

Brussels, 19 May 2010

## Digital Agenda: Commission outlines action plan to boost Europe's prosperity and well-being

*Implementing the ambitious Digital Agenda for Europe unveiled today by the European Commission would contribute significantly to the EU's economic growth and spread the benefits of the digital era to all sections of society. Half of European productivity growth over the past 15 years was already driven by information and communications technologies (see [IP/10/571](#)) and this trend is likely to accelerate. The Agenda outlines seven priority areas for action: creating a digital Single Market, greater interoperability, boosting internet trust and security, much faster internet access, more investment in research and development, enhancing digital literacy skills and inclusion, and applying information and communications technologies to address challenges facing society like climate change and the ageing population. Examples of benefits include easier electronic payments and invoicing, rapid deployment of telemedicine and energy efficient lighting. In these seven areas, the Digital Agenda foresees some 100 follow-up actions, of which 31 would be legislative. The Digital Agenda is the first of seven flagship initiatives under the [Europe 2020 strategy](#) for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (see [IP/10/225](#)).*

"We must put the interests of Europe's citizens and businesses at the forefront of the digital revolution and so maximise the potential of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to advance job creation, sustainability and social inclusion", said Commission Vice-President for the Digital Agenda Neelie Kroes. "The ambitious strategy set out today shows clearly where we need to focus our efforts in the years to come. To fully realise the potential of Europe's digital future we need the full commitment of Member States, the ICT sector and other vital economic players."

### Seven goals

#### **A new Single Market to deliver the benefits of the digital era**

Citizens should be able to enjoy commercial services and cultural entertainment across borders. But EU online markets are still separated by barriers which hamper access to pan-European telecoms services, digital services and content. Today there are four times as many music downloads in the US as in the EU because of the lack of legal offers and fragmented markets. The Commission intends to open up access to legal online content by simplifying copyright clearance, management and cross-border licensing. Other actions include making electronic payments and invoicing easier and simplifying online dispute resolution.

### **Improve ICT standard-setting and interoperability**

To allow people to create, combine and innovate we need ICT products and services to be open and interoperable.

### **Enhance trust and security**

Europeans will not embrace technology they do not trust - they need to feel confident and safe online. A better coordinated European response to cyber-attacks and reinforced rules on personal data protection are part of the solution. Actions could also potentially oblige website operators to inform their users about security breaches affecting their personal data.

### **Increase Europeans' access to fast and ultra fast internet**

The 2020 target is internet speeds of 30 Mbps or above for **all** European citizens, with half European households subscribing to connections of 100Mbps or higher. Today only 1% of Europeans have a fast fibre-based internet connection, compared to 12% of Japanese and 15% of South Koreans (see table below). Very fast internet is essential for the economy to grow strongly, to create jobs and prosperity, and to ensure citizens can access the content and services they want. The Commission will *inter alia* explore how to attract investment in broadband through credit enhancement mechanisms and will give guidance on how to encourage investments in fibre-based networks.

### **Boost cutting-edge research and innovation in ICT**

Europe must invest more in R&D and ensure our best ideas reach the market. The Agenda aims to *inter alia* leverage private investments with European regional funding and increasing EU research funding to ensure that Europe keeps up with and even surpasses its competition. EU investment in ICT research is less than half US levels (€37 billion compared to €88 billion in 2007).

### **Empower all Europeans with digital skills and accessible online services**

Over half of Europeans (250 million) use the internet every day, but another 30% have never used it. Everyone, young and old, irrespective of social background, is entitled to the knowledge and skills they need to be part of the digital era since commerce, public, social and health services, learning and political life is increasingly moving online.

### **Unleash the potential of ICT to benefit society**

We need to invest in smart use of technology and the exploitation of information to seek solutions to reduce energy consumption, support ageing citizens, empower patients and improve online access for people with disabilities. One aim would be that by 2015 patients could have access to their online medical records wherever they were in the EU. The Agenda will also boost energy saving ICT technologies like Solid State Lighting technology (SSL) that use 70% less energy than standard lighting systems.

## **Delivering the Digital Strategy for Europe**

The toughest challenge is to ensure rapid adoption and implementation of the measures necessary to meet the above objectives. A wide range of Commissioners will work together with the EU's institutions and stakeholders to make the Digital Agenda a reality.

### **Background**

A Digital Agenda press pack is available at:

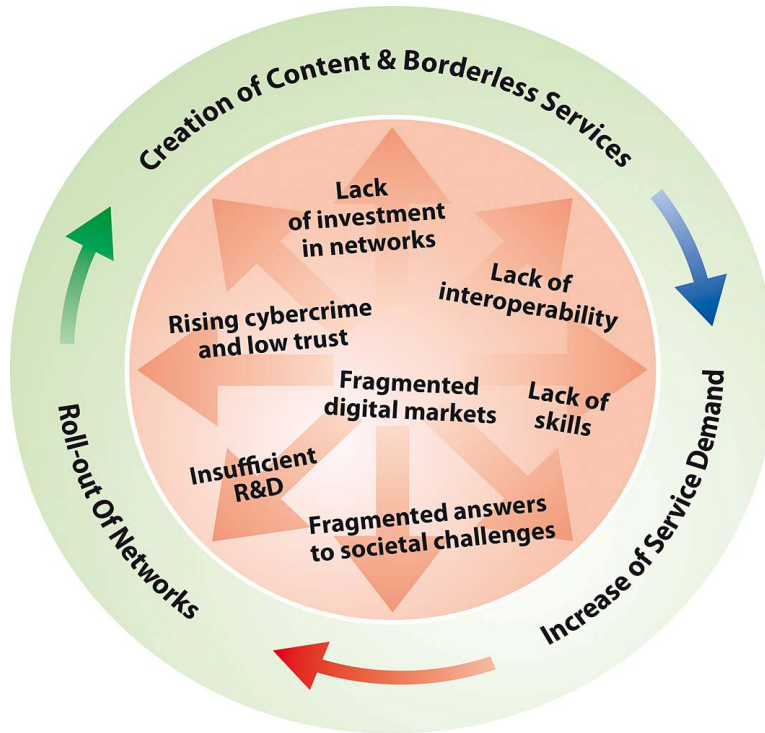
[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item\\_id=5826](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=5826)

Audio-visual stockshots are available at:

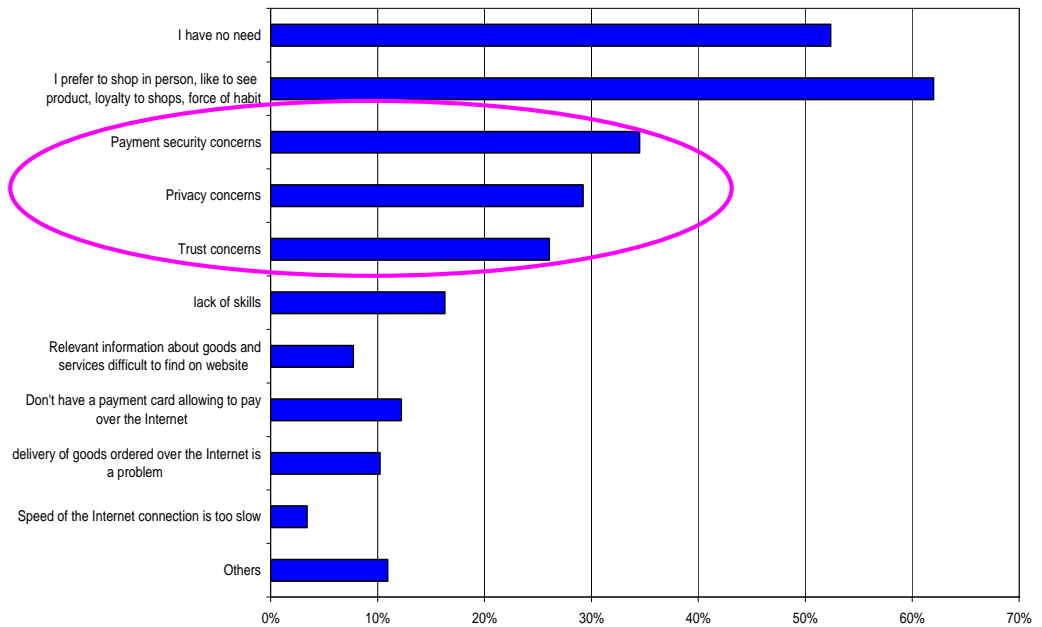
<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/video.cfm?sitelang=en&type=1>

See also [MEMO/10/199](#) and [MEMO/10/200](#).

Virtuous cycle of the digital economy

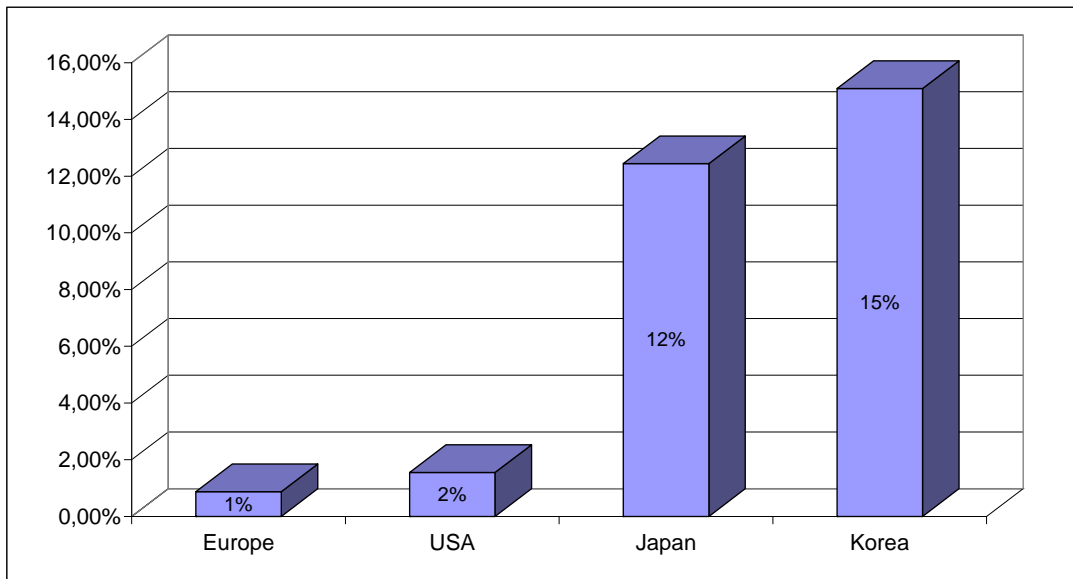


Reasons for not buying online (% of individuals that have not ordered online during last year), 2009



Source: Eurostat Community Survey on ICT Usage by Households and by Individuals 2009

**Figure 1: Fibre to the Home (FTTH) penetration in July 2009**



Source: Point Topic