity sector and its infrastructure**, to gather views on how

increasing demands for connectivity and technological advances may affect the future developments and needs.

Gigabit Infrastructure Act

Given the increasing uptake of advanced digital technologies, there is an urgent need for more bandwidth at faster speeds to enable smarter, more flexible and more innovative services for citizens, businesses and key public sectors, powered by the development and use of technologies, such as cloud, artificial intelligence (AI), data spaces, virtual reality and the metaverse and in which European citizens enjoy their digital rights. In this context, **the Gigabit Infrastructure Act responds to the growing demand for faster, more reliable, data-intense connectivity**. It will replace the Broadband Cost Reduction Directive (2014).

The Gigabit Infrastructure Act aims to overcome the challenge of slow and costly deployment of the underlying physical infrastructure sustaining advanced Gigabit networks. It will reduce 'red tape' and the costs and administrative burden associated with the deployment of Gigabit networks. Among others, it will simplify and digitalise permitting procedures. The new regulation will also enhance the coordination of civil works between network operators to deploy the underlying physical infrastructure, such as ducts and masts, and ensure that the relevant actors obtain access to it. Such works represent up to 70% of the costs of network deployment. Moreover, all new or majorly renovated buildings, except in justified cases, shall be equipped with fibre so that citizens can enjoy the fastest connectivity services. Thanks to the new rules, operators will be able to swiftly deploy networks through simplified, digitised and less costly procedures.

It is now for the European Parliament and the Council to examine the proposed Regulation. Upon adoption of the Commission's proposal by the co-legislators, the new rules will be directly applicable in all the Member States.

Gigabit Recommendation

The draft Gigabit Recommendation focuses on providing guidance to National regulatory authorities (NRAs) about the conditions for accessing the networks of those operators who have significant market power. The draft Recommendation aims to ensure that all operators can access such existing network infrastructure, when appropriate. In this way, it can ensure an adequate regulatory environment, incentivise the switch-off of legacy technologies without undue delay, i.e. within 2 to 3 years, and foster fast Gigabit network deployment, for example by promoting pricing flexibility for access to regulated networks, while enabling sustainable competition. The measures will also contribute to consumers enjoying the benefits of a single market for electronic communications in Europe – better services provided through high quality networks at affordable prices.

The draft Recommendation has been sent to the Body of European Regulators (BEREC) for a consultation, with a duration of two months. After taking into account the opinion of BEREC, the Commission will adopt its final Recommendation. The Gigabit Recommendation will replace the Access Recommendations, consisting of the [Next Generation Access Recommendation](#) (2010) and the [Non-discrimination and Costing Methodology Recommendation](#) (2013).

Consultation on the future of the telecoms sector

Today, the Commission has launched a broad exploratory consultation on the future of the connectivity sector and its infrastructure. **The aim is to gather views on the changing technological and market landscape and how it may affect the sector for electronic communications.**

In particular, it seeks to identify the types of infrastructure needed for Europe to keep ahead of transformative technological developments and to lead its digital transformation in the coming years. The consultation also seeks stakeholders' views on how to ensure that the investments required to roll out such infrastructure are timely mobilised across the Union. In this context, the exploratory

consultation is part of an open dialogue with all stakeholders about the potential need for all players benefitting from the digital transformation to fairly contribute to the investments in connectivity infrastructure. This is a complex issue which requires a comprehensive analysis of the underlying facts and figures, before deciding on the need for further action. The Commission is strongly committed to protecting a neutral and open internet.

Finally, the consultation covers the issue on how to ensure affordability of connectivity for consumers and how to progress towards a more integrated Single Market for the connectivity sector.

All interested organisations, businesses and citizens are invited to complete the survey within 12 weeks. The deadline for submitting a contribution is 19 May 2023. The Commission will report on the results. Based on the outcome of the consultation, it will consider the most appropriate actions for the future of the electronic communications sector.

Background

The EU has taken action in a range of areas to improve connectivity, which brings significant socio-economic benefits, stimulating jobs and growth, as well as the development of innovative products, services and applications for citizens and businesses across the EU. It has put an **end to [roaming charges](#)** across the EU and has launched the **[WiFi4EU initiative](#)** that funded the setup of free Wi-Fi hotspots in local communities.

The EU also provides funding, develops technical guidance and brings together experts to support public administrations and businesses working to **improve network coverage and introduce [5G networks](#) across Europe**. The Commission **[adopted revised Guidelines on State aid for broadband networks](#)**. It has launched a major research initiative to develop 6G networks, the '**[Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking](#)**', to set out the strategy and the tools to **develop technology capacities for 6G systems**.

The ambition of the **[Digital Decade](#)** is that by 2030 all European households are covered by a Gigabit network and

all populated areas are covered by networks of at least 5G performance.

The EU pro-investment regulatory framework for telecoms markets is set out, in particular, in the [European Electronic Communications Code](#), the [2020 Relevant Markets Recommendation](#) and the [Connectivity Toolbox](#).