

20 June 2017

Mr Donald Tusk
President of the European Council

Dear President,

The Digital Single Market mid-term review, after two years of constant progress following the publication of the Strategy, is a perfect opportunity for the European Council to reaffirm our political priority to the digital agenda, indicate directions of its further development, and commit ourselves to regularly discuss its progress.

The European Single Market with its four freedoms has brought enormous benefits for the European Union and its citizens. Our joint effort and the way it has shaped the Union presents a success story, which the undersigned and the EU Member States they represent are proud of.

By the constant urge towards development and expansion, the Single Market has brought down numerous barriers to allow even greater cooperation, unlocking new potential and providing new opportunities.

Taking into account the continuous digital transformation, we have already managed to take some timely decisions to strengthen the Single Market to the new digital era. We have also continued our efforts to break down barriers in the European Union, be it with the abolition of roaming surcharges as the most recent example or cross-border portability of online content.

However the main challenges to fully embrace the opportunities of digitization are still ahead of us. Therefore, next steps are necessary. It is our firm belief that to continue enhancing European unity and prosperity, and in order to have a sustainable Europe, we need to strongly embed the idea of a strong, connected and developing Single Market of which the digital dimension is the main engine. **We are convinced that this principle, adopted in the Rome Declaration, should be of priority interest, and that it needs our strong and continued political support at the highest level.**

Even though the digital agenda consists of many separate initiatives, which may seem too technical to be a subject of the European Council's concern, the cumulative effect of the Digital Single Market is of key importance for the future of the European society and economy.

That leaves us with the need for a new digital driven mind-set that uses digital economy and information society to become a more coherent, innovative, open, fair and sustainable European Union, and to ensure Europe's global competitiveness. To achieve that, we need to focus on the following measures:

- **We need to be there for business.** To achieve this we must think horizontally and deliver in the most comprehensive way. We need to support industry and our companies. We share the ambitions for digitising European Industry. But we also need to do more for SMEs, which are the backbone of the European economy, so that they take part in the digital transformation, to become a central element of European digital eco-system, and to make the European market a first choice for our start-ups and scale ups. For that we need a future oriented and positive approach to emerging technologies such as Blockchain, big data, artificial intelligence, supporting both their development, as well as their implementation by our companies. We should also keep in mind the need for proper investment in digital technologies and infrastructure, including

cross-border connectivity, particularly in areas that go far beyond the capacity of a single Member State (5G and connected cars). We need affordable and ubiquitous access to high speed internet for all Union citizens and businesses.

- **We need to be there for our citizens and consumers.** Firstly, we welcome the Commission's announcement to review the Cyber Security Strategy taking under consideration the raising cyber threats. We need to work together to face them. Equally, continued focus on data protection is vital to maintain a high level of trust in the Digital Single Market. We should also continue our efforts in key areas such as interoperable digital services, as well as in skills and media literacy to prepare our citizens to play an active role in the technological transformation.
- **We need better regulation and a coordinated approach on horizontal issues.** To achieve this, a smart regulatory approach should be followed. We should continue to investigate alternatives to regulation, limiting it to areas where regulation brings a clear added value, such as simplicity of the regulatory environment and market defragmentation. Where necessary, regulation should be introduced and tailored to suit the long-term needs of end-users and consumers in the new digital economy. Smart regulation needs to be based on digital performance that is measured in the most effective and accurate way, taking account of Member States' specificities, as well as on inclusive coordination which is crucial for keeping the legal environment coherent, as there are horizontal issues that may appear in many legal instruments and be processed in parallel (e.g. platforms, cloud solutions, embedded systems).
- **We recognise that barriers to doing business digitally and across borders hinder growth and jobs.** We need to enshrine a free flow of data principle in European law. We also need to work on a flexible, future-proof and innovation-friendly framework for access, portability and interoperability of data.
- **We need to have high global aspirations.** Our economy must be able to compete globally. Europe has what it takes to lead in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, automated mobility, robotics or High Performance Computing and in many research and industrial sectors, using those technologies. We have to make sure that our actions will contribute to improving competitiveness of European companies in the global value chain. We should promote our solutions, standards and values worldwide, including our approach to data protection. We therefore welcome the Commission's intention to include digital aspects in trade agreements.
- **We, the Heads of Member States and Governments, agree to come back on a regular basis** to digital matters with a view to help overcome what is still in the way of the fully-fledged European Digital Single Market and to discuss its further, horizontal development, beyond the initial Digital Single Market Strategy.

The digital agenda has every quality to bring us closer to the European Union we look forward to. That is why we need **to have it high on political agendas both within the European institutions and in the capitals, and deliver concrete results to our citizens and businesses.**

Yours sincerely,

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium

Charles Michel



Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Bohuslav Sobotka



Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark

Lars Løkke Rasmussen



Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia

Jüri Ratas



Taoiseach of Ireland

Leo Varadkar



Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia

Māris Kučinskis



President of the Republic of Lithuania

Dalia Grybauskaitė



**Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy
of Luxembourg**

Xavier Bettel



Prime Minister of Hungary

Viktor Orbán



**Prime Minister of the Kingdom
of the Netherlands**

Mark Rutte



Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland

Beata Szydło



Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic

António Costa



Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia

Miro Cerar



Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

Robert Fico



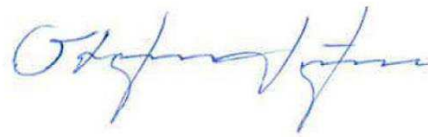
Prime Minister of the Republic of Finland

Juha Sipilä



Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden

Stefan Löfven



**Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

Theresa May



CC:

Mr Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament

Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission