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P8_TA(2017)0234

Internet connectivity for growth, competitiveness and cohesion: European gigabit society and 5G

European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2017 on internet connectivity for growth, competitiveness and cohesion: European gigabit society and 5G (2016/2305(INI))

(2018/C 307/23)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 September 2016 entitled ‘Connectivity for a Competitive Digital Single Market — Towards a European Gigabit Society’ (COM(2016)0587) and the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2016)0300),
- having regard to Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 September 2016 entitled ‘5G for Europe: An Action Plan’ (COM(2016)0588) and the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2016)0306),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 14 September 2016 for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Electronic Communications Code (COM(2016)0590),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 14 September 2016 for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) No 283/2014 as regards the promotion of Internet connectivity in local communities (COM(2016)0589),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 14 September 2016 for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (COM(2016)0591),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 6 May 2015 entitled ‘A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe’ (COM(2015)0192) and the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2015)0100),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 July 2014 entitled ‘Towards a thriving data-driven economy’ (COM(2014)0442),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 April 2016 entitled ‘Digitising European Industry — Reaping the full benefits of a Digital Single Market’ (COM(2016)0180),
- having regard to Decision No 243/2012/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2012 establishing a multiannual radio spectrum policy programme ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the annex to the Commission communication of 2 October 2013 entitled ‘Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT): results and next steps’ (COM(2013)0685),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 April 2016 entitled ‘ICT standardisation priorities for the Digital Single Market’ (COM(2016)0176),
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on Towards a Digital Single Market Act ⁽²⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 81, 21.3.2012, p. 7.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0009.

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- having regard to the Commission proposal of 2 February 2016 for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the use of the 470-790 MHz frequency band in the Union (COM(2016)0043),
 - having regard to the European Council Conclusions of 28 June 2016 (EUCO 26/16),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 25 September 2013 entitled ‘Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources’ (COM(2013)0654),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 26 October 2016 entitled ‘Space Strategy for Europe’ (COM(2016)0705),
 - having regard to Directive 2013/35/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on the minimum health and safety requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (electromagnetic fields) (20th individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC) and repealing Directive 2004/40/EC⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the European Economic and Social Committee’s opinion on the Commission communication entitled ‘Connectivity for a Competitive Digital Single Market — Towards a European Gigabit Society’,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the opinions of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, the Committee on Transport and Tourism, the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0184/2017),
- A. whereas 5G will be a key building block of the gigabit society, representing the standard for the future in mobile communication technologies, and an engine for innovation, bringing disruptive economic change and creating new use cases, high-quality services and products, revenue streams and business models and opportunities, and whereas it is expected to boost the competitiveness of industries and should provide consumer satisfaction;
- B. whereas European leadership in 5G technology is essential to economic growth and for maintaining global competitiveness, which in turn requires European coordination and planning, and whereas lagging behind means risking jobs, innovation and knowledge;
- C. whereas 5G and 5G applications will reinvent business models by providing very high speed connectivity, which will unlock innovation in all sectors, not least transport, energy, finance and health; whereas, in this regard, Europe cannot afford to lag behind, as 5G will be the engine for future growth and innovation;
- D. whereas the architecture of 5G networks will be substantially different to that of previous generations in order to meet the expected business and performance requirements for Very High Capacity (VHC) networks, especially with regard to latency, coverage and reliability;
- E. whereas the 5G architecture will lead to an increased convergence between mobile and fixed networks; whereas, therefore, the deployment of VHC fixed networks will contribute to the backhaul needs of a dense 5G wireless network as close as possible to the end user;
- F. whereas the future of European society and the European economy will strongly rely on 5G infrastructure, the impact of which will go far beyond existing wireless access networks, with the aim of providing high-quality and faster communication services which are affordable for all and available everywhere and at all times;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 179, 29.6.2013, p. 1.

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- G. whereas digitalisation is accelerating at great speed and at a global level, requiring investments in high-quality communication networks with universal coverage; whereas, in this regard, there is a need for timely availability of the radio spectrum capable of meeting those demands;
- H. whereas mobile and wireless connectivity for every citizen is becoming increasingly important as innovative services and applications are being used on the go, and whereas a future-oriented digital policy must take this into account;
- I. whereas the 5G network's rollout will be conducted mainly through private investments and will require the European Electronic Communications Code to create a regulatory environment that promotes certainty, competition and investment; whereas it will require the streamlining of administrative conditions, for example for the deployment of small cells for strict and timely spectrum harmonisation and VHC network development, as currently proposed in the European Electronic Communications Code;
- J. whereas public initiatives, such as the Commission's 2013 Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative, backed by EUR 700 million of public funding to enable 5G in Europe by 2020, need to be complemented by a competitive market with future-proof access regulation and spectrum coordination, which will spur innovation and the necessary private infrastructure investments;
- K. whereas the deployment of 5G must be carried out in a manner that complements, and not at the expense of, other projects that are geared towards boosting connectivity in the most rural and remote parts of Europe;
- L. whereas the implementation of 5G and the gigabit society requires an explicit timetable, a demand-driven, future-proof and technology-neutral approach based on assessments per region and sector, Member State coordination, cooperation with all stakeholders and adequate investments in order to fulfil all conditions within the required time frame and make it a reality for all EU citizens;

I. 5G vision — demands for a generational shift

1. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to draw up a 5G Action Plan aimed at making the EU a world leader in the deployment of standardised 5G networks from 2020 to 2025 as part of a wider developed strategy for a European gigabit society which is technologically more competitive and inclusive; takes the view that in order to achieve this, adequate coordination among the Member States is crucial, so as to prevent the same kinds of delays in the rollout of 5G that were experienced with 4G, which have resulted in the fact that today 4G coverage stands at 86 % and only 36 % in rural areas;
2. Highlights that, according to the Commission, the action plan to deploy 5G across the EU has the 'potential to create two million jobs', and could boost the European economy and combat high unemployment rates, especially among young people;
3. Emphasises that the 5G PPP is currently one of the world's most cutting-edge initiatives involving 5G and the new applications deriving from it; takes the view that although fostering synergies in R&D and industrial development is positive, given the impact that the rollout of 5G will have on society, it would be right for membership of the PPP to be opened up to consumer and civil society representatives as well;
4. Stresses that an ambitious and forward-looking timeline for spectrum allocation within the Union is of utmost importance if Europe is to be in the lead regarding the development of 5G technology; welcomes, in this regard, the actions proposed by the Commission in the communication entitled '5G for Europe: An Action Plan', and considers these actions to be a minimum requirement for the successful launch of 5G in the Union;
5. Stresses that private investments should be supported by an infrastructure-oriented policy and regulatory environment tailored to predictability and certainty and aimed at promoting competition to the benefit of the end users, and should not be delayed by overly ambitious public schemes that may impede 5G rollout;

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6. Underlines the importance of cooperation between academia, research institutions, the private sector and the public sector on research and development concerning 5G mobile communications; points to the 5G PPP as a positive example in this regard and encourages the Commission to continue involving all relevant sectors in the process;
7. Believes that Europe will benefit from further transformation towards the digital economy in terms of wider coverage, connectivity and faster speeds, and that the digital economy's contribution to total GDP growth will be 40 % up to 2020, with a growth rate 13 times faster than that of total GDP;
8. Welcomes and endorses the gigabit society medium-term objectives of attaining network speeds of at least 100 Mbps for all European consumers, upgradable to 1 Gbps and increasing in the long term to 100 Gbps for the main socio-economic drivers, such as public services providers, digitally intensive businesses, major transport hubs, financial institutions, hospitals, education and research; calls for the deployment of fibre backhaul infrastructure, competition for driving investment and high-quality end user experiences to be prioritised; recalls that the Union is lagging behind its 2020 Digital Agenda connectivity targets, with the lagging behind of rural and remote areas being particularly worrisome;
9. Stresses the need to ensure that a maximum number of EU citizens can benefit from gigabit society connectivity, including those living in remote areas;
10. Strongly supports efforts towards ensuring access to the 5G network along intermodal journeys on the basis of public transport networks linked to the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and the trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) by 2025, and expects that full access throughout the EU will follow, in both urban and rural areas and at major tourist centres and attractions;
11. Notes that further improvement in coverage of the fourth generation of mobile networks/LTE is still needed as the European Union is lagging behind the USA, South Korea and Japan in this regard, and that the 5G Action Plan should be an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the 4G rollout;
12. Points out that 5G radio access will need to be able to operate over a very wide frequency range from below 1 GHz up to 100 GHz, and including backhaul up to 300 GHz; notes that frequencies of 3-6 GHz and above 6 GHz should deliver extreme data rates and extreme capacity in dense areas; acknowledges that 5G systems in high frequency bands require a very dense network infrastructure based on small-cell access to sites, which will require choices in relation to the spectrum bands to be used or the possibility of sharing spectrum bands;
13. Stresses that download speeds alone will not be sufficient to meet the future connectivity demand of the gigabit society, which will require an infrastructure objective regarding VHC networks, as these networks meet the highest standards in terms of upload as well as download speeds, latency and resilience;
14. Stresses that a coherent European spectrum strategy, including coordinated national roadmaps and timetables, is needed in order to meet the challenges of 5G, addressing human, machine-to-machine (M2M) and Internet of Things (IoT) communications at various levels: connection speed, mobility, latency, ubiquity, duty cycle, reliability, accessibility, etc., and to ensure a smooth transition period towards 5G in all Member States;
15. Points out that the rollout of 5G wireless networks requires VHC backhaul and flexible and efficient use of all available non-contiguous parts of the spectrum, including the 700 Mhz band, for widely different network deployment scenarios, which will require the development of innovative spectrum licensing models and a clear emphasis on harmonising the available spectrum bands on a regional basis;

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16. Acknowledges the importance of licensed spectrum bands to ensure long-term network investment and guarantee better quality of services, by enabling steady and reliable spectrum access, while also underlining the need for better legal protection for unlicensed spectrum bands and various methods of sharing spectrum bands;
17. Points out that a lack of coordination constitutes a substantial risk in terms of 5G deployment, as gaining critical mass is crucial for attracting investments and thus reaping the full benefits of 5G technology;
18. Notes that all sector players should benefit from a predictable level playing field that drives competition and should enjoy the flexibility to design their own networks, choosing their investment models and the combination of technologies which should ensure complete functionality for 5G deployment objectives, such as FTTH, cable, satellite, Wi-Fi, WiGig, G.fast, 2G, Massive MIMO, or any other rapid development technologies, provided that they will help connect all Europeans to VHC networks according to their real needs; notes that 5G deployment will require much more fibre in a denser wireless network;
19. Notes the Commission's communication on 'Connectivity for a Competitive Digital Single Market' and its '5G for Europe Action Plan', which present an exciting opportunity for Member States to enable their cultural and creative innovators, in particular SMEs, to compete further on the global stage and showcase their entrepreneurial and innovative talent;

II. *Enabling gigabit society benefits*

20. Believes that 5G is more than an evolution of mobile broadband and that it will be a key enabler of the future digital world as the next generation of ubiquitous ultra-high broadband infrastructure that will support the transformation of processes in all economic sectors (public sector, education, converged media content delivery, healthcare, research, energy, utilities, manufacturing, transportation, the automotive industry, audiovisual, virtual reality (VR), online gaming and so forth) and provide affordable, agile, flexible, interactive, reliable and highly personalised services that should improve every citizen's life;
21. Notes that the European fragmentation in the rollout of 4G, still visible in the major differences between Member States as illustrated by the 2015 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), has resulted in a lack of digital competitiveness vis-à-vis the USA, China, Japan, South Korea and emerging economies; in this regard, underlines that while Europe is progressing in terms of digital development, the pace is slowing down, which constitutes a long-term risk to necessary investments and to the attractiveness of the European business environment;
22. Recalls that the ultimate beneficiaries of the introduction of 5G should be the end users and that any decision made in the rollout of 5G technologies should always remain oriented towards this ultimate purpose of offering affordable, trustworthy and high-quality services;
23. Notes that public and private sector investment bring a multiplier effect across the economy and that this is likely to create up to 2,3 million jobs directly and indirectly in the 28 Member States when 5G is fully deployed;
24. Notes that the deployment of 5G technologies in Europe is expected to have benefits that extend far beyond the mobile industry, as well as trickle-down effects amounting to EUR 141,8 billion annually by 2025;
25. Stresses that the success of a rapid EU-wide 5G rollout depends on the development of demand-driven new business models; highlights that there is a myriad of initiatives contributing to the requirements clarification for 5G, which makes it difficult for vertical industries to contribute to the process; stresses, therefore, that vertical industries need to be actively engaged in the requirements process in an efficient manner;
26. Stresses that fair competition and a level playing field for market participants are key necessities for the deployment of the gigabit society by market participants; believes that the principle of 'same services, same risk, same rules' should apply in this respect;

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27. Believes that the Commission and the Member States, together with all relevant stakeholders, should consider measures on how to incentivise advanced trials and test beds in order to accelerate innovation in 5G applications;

28. Notes that a gigabit society should tackle the digital divide and improve internet take-up; notes that continued investment is still needed in rolling out existing and future technologies, including satellite technologies, in rural and remote areas; highlights that a smart combination of private and public investments is necessary to tackle the digital divide of rural and remote areas; stresses that lessons learnt in the past should be used to address disparities between Member States, regions and dense and remote populations, supporting a balanced geographical development;

29. Points to the fact that while the digital divide is present between cities and rural areas, it is also highly present between Member States; stresses, in this regard, the importance of a competitive legislative framework and initiatives which encourage investments in infrastructure, increase the diversity of actors and strengthen European coordination;

30. Points out that 5G will be the cornerstone in realising the vision of the Networked Society and will increase the possibilities for living, studying and working in the European Union, which is a prerequisite for people and companies to fully benefit from the digital revolution;

31. Considers that facilitating deployments of 5G small cells consistent with the WiFi4EU Regulation will contribute to reducing the digital and technological divide and increasing 5G service availability to all citizens;

32. Stresses that Europe has to keep pace with technological developments and opportunities, which are provided by more efficient ICT technologies to support socio-economic development in today's underdeveloped regions;

33. Stresses that in order to benefit from the full service potential of the 5G technological mobile standard, a dense fibre network is the indispensable backhaul infrastructure;

34. Welcomes the WiFi4EU initiative to promote free and universal access to the internet in local communities by means of an EU-funded scheme implemented by the Member States; notes that the WiFi4EU initiative aims to promote digital inclusiveness across regions by allocating funds in a geographically balanced way while also paying attention to the quality of users' service experience; notes that access speeds are increasing, and that as usage across multiple wireless devices grows, WLAN will need to match end-to-end connectivity demands; believes that a policy framework with specific priorities is needed to overcome the obstacles that the market alone cannot cover;

35. Calls on the Commission to pay special attention to indoor coverage in its 5G Action Plan, considering that a large number of 5G applications will be used inside homes and offices; recalls the poor building penetration of higher frequency networks; recommends the assessment of additional technologies to ensure good indoor coverage, such as Massive MIMO, indoor repeaters and WiGig high-speed Wi-Fi applications;

36. Stresses that the development of 5G technologies is a cornerstone for transforming the ICT network infrastructure towards all-encompassing smart connectivity: smart cars, smart grids, smart cities, smart factories, smart governments and beyond; believes that ultrafast broadband and intelligent, efficient network features that achieve near-instantaneous connectivity between people, human-to-machine and connected machines will come to redefine end user connectivity, which will be enabled by network paradigms such as mesh networks, hybrid networks, dynamic network slicing and softwarisation technologies;

37. Underlines that high energy performance targeting reduced network energy consumption is a critical requirement of 5G; emphasises that this element is crucial to reduce operational costs, to facilitate network connectivity in rural and remote areas and to provide network access in a sustainable and resource-efficient way;

38. Stresses that 5G deployment requires the significant upgrade of fixed networks and the densification of mobile networks in line with gigabit society targets, especially in solutions for e-health;

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39. Emphasises that the audiovisual sector is one of the key drivers for the success of 5G in Europe, providing jobs and economic growth, and that its progress can make a strong and positive impact on the audiovisual media value chain, including content production, innovation, distribution and the user environment; calls on the Commission and Member States, therefore, to take into account the needs and specificities of this sector, in particular those related to broadcasting;

40. Notes that once networked, vehicles are consistently safer (with fewer accidents), greener (with less emissions) and contribute to more predictable travel patterns; therefore supports the idea of introducing an EU-wide target for all vehicles available on the EU market to become 5G-enabled and to feature on-board ITS equipment; strongly supports the goal of 5G-enabling base-station networked ambulances and other emergency vehicles (police cars, fire engines) for ongoing and uninterrupted coverage during interventions;

41. Notes the benefits of reliable and uninterrupted 5G coverage for road safety, enabling connected and digital means of control, such as smart tachographs and e-documents, for heavy goods vehicles;

42. Believes that 5G should enable new affordable and high-quality services, connect new industries and ultimately improve the customer experience for increasingly sophisticated and demanding digital users; highlights that 5G can offer solutions to important societal challenges through its ability to significantly cut the energy use of mobile devices and through its potential to transform sectors such as health and transport;

43. Welcomes the Connecting Europe Broadband Fund, a fund for broadband infrastructure open to participation of National Promotional Banks and Institutions and of private investors, which will be a step further to bring infrastructure investments to underserved less populated and rural and remote areas;

44. Considers that the development and improvement of digital skills is crucial and should take place through major investment in education — including vocational, entrepreneurial and further training, as well as retraining — and through the comprehensive participation of all relevant stakeholders, including social partners, with three main objectives: to retain and create technological jobs by training a highly skilled workforce, to support citizens in taking control of their digital existence by providing the necessary tools and to end digital illiteracy, which is a cause of digital divide and exclusion;

45. Considers that the Union should establish and make available 5G skills development curricula in partnership with EIT Digital, with an emphasis on start-ups and SMEs in order for them to reap the benefits of 5G deployment;

46. Stresses that the development of 5G networks will foster rapid technological changes permitting the full deployment of the digital sector, smart technology, the Internet of Things and advanced manufacturing systems;

47. Emphasises the importance of 5G for enabling European global leadership in providing high-end research infrastructure, which could make Europe the centre for excellent research;

III. Policy approach

48. Welcomes the Commission initiative to reinforce the Investment Plan for Europe within financing instruments (EFSI, CEF) earmarked to finance strategic objectives for gigabit connectivity until 2025;

49. Emphasises that all decisions related to the Digital Single Market, including spectrum allocation, connectivity targets and 5G deployment, must be formulated based on future needs and how the market is expected to develop over the next 10-15 years; stresses, in this regard, that a successful 5G deployment will be key to economic competitiveness, which can only be achieved through far-sighted European legislation and policy coordination;

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50. Stresses that policies on the gigabit society and 5G should be proportionate, frequently revised and in accordance with the 'Innovation Principle', so that potential effects on innovation will be part of the impact assessment;

51. Calls on the Commission to ensure, maintain and develop long-term financing for the 5G Action Plan and the network modernisation at the appropriate level within the horizon of the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2020-2027 and particularly the next RTD&I Framework; underlines the importance of cooperation between academia, research institutions, the private sector and the public sector on research and development concerning 5G mobile communications; points to the 5G PPP as a positive example in this regard; points out that, according to the Commission, an investment of EUR 500 billion will be required over the next decade in order to reach the connectivity targets, although it also estimates that there is an investment shortfall of EUR 155 billion; takes the view, therefore, that top priority needs to be given to ensuring that there is sufficient investment triggered by competition for the deployment of digital infrastructure, as that deployment is imperative in order to enable citizens and businesses to reap the benefits of the development of 5G technology;

52. Urges all Member States to implement rapidly the provisions in Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union ⁽¹⁾, with the aim of ensuring an adequate level of security in making this plan efficient and sustainable;

53. Believes that the best path towards the gigabit society lies in a future-proof, pro-competitive and technology-neutral approach supported by a broad range of investment models such as public-private or co-investments; notes that co-investment and other forms of collaborative investment and long-term commercial access arrangements for very high capacity networks can help to pool resources, enable different flexible frameworks and lower deployment costs;

54. Calls on the Member States to implement the 5G Action Plan fully through coherent, inclusive and timely action in regions and cities in order to encourage and incentivise cross-sector innovation and foster an economic industry-wide cooperative framework;

55. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take the lead in promoting intersectoral, cross-lingual 5G and cross-border interoperability and supporting privacy-friendly, reliable, secure services as industry and society at large become increasingly more dependent on digital infrastructure for their business and services, and to consider economic and geographic national circumstances as an integral part of a common strategy;

56. Calls for efforts on standardisation to be stepped up with a view to ensuring that Europe plays a leading role in setting technology standards allowing for the deployment of 5G networks and services; believes that the European standardisation bodies should play a special role in this process; notes that each sector should work out its own roadmap for standardisation, relying on industry-led processes, with a strong will to reach common standards that have the potential to become worldwide standards; calls on the Commission and the Member States to incentivise investments in research and development and European standardisation;

57. Stresses that 5G has the potential to revolutionise access to, and dissemination of, content and to substantially enhance the user experience, while at the same time allowing the development of new forms of cultural and creative content; highlights, in this context, the need for effective measures to fight piracy and a comprehensive approach to improve the enforcement of intellectual property rights to ensure easy routes to legal content for consumers;

58. Strongly encourages increased experimentation with 5G technologies; supports the development of integrated solutions and tests followed by cross-industry trials of large-scale pilots in response to demand for services in the gigabit society; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure sufficient unlicensed frequency bands to stimulate experiments conducted by the industry; asks the Commission to consider setting a concrete and appealing target as a framework for private sector experimentation with 5G technologies and products;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 194, 19.7.2016, p. 1.

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59. Stresses the need to take account of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines, formally recognised by the WHO, in order to avoid inconsistency and fragmentation and to ensure consistent wireless network deployment conditions on the European Digital Single Market;

60. Highlights that the development of the gigabit society requires clear, common EU rules that are future-oriented and pro-competitive in order to drive investment and innovation and preserve affordability and consumer choice; stresses that infrastructure-based competition offers the potential for efficient regulation and allows for a fair long-term return on investments; encourages the Member States to simplify the administrative procedures for accessing physical infrastructure;

61. Underlines the need to establish an innovation-friendly environment for digital services, especially in the area of big data and IoT, broadening consumer choice whilst increasing trust and promoting the take-up of digital services, through efficient and streamlined rules, and focusing on the needs of the users and characteristics of services, irrespective of the kind of provider;

62. Stresses that National Broadband Plans need to be reviewed and, where appropriate, revised carefully, target all 5G areas, maintain a multi-technology, competitive approach, support regulatory certainty and maximise the scope of innovation and coverage, with one of the targets being to bridge the digital divide;

63. Calls on the Commission to assess the National Broadband Plans to identify gaps, and to formulate country-specific recommendations for further action;

64. Welcomes the Commission initiative to establish the Participatory Broadband Platform to ensure the high-level engagement of public and private entities, as well as local and regional authorities;

65. Emphasises that ensuring internet access and guaranteeing high-speed, reliable, low-latency and low-jitter internet connectivity are essential for digitising processes and the value chain in the tourism sector, as well as for the development and deployment of transport technologies such as Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems (C-ITS), River Information Services (RIS) and European Rail Traffic Management Systems (ERTMS);

66. Recalls that SMEs would benefit greatly from competitive access to 5G solutions; calls on the Commission to detail its action plans to facilitate the participation of SMEs and start-ups in experimentation with 5G technologies and to ensure them access to the 5G Participatory Broadband Platform;

67. Supports EU-level initiatives to ensure greater spectrum coordination between Member States and long-term licence durations, which will increase the stability and certainty of investments; notes that the decisions on these issues should be taken at the same time in all Member States to adopt binding guidance on certain conditions of the assignment process, such as the deadlines for spectrum allocation, spectrum sharing and jointly organised auctions, with the ambition of promoting trans-European networks; points out that the competitive nature of mobile telecoms markets in the European Union is crucial in the generation shift to 5G;

68. Calls on the EU to coordinate efforts within the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with a view to ensuring coherent EU policy; stresses that European spectrum harmonisation needs for 5G beyond 2020 should be finalised before the 2019 World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-19), with due protection of the existing services relied upon today and in line with decisions taken at the WRC-15;

69. Stresses that the definition of VHC networks laid down in the European Electronic Communications Code should comply with the principle of technological neutrality provided such technologies meet the needs for quality of network services that industrial and consumer applications will require in the future;

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70. Calls on the Commission to establish an annual progress review and draw up recommendations on the 5G Action Plan, and inform Parliament of the results;

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71. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.
