



Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs DG

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**Meeting with John Higgins, Klaus-Dieter Axt from
Digital Europe and manufacturer representatives**

Brussels, 16/03/2015, 15:00

BRIEFING NOTE

The Common Charger

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1. Line to take

- *A sound and clear voluntary agreement is an excellent way to deliver the practical benefits for consumers and the environment that we are seeking with the harmonisation of chargers, without hampering innovation. We are looking forward to the proposals of Digital Europe.*

2. Speaking points

- We thank you for the letter of 13th January and for the proposals it suggests, we hope today we can agree on what the new voluntary agreement should deliver and by when.
- We want an agreement on a common charger for the next generation of smartphones and also for other portable devices.
- The benefits for consumers and the environment should be clear: no need for adaptors or multiple cables, no need for buying a charger with each device. This is what the citizens and the European Parliament want, and what we shall give them.

3. Defensive points

Question 1:

A **mandatory technology** would hamper innovation. A common connector is not a decisive purchase criterion for consumers. Consumers value innovation and this is best left to the market. Why does the Commission insist in a single technology for all smartphones?

Response:

The 2009 MoU was a huge success among European citizens, and we want to continue to bring them the benefits of a common charger. This has also been strongly demanded by the European Parliament. A voluntary MoU is more flexible towards technological evolution than regulation, and we are looking forward to the proposals of Digital Europe.

Question 2:

The study published by the Commission recognises that the 2009 Memorandum of Understanding was a success. **Adaptors** played an important role in this MoU introducing flexibility and facilitating innovation, do you agree with maintaining this approach?

Response

The 2009 MoU greatly reduced the diversity of chargers and was therefore a success. However, the perception among the citizens and the European Parliament is that the common charger does not really exist, and looking at what we find among the most popular smartphones, we have to agree with them. The future MoU must be clear in its outcome, **we cannot afford to admit adaptors**

Question 3: *(possibly from Apple)*

The **USB Type-C connector is too thick** for our thin smartphones. Imposing this connector for smartphones will result in disappointment for customers and in huge market losses for our company. Instead, we propose to have a voluntary agreement on the connector between the power supply and a detachable cable, which could be specific for different devices. Would you agree to this approach?

Response

We believe that the preferred choice for consumers would be a single charger cable and not have different ones.

We would like to understand better the issue with the size of the USB type-C connector from your perspective and would be interested to receive from you any evidence you have that supports your position.

4. Background information

The ‘Study on the impact of the 2009 Memorandum of Understanding on harmonization of chargers for mobile telephones and to assess possible future options’ has been finalized and has been made available on the Europa website^[1].

The Commission has taken contact with the representatives of major manufacturers of mobile telephones and has invited them to make proposals to consolidate the achievements of the 2009 regarding harmonization of a charging capability for mobile phones and to ensure a smooth transition towards the next generation of devices.

On the basis of these proposals, the Commission can assess:

- whether harmonization of chargers can be ensured through a voluntary agreement
- or whether a legislative proposal under the new Radio Equipment Directive, Directive 2014/53/EU, is necessary. The Directive is currently going through its transposition phase and will be applicable from 13 June 2016.

Neither option is likely to impose significant costs on manufacturers, if appropriate time for adaptation is granted to manufacturers, and if exemptions for waterproof and high-powered products are established. Transition costs would be higher in case adaptors to facilitate compatibility with the common charger are not allowed. Significant impacts on competition, competitiveness, trade and investment flows are not expected. However, a number of manufacturers have expressed concerns about the impact of further harmonisation in terms of slowing down innovation.

In a **letter sent by Digital Europe on 13.1.2015 (annex)**, main manufacturers of mobile phones have proposed a new MoU, which could be ready by mid-2015 and be applicable begin 2017. USB-C should be the chosen technology, wireless charging is also mentioned.

Apple has alleged that USB Type-C connector would be too thick for their smartphone.

However, other manufacturers do not understand why the USB Type-C connector would be too small for smartphones; on the contrary, it is a small connector and the possible critique is that being so small it is fragile. Therefore manufacturers of mobile phones should be able to work on the basis of the USB Type-C connector in the design of the next generation of mobile phones, including for thin devices. However, we would welcome factual evidence by Apple (or anybody else) demonstrating that within these devices the use of USB-Type C would be impossible if this is really the case.

^[1] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/rte/documents/index_en.htm#h2-6

5. CVs

