

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

**JOINT PARLIAMENTARY
COMMITTEE**

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RESOLUTIONS

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EU Digital Agenda and the EEA

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Paul RÜBIG (EPP, Austria)
Mr Sigmundur D. GUNNLAUGSSON (Progressive Party,
Iceland)

adopted unanimously

and

**EEA and Norwegian Grants: Contributing to the Social and Economic Cohesion
in Europe**

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Harald T. NESVIK (MP, Progress Party, Norway)
Ms Zuzana BRZOBOHATÁ (S&D, Czech Republic)

adopted unanimously

and

European Refund Scheme for Drinks Containers

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Nikolai ASTRUP (Conservative Party, Norway)
Ms Anna HEDH (S&D, Sweden)

adopted unanimously

on

EU Digital Agenda and the EEA

The Joint Parliamentary Committee of the European Economic Area:

A. emphasising the full participation of the EEA EFTA States in the Internal Market,

B. acknowledging the importance of implementation of EEA legislation in order to establish a dynamic and homogenous European Economic Area,

1. welcomes the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE), issued in May 2010, as one of the seven "flagships" of the Europe 2020 strategy, and emphasises the role of the Information and communication technology in objectives thereof;
2. undelines the importance of the delivery of sustainable economic and social benefits from a digital single market based on fast and ultra fast internet and interoperable applications across the EEA;
3. takes note of the commitments to undertake 101 specific policy actions intended to stimulate investment in and the usage of digital technologies; of which, 78 actions (including 31 legal proposals) to be taken up by the Commission and 23 actions proposed to the Member States;
4. takes note of the charting of progress of both the announced policy actions and the key performance targets, as well as the publication of an annual scoreboard; and welcomes the progress made as reported in the evaluation released in May 2011;
5. highlights the need for close cooperation amongst EU institutions, Member State and all interested stakeholders, including EEA/EFTA states, with a view to assessment of progress and emerging challenges, in the form of the proposed annual Digital Agenda Assembly;
6. recognises the important challenges facing the EU Members States as well as EEA/EFTA states of DAE addressed in the seven pillars: (1) fragmented digital markets, (2) lack of interoperability, (3) rising cybercrime and risk of low trust in networks, (4) lack of investment in networks, (5) insufficient research and innovation efforts, (6) lack of digital literacy and skills, and (7) missed opportunities in addressing societal challenges;

A vibrant digital single market

7. Welcomes the actions aimed at harmonising rules across the EEA in the area of digital single market in which Consumers and businesses are still faced with considerable uncertainty about their rights and legal protection despite the existing body of key single market legislation on eCommerce, eInvoicing and eSignatures;

8. in this regard highlights the need for opening of public data resources for re-use, by means of a review of the Directive on Re-Use of Public Sector Information, in order to unlock the public data potential across Europe with an estimated market value of €7 billion; (Action 3);
9. welcomes preserving orphan works and out of print works, by means of creating a legal framework to facilitate the digitisation and dissemination of cultural works in Europe (Action 2) by proposing a Directive on orphan works by 2010, in order to exploit the millions of copyrighted cultural works in libraries and museums throughout Europe; proposes inclusion of EEA/EFTA states in the project;
10. welcomes the wide stakeholder debate on further measures to stimulate a European online content market, including measures to promote cross-border and pan-European licenses (Action 4);
11. expects with eagerness fixing of a date for migration to Single European Payment which could generate net benefits of €123 billion over six years for the market as a whole & eInvoicing worth roughly €240 billion in savings over a six-year period (Action 7);
12. supports simplification of pan-European licensing for online works in order to enable Consumers to access all available European content and authors and prevent loss of revenue due to the illegal markets (.Action 1);
13. commends the plans to protect intellectual property rights online in order to push ahead with the creation, production and distribution of digital content (Action 6) and recognises the potential for EEA-wide positive effects;
14. fully supports a revision of the eSignature directive in order to provide for more secure solutions that are increasingly needed to protect personal data online (Action 8);
15. welcomes the ambition to overcome the fragmentation of contract law by Complementing the Consumer Rights Directive with an additional instrument, in particular as regards the online environment (Action 13) and recognises the potential for EEA-wide application of the ambition to provide for durable solutions for voice and data roaming by 2012 in order to achieve zero difference in between roaming and national tariffs by 2015 (Action 101);

Interoperability and standards

16. supports provision of guidance on ICT standardisation and public procurement in order help public authorities use standards (Action 23), in this context calls on the EU institutions to include the views of the EEA/EFTA states, in ensuring that good ICT standards are available and used, notably in public procurement and legislation;

Trust and security

17. Considers the trust in using internet by Europeans as a vital prerequisite in furthering digital internal market as well as safety and prioritises addressing of the rise of "cybercrime" , including child abuse, identity theft and cyber-attacks;
18. in this regard supports strengthening of the fight against cybercrime at international level in order to strengthen global risk management and targeted actions against computer-based crime and security attack (Action 32), including coordinated action in the EEA;
19. considers reporting of illegal content online and awareness campaigns on online safety for children a priority; in this context recommends pan-European cooperation and sharing of best practice in order to diminish sexual abuse of children (Action 36);

Fast and ultra fast internet access

20. Fully supports the ambition to ensure that by 2020 all Europeans have access to much faster internet at speeds of above 30 Mbps; emphasise the positive effects on for EEA-wide online market; and in particular supports the implementation of a European Spectrum Policy Programme, in order to prevent the lack of frequencies from becoming an obstacle to the competitiveness of EU businesses in the global market for wireless innovations; (Action 44);

Research and innovation

21. urges the EU an EEA-EFTA states invest much more in ICT research and development in the view of the Commission's evaluation that Europe continues to under-invest in this area in comparison with other industrialised economies;
22. highlights the need for more private investment for ICT research and innovation in order to keep Europe's competitive edge in ICT R&D (Action 50); and emphasise the need for reinforcement of the coordination and pooling of resources in order to reduce fragmentation, redundancies and to better exploit synergies.(Action 51);

Enhancing digital literacy, skills and inclusion

23. Urges all stakeholders to address the growing professional ICT skills shortage and a digital literacy deficit in Europe, in particular with regard to people from disadvantaged groups such as the elderly or the disabled, in order to take advantage of the opportunities presented by continuing progress of the Internet and ICT;

ICT-enabled benefits for EU society

24. Highlights the potential contribution of actions proposed by harnessing the full potential of ICT in better addressing some of Europe's most acute societal

challenges, such as climate change and other pressures on the environment, an ageing population and rising health costs, developing more efficient public services and integrating people with disabilities, digitising Europe's cultural heritage and making it available to this and future generations;

25. in this regards supports the deployment of eHealth technologies across Europe in order to improve the quality of care, reduction of medical costs and fostering of independent living, including in remote places in a safe online environment (actions 75 and 77);
26. commends the objective to wider distribute the cultural and creative content, in particular a sustainable model for financing the EU public digital library "Europeana" and digitisation of content; in order to provide for cheaper and quicker reproduction as well as creation of more opportunities for authors and content providers to reach global audiences;
27. highlights the need to implement the objective to make the EU Member States' eGovernment services fully interoperable and supports the plans to propose concrete steps in a White Paper on how to interconnect eProcurement capacity across the single market (actions 84, 89, 90);
28. Urges the Commission's not to delay further its objective to adopt the Air Traffic Management Solutions for the Single European Sky (SESAR) deployment strategy (Action 93) permitting EEA-wide operational deployment by 2020;

International aspects of the Digital Agenda

29. recognises the importance of promotion of internationalisation of internet governance and global cooperation due to the global nature and the strategic importance of the Internet, and the potential of EEA-wide inclusive dialogue, welcome the Decision at 65th UN General Assembly in December 2010, extending the Internet Governance Forum until 2015.

on

EEA and Norwegian Grants: Contributing to the Social and Economic Cohesion in Europe

The EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee:

1. notes the significant contribution by the EEA EFTA States to social and economic cohesion in the enlarged EEA through the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms, and appreciates the valuable opportunities this offers stakeholders in the beneficiary states;
2. welcomes the wide scope of eligibility of stakeholders, and particularly highlights the fact that civil society organisations, which are a driving force in the development of policies for social inclusion and regional development, are eligible at all levels of funding;
3. notes three significant gaps between Europe's regions and countries in terms of economic, social and territorial development whereas the expansions of the EU (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004, followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 – collectively the 'EU-12') brought a 20% increase in the EU's population, but only a 5% increase in GDP.
4. welcomes that the EEA Grants and Norway Grants are based on a firm vision of a stable and prosperous Europe where social and economic inequalities are consigned to the past; and acknowledges that it is a commitment to more than a shared future, based on a common foundation of European values of democracy and solidarity.
5. underlines the importance of dedicated funding for non-governmental organisations which will enable civil society to continue to play a vital role in the development of European democracy, as well as in specific policy areas under the Grants; and highlighting that the promotion of cooperation is a concrete aim of the Grants;
6. underlines the importance of maintaining full transparency and accountability in the application process as well as in the approval and execution phase so that the allocation of funds is used in the most effective way possible and reaches the stated goals; emphasises intensified cooperation and dialogue between donor and beneficiary states; and urges continuous reviews with the aim to constantly improve procedures;
7. recognizes that many pressing current issues, such as demographic trends, rising social inequalities, immigration, environmental concerns and resource sustainability, do not stop at national borders and that shared challenges require shared solutions; and underlines that working in cooperation through bilateral programmes and projects provides an arena for learning from good practices elsewhere;

8. highlights that the economies of the donor and beneficiary states are strongly intertwined in the internal European market, increasing opportunities for trade and investment and that as members of the Schengen area, strengthened police and judiciary cooperation serves in the fight against organised crime and illegal immigration;
9. underlines the importance of that all EEA countries are committed to fighting climate change and that climate action is at the heart of the Europe 2020 with reducing greenhouse gas emissions, curbing pollution and preserving a healthy environment being policy priorities for Europe.
10. welcomes that one-quarter of the total contribution between 2004 and 2009 – €275 million – was spent on environmental protection, environmental research and sustainable development projects, most of the funding being targeted at measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as investments to reduce water pollution, improve waste management, strengthen environmental management and protect biodiversity.
11. welcomes that a quarter of the 2009-2014 EEA and Norway Grants – around €450 million – is set aside for environment and climate change and that the reduction of greenhouse gases is specifically targeted through the priority sectors for climate change and renewable energy, in addition to carbon capture and storage.
12. recognizes that there are significant disparities between European countries and regions, with all of the EEA and Norway Grants beneficiary states well below the 3% target; and underlines that plugging this deficit, and creating an environment that encourages high-quality research and technological development, it is crucial to keep pace with global competition and drive forward growth in Europe;
13. underlines that of the EU's 271 regions, one in four has a GDP of less than 75% of the EU average and whilst economic and social disparities between regions are found in all EU member states, the regions with the lowest GDP per capita are located in some of the beneficiary states of the EEA and Norway Grants;
14. welcomes that support from the EEA and Norway Grants to the health and childcare sector has helped to tackle inequalities and improve public health in the beneficiary states;

on

European Refund Scheme for Drinks Containers

The Joint Parliamentary Committee of the European Economic Area:

- A. emphasising the full participation of the EEA EFTA States in the Internal Market,
- B. acknowledging the fragmentation of the Internal Market in the field of beverage packaging, deposit systems and free movement of goods;
- C. having regard to text with EEA relevance, such as EU directive on "waste and repealing certain Directives" (2008/98/EC) of 19 November 2008 and EU Directive (94/62/EC) of 20 December 1994 on "packaging and packaging waste";
- D. having regard to the Commission Communication on beverage packaging, deposit systems and free movement of goods published on 9 May 2009;
 1. calls on the Commission to introduce a mandatory deposit refund system for the whole European Economic Area; in order to provide for a free movement of goods as well as to allow consumers to reclaim their deposits regardless of where they buy the beverages and return the packaging;
 2. emphasises the possible positive effects of a mandatory deposit refund system, such as an increase of the overall EU recycling rate for beverage packaging, and decreased costs for the market operators to adapt their packaging according to different national requirements;
 3. in this context recognises the contribution a mandatory deposit refund system would have in increasing environmental awareness in the general public;
 4. recognises several challenges of the introduction of an EEA-wide mandatory deposit refund system for beverage packaging, such as changes to all national systems which could lead to additional costs; therefore calls for further research in this area, in close coordination and cooperation with the retailers as well as the beverage and the packaging industries.
 5. furthermore in this regards calls on the Commission to suggest necessary phasing-out periods;
 6. stresses the need for a single deposit refund system which would be user-friendly and easy to understand; underlines the importance of uniform labelling across the EEA;
 7. Encourages beverage producers to optimise their production and logistics for the whole internal market;

8. welcomes current initiatives in this area, such as the current EU-sponsored project examining 'Options and feasibility of a European refund system for metal beverage cans' and the Nordic Council initiative on the issue;