



**DG GROW**

**Meeting between DG GROW and Digital Europe**

**Brussels, 18/2/2020**

**Subject: Defining the way forward for IoT security and certification schemes**

**BRIEFING NOTE**

**Scene setter/Context of the meeting:**



- DE might also raise some concerns on the initiative concerning the 'common charger'; moreover, they might bring forward some proposals, in particular on a voluntary de-coupling.

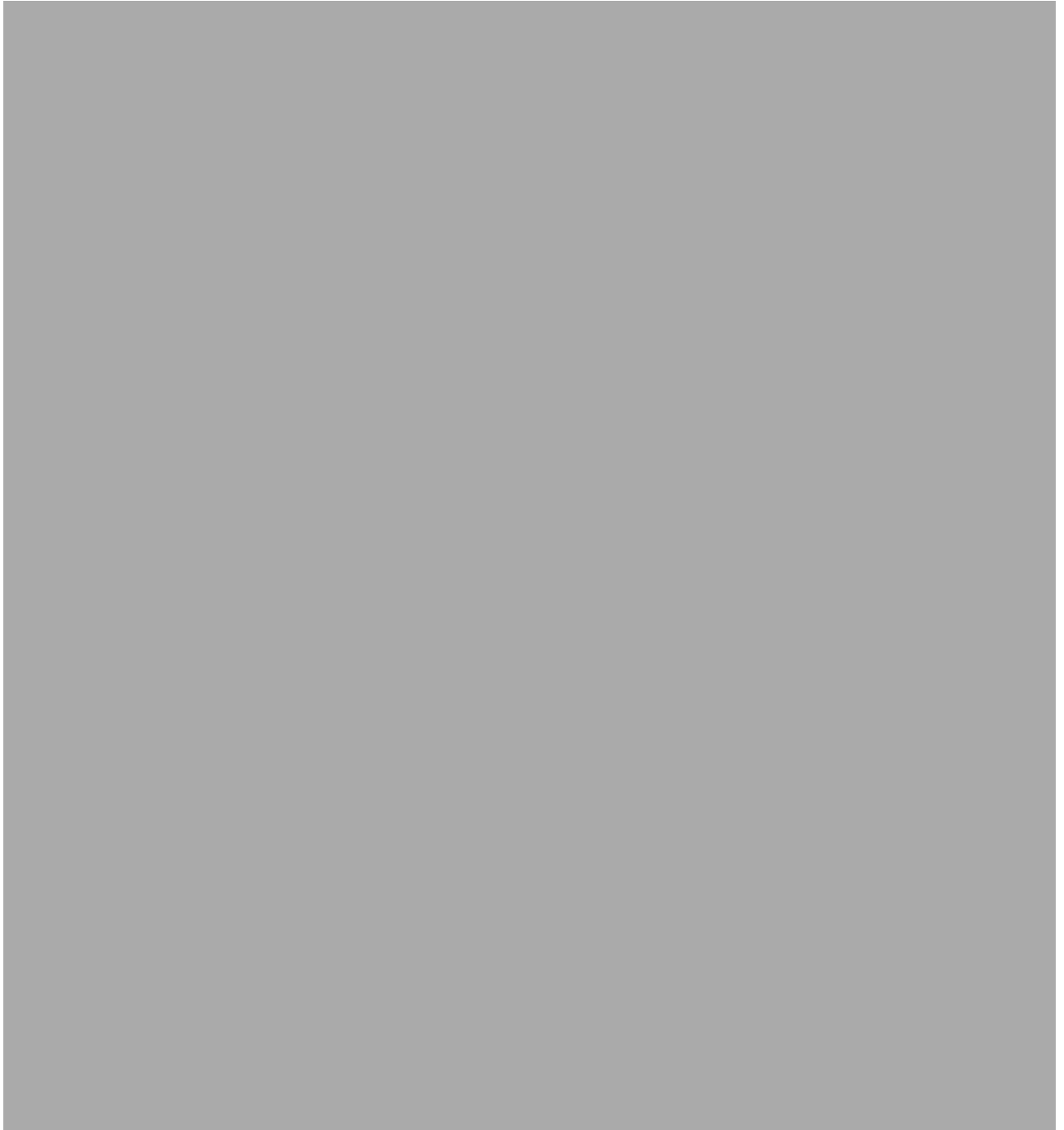
**Objective of the meeting:**



**(common charger and de-coupling)**

- If it is raised, provide an update and defensives on the initiative concerning the common charger as well as on de-coupling.
- Discuss any proposals put forward by DE, in particular on voluntary de-coupling.

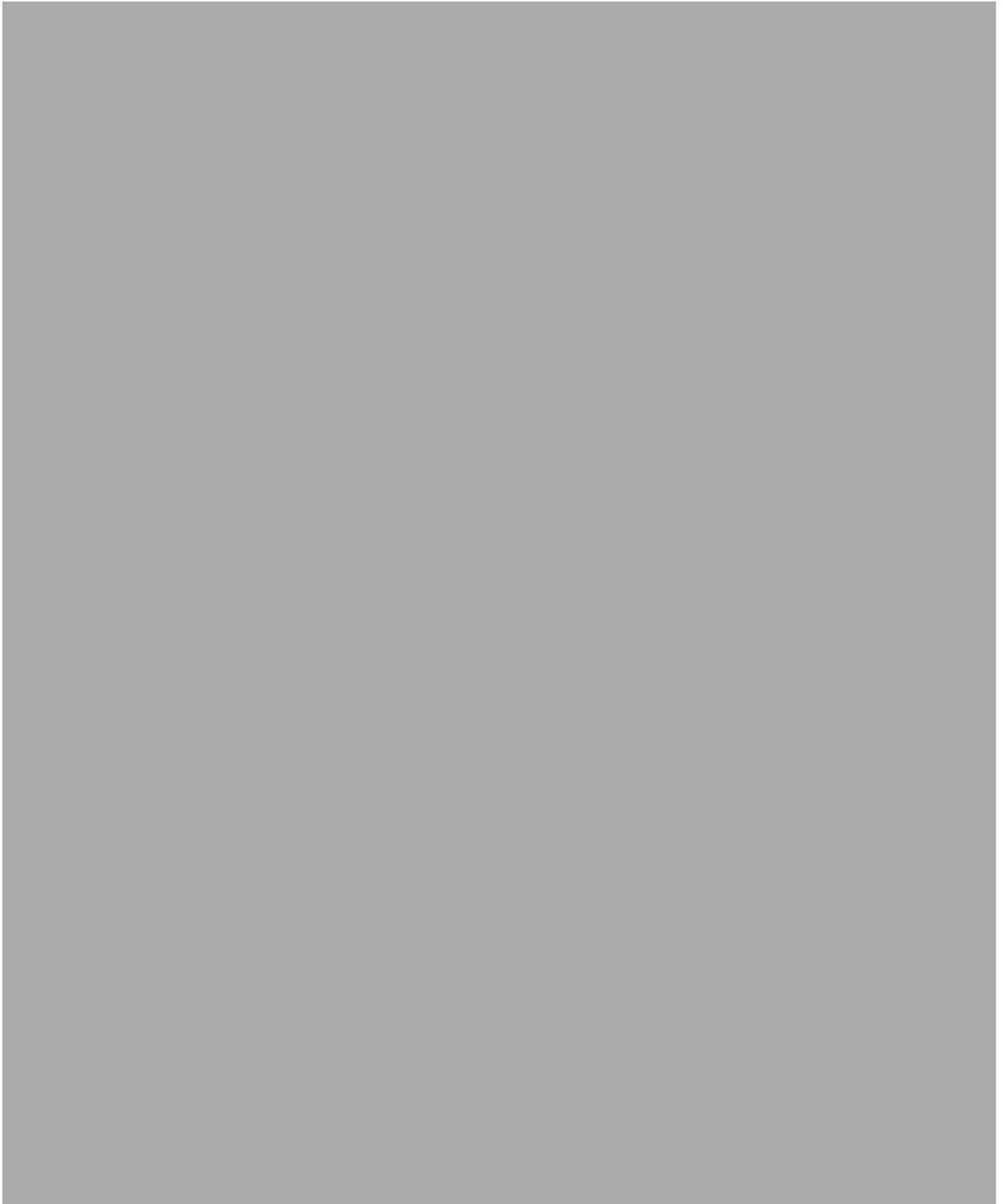
## **KEY messages – Line to Take**

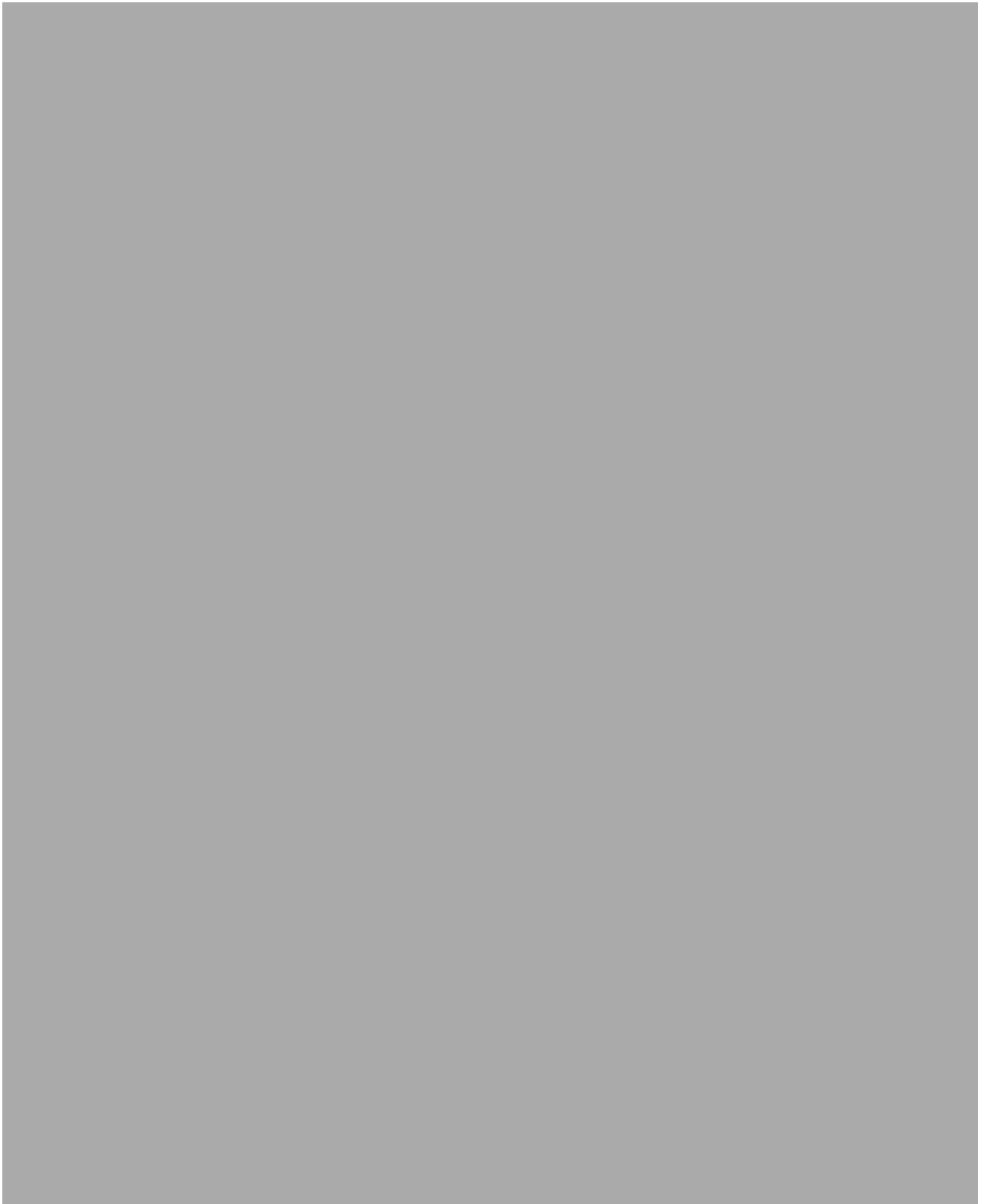


### **(Common Charger and de-coupling)**

- As the new MoU of 2018 was not satisfactory, a study was commissioned by the Commission which has been just published, in support of possible regulatory initiatives on the common charger. The study indicates that a combination of policy options will have to be carefully designed.
- Harmonising the charging interface of smartphone would deliver consumer's benefits, but this option may not be sufficient to reduce significantly electronic waste. In order to enhance the positive benefits stemming from the harmonisation of the charging interface, accompanying measures aimed at incentivising/mandating decoupling (i.e. selling the phone without the charger) should be considered.
- In addition, the scope of any regulatory measure may be enlarged to cover not only smartphones, but also other electronic devices, such as tablets, e-readers or cameras, which have a similar charging behaviour.
- The Commission is currently preparing its response to the European Parliament legislative resolution of 30 January 2020 for a delegated act supplementing Directive 2014/53/EU on radio equipment on a common charger for mobile radio equipment. In its work-programme, the Commission has included a legislative initiative on common chargers for adoption in the 3rd quarter of 2020.

## Defensives / Q&A





### **(Common Charger and de-coupling)**

***Question: Why the Commission does not follow a voluntary approach on common charger which will also ensure innovation?***

Since expiration of the initial MoU, the Commission fostered the renewal of a new voluntary approach from the industry. However, the new MoU of 2018 was not satisfactory, as it did not guarantee the implementation of a common solution (which continued to allow for proprietary solutions instead) nor it addressed new technological challenges (fast/wireless charging). In addition, its scope continued to be limited to mobile phones only.

The Commission therefore decided to take action, as the lack of intervention from the EU side could result in a pre-2011 situation, where different types of chargers are made available on the market.

***Question: Would a voluntary solution on de-coupling be acceptable?***

The Commission will consider all possible and appropriate options. It should be clear, however, that decoupling is only possible if a common charging solution is implemented.

***Question: How will the Commission deal with aspects that cannot be covered by RED, such as definition of 'common charger' or de-coupling' of the sales of chargers and equipment?***

The Commission services are assessing all possible options. These options include also the possibility, if needed, to follow the co-decision procedure and/or use as basis another existing legislative framework in order to cover aspects and objectives that cannot be achieved via a delegated act under the RED.

## Background information

BASIS request ID: GROW/7326

Room, time: N105 4/25

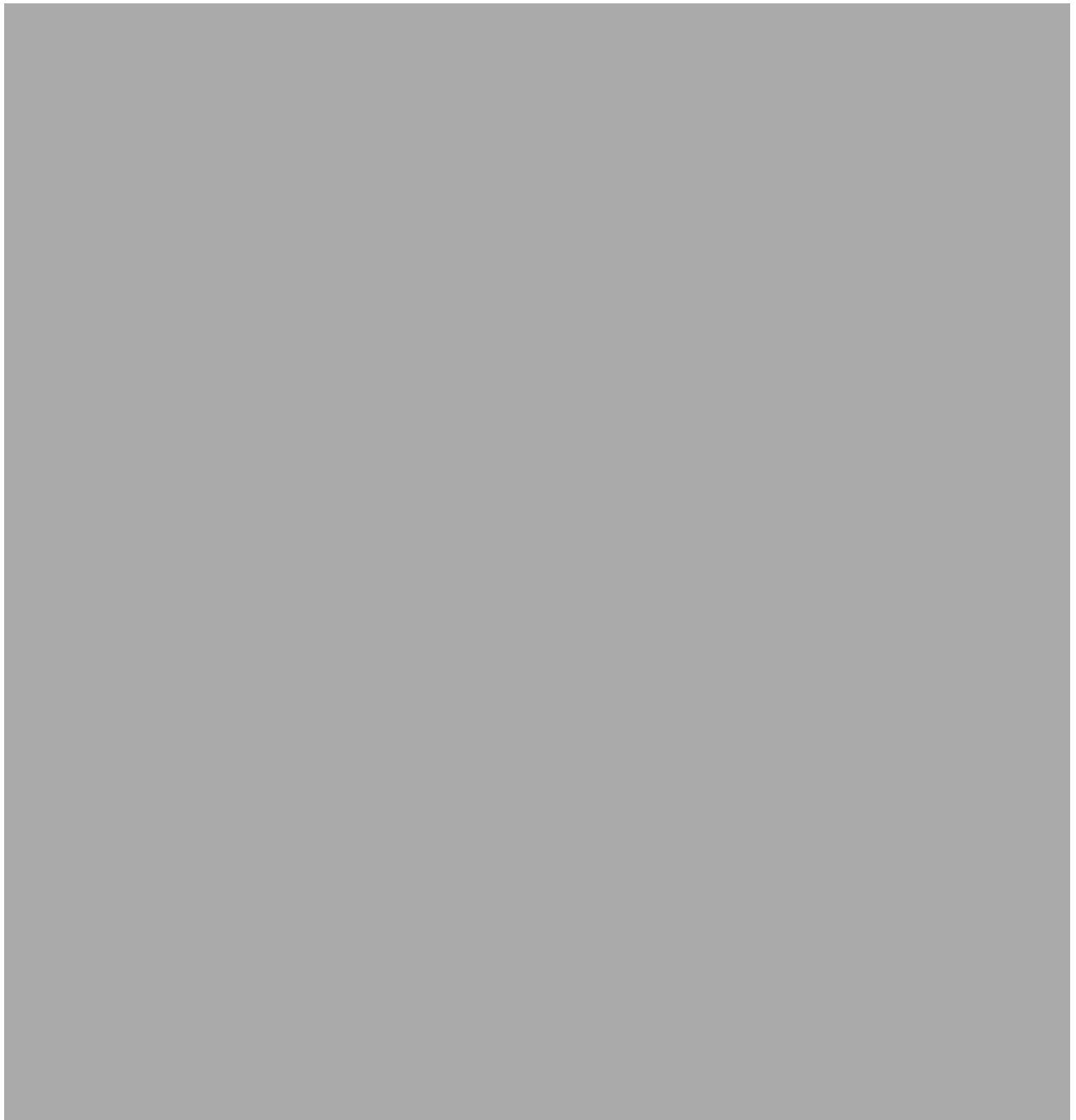
Participants: [REDACTED], Joaquin Nunes de Almeida, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Name of main contact person: [REDACTED]

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Directorate/Unit: C/3



## **Common charger and de-coupling**

Regarding the common charger, the RED empowers the Commission, under Article 3(3) (a), to define the categories or classes that shall be constructed so that they interwork with accessories, in particular with common chargers. The RED, in recital (12), refers to renewed effort to develop a common charger for particular categories or classes of radio equipment.

In 2009, manufacturers of mobile telephones agreed on a voluntary agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) in relation to mobile phones coming onto the market as of 2011. The signatories agreed to develop a common specification based on the USB 2.0 Micro B (Micro-USB) interface, which would allow full charging compatibility with mobile phones to be placed on the market. For those phones that did not have a Micro-USB interface an adaptor was allowed under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Memorandum of Understanding aimed at guarantying interoperability between chargers and new mobile phones on the market, therefore reducing the need to buy or continuously exchange chargers and cables and a consequent reduction of e-Waste in line with the Circular economy and Energy Union strategies. At the same time, interoperability was considered key for the development of a competitive Digital Single Market, at the benefit of both industry and consumers. The Memorandum of Understanding was aiming also at ensuring that citizens could benefit from reliable, energy-efficient and safe chargers, whether they were provided by the smartphones' manufacturers or they were sold as standalone products.

Before the Memorandum of Understanding, there were 500 million mobile phones in use in the EU countries, but they were only compatible with specific mobile telephone chargers as more than 30 different types of charger were on the market. Other than inconvenience to the consumer, that situation was estimated to generate more than 51,000 tons of electronic waste per year in the EU.

A study, assessing the Impact of the Memorandum of Understanding on Harmonisation of Chargers for Mobile Telephones and Possible Future Options, was commissioned by the Commission. It was delivered in August 2014 and confirmed that the chosen method (a voluntary agreement facilitated by the Commission, together with the development of a technical standard) increased harmonisation of mobile phone charging in the EU and improved consumer convenience.

The study has, in particular, provided the following information and conclusions: even manufacturers of mobile phones which did not sign up to the Memorandum of Understanding appear to have also adopted Micro-USB charging solutions, leading to the indication that almost 100% of data enabled phones sold in Europe in 2013 were compliant with Micro-USB charging solution.; due to the Memorandum of Understanding, it is estimated to have resulted in six to 21 million fewer standalone chargers over the period 2011 to 2013; the increasing prevalence of Micro-USB charging has limited the need to purchase standalone chargers and consequently reduced the use of raw materials than might otherwise have been the case.

Since the previous experience of the Memorandum of Understanding had proven to be successful for the reasons mentioned above, the Commission wished to continue the



approach already followed based on a voluntary agreement. Moreover, a voluntary solution could more readily accommodate new technology and innovation compared to a regulatory option. Additionally, a voluntary approach may have had the advantage of having a wider scope, compared to the regulatory option, for example, it may have covered both ends of the charging cable. Unfortunately, the proposals received by the industry for a new MoU of March 2018 did not allow to meet the policy objectives of the Commission in terms of (i) interoperability and uniformity of performance, (ii) reduction and prevention of fragmentation, (iii) eWaste reduction and (iv) timeliness of the transitional time.

Given the unsatisfactory outcome of the progress in the voluntary option, the Commission initiated an action aiming to implement a common solution for charging mobile phones and possibly other small and medium portable electronic devices.

A new study, assessing the impacts that a new initiative aiming to limit fragmentation of the charging solutions for mobile phones and similar devices would have on consumers, on the industry and on the environment, has been published (on 11/02/2020)<sup>1</sup>. The study includes an assessment of the impacts that a new initiative aiming to limit fragmentation of the charging solutions for mobile phones and similar devices would have on consumers, on the industry and on the environment. The study emphasises that achieving a reduction in material use, e-waste, and GHG emissions would require additional measures to facilitate and/or incentivise the sale of mobile phones without an EPS and/or cable assembly.

On 30 January 2020, the European Parliament adopted a resolution<sup>2</sup>: calling the Commission to adopt the delegated under RED defining a standard for a common charger for mobile phones and other small and medium-sized radio equipment by July 2020 or, if needed, a legislative measure by July 2020 at the latest, which would introduce the common charger without any further delay; urging the Commission to ensure that consumers are not any longer obliged to buy new chargers with each new device, thereby reducing the amount of chargers produced per year; and underlining that decoupling strategies should be introduced with a common charger solution.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/c6fadfea-4641-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0024\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0024_EN.pdf)