

Ed Vaizey

Minister for Culture, Communications
and Creative Industries

The Chairman
House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee
Millbank House
7 Millbank
Room 270
London SW1P 3JA

27 May 2010

Dear Chairman;

TELECOMS COUNCIL 31 MAY 2010

I am pleased to confirm the agenda items for which BIS has responsibility at the forthcoming Telecommunications Council in Brussels on 31st May 2010. I intend to represent the UK at this Council.

There is only one substantive agenda item; this being the recently adopted **Digital Agenda for Europe**. This agenda item is made up of three strands: -

Digital Agenda for Europe

- Presentation by the Commission
- Adoption of Council Conclusions
- Exchange of views on the "European Code of rights of users of electronic communications services"

The Commission's EU European Digital Agenda was published on 19th May and is a key component of EU2020 (the successor to the Lisbon Agenda). The Agenda is essentially a roadmap from the Commission on how they would like to leverage the economic and social benefits of information and communication technologies (ICT) for the benefit of all EU citizens and businesses.

The Conclusions (negotiated last week) are initial Member States views on what is important in the new European Digital Agenda. The UK welcomes and supports the adoption of these Conclusions, as ICT is now seen by all Member States as one of the most important components of any European economic recovery, as well as future economic growth.

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In my intervention on this item (we expect nearly all member States to make comments) I will welcome the opportunity to debate this essential issue and will say that:-

- the priority for the new Digital Agenda should be to bring forward proposals that promote investment in super fast broadband on a pro-competitive basis;
- that we welcome many of the proposals that may make the Digital Single Market a reality and;
- support actions that seek to resolve both access to, and up take of, the Internet by EU citizens.

The last item under this part of the agenda is the **Exchange of views on the "European Code of rights of users of electronic communications services"**.

This is a Spanish Presidency and European Parliament proposal to produce an easily accessible summary of consumers' online rights. Here, I will say that though we welcome this proposal (especially to codify existing rights) it should not create any new rights and that we will resist any efforts by the Commission to use this exercise to introduce any new regulation in this area.

The Spanish Presidency is also hosting a Ministerial lunch, where Member States will discuss the Latvian bid to host the offices of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC). This discussion will start with a presentation by the Latvian Minister for Transport and Communications, Kaspars Gerhards, on their proposal to host BEREC in Riga. (Latvia was the only bidder in a recent Council process) The lunch will end with a short meeting that will endorse the Latvian bid. In my intervention, I will congratulate the Latvians on securing Riga as the location for BEREC and welcome their (expected) offer of providing a satellite office in Brussels that will also be under their control.

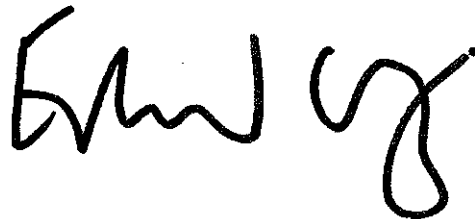
In addition there are four "Any Other Business" items for which BIS has responsibility. The four are:-

- Universal Service - Outcome of the public consultation - Information from the Commission;
- Progress Report on the Single European Electronic Communications Market 2009 (15th Report) – Presentation by the Commission;
- Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report- Presentation by the Commission;
- Ministerial meeting EU-Latin America and Caribbean Countries: "Digital Content for a Digital Society" (Segovia, La Granja de San Ildefonso, 14-16 March 2010) - Information from the Presidency.

I do not expect to intervene on any of the above; though I may (if there is a discussion in relation to the Consultation on Universal Services) note that the EU should think very carefully before embarking on a single universal obligation across the EU-27 for broadband, because imposing obligations prematurely are likely to undermine what companies do voluntarily. Finally, the incoming Belgian Presidency will present their work programme for the next six months, which begins on 1 July 2010.

I am thoroughly looking forward to attending the Council.

I am writing in similar terms to the Chair of the House of Lords Select Committee on the EU and copied this letter and Statement to the clerk of your Committee, Les Saunders (Cabinet Office) and Elaine Barley (BIS). I am also placing a copy of this letter in the Libraries of the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Vaizey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ED VAIZEY