



DRAFT AGENDA for the Broadband Platform Meeting
Hybrid meeting on *Interactio* and in room JDE 51
Friday, 6 May 2022
11.00-13.00

DIGITAL COHESION – towards closing the digital divides in the European Union

11.00-11.15 **Welcome** by **Michael Murphy**, Chair of the ECON Commission, European Committee of the Regions and **Franco Accordino**, Head of Unit – Investment in High Capacity Networks, European Commission

Moderated by **Michael Murphy**, Chair of the ECON Commission, European Committee of the Regions

11.15 – 11.30 Digital Cohesion
Presentation of the work on the CoR opinion on Digital Cohesion by Rapporteur Gaetano Armao

The pandemic has taught EU citizens several lessons, one of them being that technology is a key tool to help us adapt to challenging situations affecting all spheres of society. At the same time, the pandemic has exposed a growing digital divide between well-connected urban areas and rural areas, between those who know how to use the digital space, and those who don't. The availability, the actual use of technology and the ability to harness the vast opportunities that digital technologies offer have therefore had a huge impact on cohesion across the EU.

The ongoing CoR opinion aims to look at reasons for the growing digital divide, the challenges facing cities, regions, businesses and citizens linked to the digital transition and the ways in which the EU can be more cohesive in terms of digital transformation. It is also reflecting on the ongoing proceedings and conclusions from the Conference on the Future of Europe and is seeking to promote digital cohesion as an important additional dimension of the traditional concept of economic, social and territorial cohesion defined in the EU Treaty.

Followed by a 5 mins Q&A session

11.35-11.50 Digital Cohesion
Presentation of the ongoing CoR Foresight study by FORMIT and Progress Consulting S.r.l.

In view of growing digital divides, the CoR is advocating to expand the definition of "economic, social and territorial cohesion" by the notion of "digital cohesion" as "an important additional dimension of the traditional concept of economic, social and territorial cohesion defined in the EU Treaty". The CoR therefore proposes an open debate on the future role of digitalisation in promoting "cohesion" in the European Union". The foresight study will feed into the political work of the CoR on digitalisation and the Digital Decade as horizontal themes. It is seen in the context of the recent Compass Communication



of the European Commission regarding the future digitalisation of public services. The study and the accompanying discussion process is also providing the evidence and the political momentum for providing input into the ongoing foresight work of the EU the ESPAS network.

The discussion at the Broadband Platform will provide an opportunity for its members to exchange about the most recent findings on weak signals, wild cards, megatrends and possible scenarios how digital cohesion can be achieved and learn possible implications for the present. Experts from the contractor and experts from the EU institutions within the framework of ESPAS (European Strategy and Policy Analysis System) will also join this debate.

Followed by a 5 mins Q&A session

11.55-12.10 5G Communities

Eric Gaudillat, Head of Sector, DG CNECT, Investment in High Capacity Networks, European Commission

“5G for Smart Communities”: The Commission grants funding for the early rollout of 5G networks that connect objects and enable use cases for healthcare, education and public services. This will provide unprecedented opportunities to local communities to accelerate the take-up of 5G connectivity and allow its citizens and businesses to appreciate its benefits for services of general interest.

Followed by a 5 mins Q&A session

12.15-12.30 Digital Global Gateways

Thomas Küpper, Policy Office Broadband and Submarine Cable Systems, DG CNECT, European Commission

Backbone connectivity plays an essential role in ensuring very high capacity and performance (in terms of resilience, security, redundancy and latency) of digital connectivity throughout the EU, in particular for islands and Member States with coastlines, including the Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories. They are also crucial in providing efficient international connectivity of strategic importance such as linking the EU with its trading and research partners around the globe.

The capacity and resilience of this overall network of backbone infrastructure benefit all users – even those in landlocked Member States benefit from the routing of traffic via international submarine cable systems. It is therefore necessary for the EU to secure the competitive availability, reliability and resilience of such vital infrastructures. In particular, EU support is needed to address market failures and contribute to making specific projects possible, which would not be achieved by market forces alone. The discussion in the Broadband Platform will offer an opportunity for its members to get acquainted with details of the support provided from the CEF Digital fund addressing current connectivity needs.

Followed by a 5 mins Q&A session



12.35-12.55 Discussion about the concerns and involvement of local and regional authorities between the Broadband Platform Members/Experts and the speakers

*Moderated by **Franco Accordino**, Head of Unit CNECT B5, Investment in High Capacity Networks, European Commission and **Thomas Wobben**, Director, Committee of the Regions*

Followed by closing remarks

Interpretation arrangements

3/3: EN/FR/DE