Ref. Ares(2021)1164347 - 10/02/2021

European Parliament

Commissioner Margrethe Vestager
Executive Vice-President

Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis
Executive Vice-President

Commissioner Thierry Breton

Bruxelles 4th January 2021

Subject: Letter regarding implementation of communications technology in the EU

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament from different political groups, share a common concern regarding the politicisation of the deployment of 5G technology across our Union.

The European Commission, along with the Member States, has made clear that digitisation is one of the two key pillars on which the post-Covid recovery must be built. The "fifth generation" of telecommunication systems, or 5G, provides the capacities to meet Europe growing connectivity needs, which are the backbone of job creation, economic growth, public services fit for the digital age, and opportunities for all.

Among other things, 5G will benefit healthcare by expanding telemedicine. Europe's rural areas, in particular, are in need of better access to health – and here telemedicine is key. But telemedicine requires a network that can support real-time high-quality video, as it is the case with 5G. With 5G-enabled systems, patients can often get treated sooner, regardless of where they live.

But healthcare is not the only sector that will benefit from 5G. Europe's industry as a whole will benefit, too. Faster, more stable connections can connect teams in multiple locations at once, supporting remote work – which is essential in our fight against Covid-19. At the same time, the possibility to quickly access and share data will help businesses increase growth and savings, while improving customer experience. The Commission has even mentioned that the system will also increase a strong cooperation between member states and the European Union Institutions in matters of cyber security.

Last but not least, a timely 5G deployment will directly benefit European consumers in their daily lives. As soon as this technology is available for everyone, close to 500 million citizens

will enjoy a much faster and more reliable connection. With wider, improved connectivity, more people will have access to the internet, and thus to digital services and digital education.

In other words, 5G is supposed to be the connective tissue between all visions of the future. Unfortunately some Member States have banned or intend to ban the use of foreign 5G devices out of ulterior motives and unsubstantiated fear of national security risks, and are even pushing others to join their club. But such behaviours serve nobody in the long run. They will disrupt global industrial chains, undermine the innovation ecosystem and hurt EU consumers the most, depriving them of their right to enjoy fast and reliable telecom services, at a reasonable price.

There are many other 5G-enabled appliances worth exploring – but unlocking Europe's untapped 5G potential starts with an unpoliticized deployment of 5G. This is indispensable, particularly amid times of hardship. Europe cannot afford to miss years of progress just because some have decided to play darts with 5G – in many occasions using discriminatory arguments, which are in blatant contradiction with our common values, as enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty.

Every day that 5G roll-out is delayed, every day that vendors are excluded as a result of arbitrary decisions, opportunities are missed: jobs are not created, business development is not supported, and patients and pupils are treated and lectured with not-up-to-date resources in our hospitals and schools. Our digital sovereignty starts by providing European citizens with the best technology available, not with vague, protectionist debates. This protectionist logic is already hurting the protective approach that Europe pledged to showcase in this new decade.

"A Europe That Protects", we used to say. Well, it is high time for "A Europe That moves on" to decisively protect its citizens from short-sighed decisions that, by threatening to reduce competition, could ultimately leave them with a health system, an education system and a connectivity ecosystem that are not fit for the digital era.

For Europe to be a world leader in this digital era, Europe needs to be able to make its own decisions, based on its own interests – not on those of third parties. Therefore, we ask the European Commission, as well as the EU's Telecom and Trade Ministers, to uphold the main principles of the 5G toolbox, one of which is the need for all industry players to enjoy a level-playing field, without discrimination based on their origin (in other words, "technological racism"), as long as they comply with the technical, facts-based criteria.

Lest we forget, the end goal is to ensure that no one in Europe is left behind, and that Europe can enter into the post-Covid era enjoying good levels of growth and competitiveness, as these are the cornerstone of our European way of life.

Ultimately, it is our European way of life that has to consolidate our approach to digital sovereignty. And the European way of life starts by protecting those features that make us Europeans: full trust in our own competition rules, and in our values of non-discrimination, openness and collaboration – regardless of third actors' aims to seed divisions and make us forget who we are. Only by defending those values we will be truly sovereign, and we will manage to protect our citizens in the digital era – and to build a bright future for our younger generations.

Members of the European Parliament

MEP Fulvio Martusciello EPP ITALY

MEP Giuseppe Milazzo EPP ITALY

MEP Herbert Dorfman EPP ITALY

MEP Aldo Patriciello EPP ITALY

MEP Cristian-Silviu Busoi EPP ROMANIA

MEP Daniel Buda EPP ROMANIA

MEP Ciuhodaru Tudor SD ROMANIA

MEP Giuseppe Ferrandino SD ITALY