

Digital Single Market: A paradigm shift

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Date : 02/23/2015



European efforts to create a Digital Single Market mean much more than a usual work on finalisation of legislation. A comprehensive approach is needed to understand and unleash the benefits of a truly connected continent.

The key question nowadays is to understand the scale and the real impact of the digital revolution. The internet is a general purpose technology, as only some of the inventions in the history have been, and which – like Gutenberg’s or Bell’s discoveries – have completely changed the world.

We need to use a holistic approach not only in order to understand all aspects of digital changes, but also to prepare the adequate tools for a full creation and utilisation of all benefits of digital technologies.

It is important to stress the incredible impact of the European single market on many areas. The process of building the single market has provided the European economy with additional added value. The resulting harmonisation of rules simplified the legal framework for business and for consumers alike.

[Tweet "The idea of digital single market works as a multiplier"]

And it gives us the additional part of added value represented by the potentiality of the digital drivers that are present in all sectors of the economy.

Today we are not only seeing a massive development of the ICT sector – we are also experiencing an “ICT development” in all sectors and all branches of the economy. This amounts to a “double added value” deriving from the growth of digital factors in the modern world.

Those digital factors create new opportunities.

Firstly, this is based on a new phenomenon: data processing which builds the data driven economy. This changes the way we manufacture, increases the productivity, provides new ways of allocation of resources, help energy and transport efficiency, supports the smart cities development and opens the future of the internet of things.

As a result, we are confronted with a completely new economy: from the “connected car sector” – via the new model of neutral platforms delivering various types of content (defined as collection of goods and services) and provided in the fair way – to the “app economy” addressing everyday decisions of users and influencing their environment.

Secondly, it leads us to a new model of products and services, totally adjusted to our – as consumers – expectations and needs. That is the phenomenon of the personalisation. Everything can be personalised. But very often this requires the knowledge of our habits, individual needs, privacy.

Therefore, on the one hand there is the possibility of profiling our customs. On the other hand, we are starting to understand the process of monetisation of our privacy and at the same time we are defending “the digital I”.

This is the reason why we need to have the data and privacy protection regulation in place, where trust is as a fundamental background for the new digital economy.

Only by ensuring more trust we can build the right framework for the growth of new kinds of public services: the m-health in healthcare; new forms of teaching and dissemination of MOOCs influence in education; access to the open data (for re-using) and knowledge; and as far as the cultural activities are concerned, access to many goods thanks to the new European rules of copyright with respect to the authors and clear definition of the characteristic of the public domains.

It is obvious, that Big Data development, personalisation of products and services, data protection and digital security in the broad sense are all related to the problem of the access to the internet and the framework for global connectivity.

The connectivity is the third, great opportunity and should match networks and devices. We

need investments in the area of infrastructure tailored to the future requirements of a digital, fully connected economy. This means the necessity to consider systemic, structural incentives for European operators to finish their work on 4G, but also to start the preparation for 5G.

The internet is changing all aspects of our life: from the economic to the social and private. It changes our position as consumers, as producers, as workers (future robotisation and our skills), and also as citizens.

[Tweet "The internet represents today a most important way for refreshing and reinvigorating our democracy"]

A new concept of citizenship is taking shape, opening new possibilities for participatory democracy, by enabling online consultations, rendering the decision making processes more transparent and making the citizens a valuable source of knowledge for the public authorities.

This new model of shared democracy is a good background for the shared economy. But there is one more condition. It is easy to understand and to develop the bright side of the internet; it is difficult to understand and to stop its dark side.

The virtual terms of the internet are functioning in the real terms of the world. What is good should be named as good, but what is bad needs to be named as bad, with all the consequences: the clear rule of law, the respect for fundamental rights, the transparent tools for law enforcement measures.

The digital is challenging us. The new is the added value of the paradigm shift.

We have a unique opportunity to move from open, creative minds to open societies and via the open governments to an open, much more collaborative economy with new competitive advantages.

But it requires the awareness that European efforts to create the Digital Single Market mean now significantly more than a usual work on finalisation of legislation. "More" means a holistic approach which should bring this digital package to provide comprehensive results and benefits.

The way for the paradigm shift is: from a new technology to a new socio-economic model of development.

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