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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Ministerial debate on the future of a highly digitised Europe beyond 2020: "Boosting digital and economic competitiveness across the Union and digital cohesion" - Policy debate

Achieving the Digital Single Market ranks high on the European Union's agenda as Digital is a driver of growth, economic development, employment and innovation, leading to new opportunities, products and services.

The Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy adopted on the 6 May 2015 had the purpose to create opportunities for new startups and allow existing companies to reach a market of over 500 million people, contributing thus to the development of the European economy, to the new jobs and to the transformation of the public services.

On the 10th of May 2017, the European Commission published the mid-term review of the Digital Single Market strategy. It took stock of the progress made, called on co-legislators to swiftly act on the proposals already presented, and outlined further actions on online platforms, data economy and cybersecurity.

Significant progress has been achieved in the legislative work in the last years for ensuring the Digital Single Market: the European Electronic Communications Code, the Free flow of non-personal data, combating unjustified geo-blocking, ENISA /the "EU Cybersecurity Agency" and the Information and Communication Technology cybersecurity certification and the implementation and functioning of the .eu top-level domain name.

Other relevant legislative files in the field of DSM were finalized more recently such as: open data and re-use of public sector information, copyright in the Digital Single Market, promoting fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services. Common understandings have been reached with the European Parliament on relevant European financing programs such as Digital Europe Program, the Connecting Europe Facility, Horizon Europe etc. Intensive work progress has been undertaken also on ePrivacy and on the creation of a Network of Cybersecurity Competence Centres and a new European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre.

While the work on the current legislative agenda will continue, we have to look also at future challenges and the best ways to tackle them. The first exchange of views on the future of the highly digitized Europe beyond 2020 took place during the Informal Ministerial Meeting held by the Romanian Presidency on the 1st of March 2019.

Ministers have recognized that Digital Single Market (DSM) together with the development of data economy and the innovative digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things, Cloud, High Performance Computing, distributed ledger technologies will help European companies to grow beyond the EU Internal Market and make the EU an even more attractive location for global companies.

In this context, the Romanian Presidency is inviting the EU ministers to a policy debate on the basis of the following questions:

Which are the main actions Europe should take immediately in order to maintain its global competitiveness in e-commerce and in data economy, including in relation to the rapid adoption of AI by companies and SMEs?

How can we better address challenges such as digital disparities in a way that no one is left behind in the digital transformation?
