



Margrethe Vestager
Executive Vice-President of the European Commission

Thierry Breton
Member of the European Commission

Brussels, 18. 10. 2022
Ares (2022) 5081590

Dear Honourable Member,

Thank you, and your cosignatories, for sharing your thoughts regarding the importance of preserving net neutrality in Europe. In your letter, you also express the view that any possible requirement for payments from online service providers to broadband providers to fund their network deployment would be detrimental to the development of the internet. We understand that your letter was triggered as a reaction to press reports on possible legislative proposals from the Commission which would allegedly go in that direction.

First of all, let us be clear on one fundamental point: the Commission is strongly committed to protecting a neutral and open internet where content, services, and applications are not unjustifiably blocked or degraded in Europe, as well as on the global stage. This is not only enshrined in the Open Internet Regulation, but it is also one of the fundamental principles we have included in the proposal for a 'European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade', which is expected to be signed even this year by the European Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission. We should stress that neither the Council's nor the European Parliament's amendments to the Commission's proposal have brought this principle into question.

Therefore, any interpretation of the Commission's work suggesting that we might be in the process of reversing this fundamental principle is completely misguided.

The issue of the digital players' contribution to network deployment does not need to be approached – and the Commission is certainly not approaching it – from the perspective of net neutrality. The starting point of this discussion is in fact quite different and is well reflected in the recent political agreement reached by the co-legislators on the 'Path to the Digital Decade policy programme'. A specific provision in it, refers to the need that 'all market actors benefiting from the digital transformation [should] assume their social responsibilities and make a fair and proportionate contribution to the public goods, services and infrastructures, for the benefit of all Europeans.'

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The reflections on the best way to implement this principle are currently ongoing. We, as well as the Commission services, are engaging in an open dialogue with many interested parties in this regard. Our objective is to ensure the best experience for everyone in Europe in the Digital Decade, while safeguarding innovation and the growth of the internet ecosystem for the benefit of the European economy.

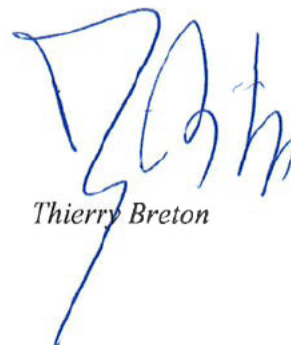
A prerequisite for achieving this objective is the promotion of better investment incentives for the roll-out of gigabit connectivity, through the creation of a virtuous cycle that creates a mutually beneficial environment to all players in the ecosystem. It is in this context that the reflections on the contribution by digital players as well as the revision of the Broadband Cost Reduction Directive are carried out.

We can assure you that your concerns are duly noted. We are looking forward to continuing the conversation on these very important subjects.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margrethe Vestager', with a stylized, cursive script.

Margrethe Vestager

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thierry Breton', with a stylized, cursive script.

Thierry Breton