



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on future networks and the internet

*2907th TRANSPORT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS and ENERGY Council meeting
Brussels, 27 November 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. WELCOMES

- a) the Commission communication of 29 September 2008 "Future networks and the Internet";
- b) the Commission communication of 25 September 2008 on the second periodic review of the scope of universal service in electronic communications networks and services in accordance with Article 15 of Directive 2002/22/EC ;
- c) the Commission communication of 27 May 2008 presenting an action plan for the transition to the IPv6 protocol.

2. RECALLS

- a) the conclusions of the European Council of December 2006, encouraging the March 2008 European Council to review the primary challenges raised by next-generation networks;
- b) the conclusions of the European Council of 14 March 2008 recommending much greater use of online infrastructures and broadband Internet and encouraging Member States to set, within the framework of national reform programmes, ambitious national objectives concerning households' access to such services;
- c) the mid-term review of the i2010 strategy and the conclusions of the Council of 12 June 2008, granting strategic importance to the transition to next-generation networks, for competitive reasons and for an increased use of ICT in Europe;

P R E S S

3. RECOGNISES

- a) the remarkable vitality of information technologies and the fundamental role that they play in the future of both our economies and our societies, in particular their contribution to increased European productivity and competitiveness;
- b) the growing presence of the Internet, which has, for a decade now, played a major economic and social role, and served as a space for cultural identity, technological innovation, economic activity and creation of value;
- c) that future Internet developments, whether gradual or disruptive, and whether they concern the Internet's infrastructure, services or applications, represent major opportunities for Europe, requiring ambitious research and development work, similar to the programmes engaged by other regions or third countries;
- d) that the arrival of new trends, particularly the development of next-generation networks offers significantly higher bandwidth and new possibilities for use;
- e) that users' desires for mobility and ubiquitous access to services of the digital economy represent a wide-ranging trend, and that, as a result, the deployment of a very high-speed mobile and wireless network, as well as very high-speed fixed network, is a major issue;
- f) the potential of ICT to help address climate and environmental changes;
- g) that although some EU countries have extensive broadband coverage, full broadband coverage of the EU territory has not yet been achieved, and that coverage is unequal both among and within Member States ;
- h) that the Internet of Things is poised to develop and to give rise to important possibilities for developing new services but that it also represents risks in terms of the protection of individual privacy;
- i) that certain advanced services, like these based on RFID and mobile contactless services, have significant potential in terms of both growth and added value;
- j) that the protection of private data is a legitimately increasing concern within the EU related to the introduction of new technologies and services, including geolocation services.
- k) that stability, safety and resilience of the Internet are decisive factors for forthcoming developments.

4. UNDERLINES

- a) that the EU must play an active role in facilitating deployment of next-generation Internet and networks, in order to foster afterwards a large diffusion of uses;
- b) that the deployment of high speed fixed and mobile networks has a strategic importance; European competitiveness, a strong innovation capacity and the development of next generation services depend on it;
- c) that in this context, the deployment of such networks must continue in order for the EU to reach the levels of the most advanced countries in the world;
- d) that this deployment must be given impetus by encouraging a concerted European approach, which nevertheless takes national diversity into account;
- e) that a proper balance between stimulation of competition and innovation and encouragement of private investment, taking into account the costs of civil engineering works, will also contribute to this goal;
- f) that, when it comes to mobile very high-speed networks, Europe's position is currently strong with respect to equipment and terminal manufacturers and first tier operators, and that in such a context, the development of mobile very high-speed broadband is a European growth vector;
- g) that the deployment of very high-speed networks induces an increased risk of "geographical digital divides" and that the goal of encouraging an inclusive digital economy must remain a priority in the i2010 strategy;

- h) that open and non discriminatory access to the Internet should be promoted in order to ensure effective competition and an innovation-friendly environment;
- i) that the rapid deployment of the IPV6 protocol is of importance for the future growth of the Internet;
- j) that it is essential to prevent cybercrime, in particular by educating and protecting young Internet users, where the Safer Internet Programme and related activities play very important role;
- k) that regarding protection of privacy, empowering the user is necessary to take informed decisions and more generally, user empowerment is vital to ensure adoption of new technologies, applications and services ;
- l) that mobile contactless services represent an opportunity for growth and will offer users true added value in terms of payment, identification, and ticket purchase, provided that this comes with actions to promote interoperability, consumer trust and protection of privacy;
- m) that Internet of the future and these new networks have a clear potential to help Europe face societal challenges such as those posed by population ageing.

5. WELCOMES THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO

- a) up-date and summarize the conditions under which public financing may be used for very high-speed broadband infrastructure projects;
- b) adopt a recommendation providing guidance on the regulatory treatment of next-generation access networks in order to foster their efficient deployment and to promote non discriminatory access ;
- c) prepare a forward-looking strategy on the respect of privacy and trust in the context of a ubiquitous information society;
- d) consider public-private R&D partnerships concerning the Internet of the future, in compliance with the Bled Declaration of 31 March 2008;
- e) adopt a communication in 2009 on the Internet of Things, presenting architecture and governance issues and identifying a series of concrete actions to initiate;
- f) adopt a communication in 2009 on the protection of critical information infrastructure, addressing particularly global cooperation for long-term stability and resilience of the Internet.

6. INVITES MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO

- a) launch a reflection on how best to ensure territorial cohesion and to guarantee all citizens sufficient access to the information society;
- b) measure the progress of both fixed and mobile very high-speed broadband in the Member States through an agreed methodology and official data provided by Member States, when available, and to compare this progress with that of the most advanced third countries;
- c) encourage, as regards very high-speed broadband, exchange of best practices between Member States (regulators and national administrations) in order to identify the best measures to foster its deployment and exchange on their economic and technical models for providing coverage to sparsely-populated and/or non-profitable zones;
- d) make efforts, as regards mobile very high-speed broadband, to ensure that Member States have access to frequencies that can be adapted to future needs, and in this respect encourage close cooperation between Member States in the use of the digital dividend, based on the results of WRC-07 and the Council conclusions of 12 June 2008 ;
- e) encourage the emergence of harmonised and open international standards to meet needs of interoperability and roaming, and finally direct R&D efforts in favour of mobile services that encourage innovation, interoperability, openness and simplicity of systems and services;

- f) initiate, with respect to the Internet of the future, ambitious research programmes that will allow Europe to take an active part in the Internet's transformation and breakthrough changes;
- g) better structure and coordinate their efforts concerning the Internet of the future, in particular in the areas of R&D and standardisation, and collaborate with third countries who are excelling in this respect;
- h) encourage the creation of European test platforms based on open standards to serve as an essential tool for validating hypotheses, solutions and protocols for the Internet of the future;
- i) call upon European standards organizations to initiate and coordinate work with the aim of supporting the industry in this area;
- j) discuss the implementation of the action plan for a transition to the IPv6 protocol;
- k) with respect to the Internet of Things, deepen the reflection on the development of decentralised architectures and promoting a shared and decentralised network governance;
- l) launch discussions, in partnership with ENISA, on possible ways to improve the security and the resilience of the European Internet network;
- m) encourage R&D to develop technologies that improve security and privacy on a network basis;
- n) create an environment propitious for accelerating the development of advanced services within the EU, in particular, by favouring an ecosystem, based on open standards, that encourages development of mobile contactless services on a Europe-wide level and ensures coherence of regulatory frameworks governing the various stakeholders (telecom operators, banks, transport operators, etc.) and the interoperability of these services;
- o) continue to promote a market of competitive, rich and diversified digital content, in particular via electronic administration services;
- p) contribute to ensuring the confidentiality, security, privacy and ethical management of the data that will be exchanged on the Internet of Things, for example by promoting where appropriate the possibility of deactivating RFID chips or any other way which provides empowerment and user control;
- q) take into account the economic and societal impacts of new networks and the Internet of the future in the reflections on the post 2010 Lisbon strategy.

7. INVITES MEMBER STATES TO

- a) continue to foster favourable conditions for the deployment of infrastructures for very high-speed broadband access (both fixed and mobile);
- b) increase their cooperation, within the high-level group devoted to Internet governance, in order to improve their mutual understanding of issues of safety, privacy, resilience and governance;
- c) facilitate, with regard to mobile contactless services, dialogue between the various stakeholders (electronic communication operators and service providers), as currently done in several Member States.

8. ENCOURAGES ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO

- a) integrate, into the design of products and services, requirements for service quality, security, environmental protection and protection of personal data, aiming to improve users' trust and to accelerate the adoption and sustainability of these products and services;
- b) promote investments in the deployment of next generation access networks;
- c) participate in coordination efforts by public- and private-sphere stakeholders in order to achieve the level of security and trust to the Internet that is indispensable to its development and to enhancing measures to limit the risks linked to critical infrastructures;
- d) launch awareness raising and education programs for professionals and for individual users as well, covering the issues of advantages, security, protection and possible threats as regards the use of ICT;

- e) continue research efforts into the Internet of the future and strengthen European participation in international standardization organizations;
 - f) regarding Internet of things, deploy technologically neutral, open and interoperable solutions;
 - g) discuss the adoption of the IPv6 protocol by 2010, in compliance with the Commission's communication of 27 May 2008 concerning its deployment;
 - h) as regards mobile contactless services, develop joint projects bringing together companies, electronic communication operators and service providers (banks, transport companies, shops, etc.) around the technical aspects and the business model."
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