

## Meeting between Cabinet Vestager and ECFR

16 December 2021, 11:00 – 12:00

### Participants:

**ECFR:** [REDACTED]

**European Commission:** Alejandro Cainzos (Cabinet Vestager), [REDACTED]

### Summary:

The ECFR and Cabinet Vestager discussed the EU's external digital strategy.

Cabinet Vestager explained ongoing work on the EU's external digital strategy, including in the digital compass communication and in cooperation with our international partners. Cabinet Vestager also outlined the existing tools and delivery mechanisms the EU has. Improvements could be found in the cooperation with Member States, which are working in different ways on international digital issues, and the structure in the Council, where international digital topics fall into several working groups. Furthermore, the existing network of EU delegations is not fully utilised.

ECFR explained how the EU already has many initiatives, whose external digital dimension could be strengthened, such as the European Democratic Action Plan. The EEAS should explore additional avenues for more funding for practical technical help for alignment with EU values, such as on privacy. The link between technology and development is not yet fully explored. Overall, the EEAS should find ways to support the work of the DGs on digital issues, to externalise them more successfully. For instance, this includes identifying and supporting the needs of partner countries. Furthermore, it should engage more in the monitoring of international trends, such as Huawei promoting facial recognition standards in international organisations.

Cabinet Vestager explained that in the current implementation phase of the EU's external digital strategy, issues of prioritisation are important. This is why work of think tanks on mapping global initiatives is useful, including the diverging foras where topics are being discussed.

The ECFR confirmed that tailoring an external digital strategy to the needs of individual countries is important. It is important to raise awareness within foreign ministries that international digital issues go beyond cybersecurity. A final issue area for additional action would be engagement with or guidance for the private sector that is affected by digital regulations in third countries, with which the EU cannot align standards.