Developments at EU level October 2012 – December 2012

October 2012

Digital Agenda: Commission asks Court of Justice to fine Belgium over non-transparent "must-carry" TV and radio rules

24 October 2012 — The European Commission is asking the European Court of Justice (ECJ) to impose a fine on Belgium because it has not correctly implemented EU telecom rules when awarding "must-carry" status to broadcast content, even after the Court's judgement of March 2011. "Must-carry" rules require cable companies or telecom operators to carry specified radio and TV broadcast channels and services where a significant number of consumers use them as their principal means to receive radio or TV broadcasts. The Commission is suggesting a lump sum calculated on the basis of €5397/day for the period between the first and eventual second Court ruling and a daily penalty payment of €31 251.20 for each day after the second Court ruling until Belgium complies with the judgment.

Digital Agenda: Commission consults on Future and Emerging Technologies

26 October 2012 - The European Commission is launching a public consultation to identify promising and potentially game-changing directions for future technological research. The research directions for future and emerging technologies will shape our economy for decades to come.

November 2012

Commission to defend access to open Internet and freedom of speech at global Internet Governance Forum conference in Azerbaijan

1 November 2012 — The European Commission will use the opportunity of the annual global conference of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Baku (5-9 November) to defend the open Internet and promote the Internet as a frontline in efforts to ensure freedom of speech globally, including in Azerbaijan. These efforts will advance the Commission's No Disconnect Strategy and its support for multi-stakeholder governance of the Internet.

Digital Agenda: Commission Decision paves the way for 4G in Europe

5 November 2012 — The European Commission has today decided to add another 120 MHz to the radio spectrum portfolio for 4G technologies, such as LTE (Long Term Evolution), around the 2 GHz band. This band is currently solely used for UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System) wireless communications, known as 3G networks. The Decision makes it mandatory for Member States to open the relevant spectrum by 30 June 2014 at the latest, and lays down harmonised technical conditions to allow coexistence between different technologies. On this basis the EU will enjoy up to twice the amount of spectrum for high speed wireless broadband as in the United States, namely around 1000 MHz.

Active and healthy ageing: concrete action plans for a better life for older Europeans

6 November 2012 — The first Conference of Partners of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing takes place in Brussels today. The Conference is headlined by European Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes, Commissioner Maire Geoghegan Quinn, Kathleen Lynch, the Irish Minister of State from the Department of Health and Department of Justice, and the Spanish Secretary General of Health and Consumers, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, María Pilar Farjas Abadía.

Enhancing freedom of expression in Azerbaijan

9 November 2012 —At the end of a meeting with the Azerbaijani media on the safety of journalists held yesterday in Baku, Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission, stated that they stand ready to support progress in Azerbaijan in the field of securing the right to freedom of expression and media freedom, both offline and online.

Digital Agenda: Tech CEOs and leaders kickstart new EU cloud computing board

19 November 2012 — The Steering Board of the new European Cloud Partnership (ECP) met for the first time in Brussels today, kicking-off a process where public authorities and industry work together to help building the EU Digital Single Market for cloud computing pursuant to the European Cloud Computing Strategy. Specifically, the ECP aims at leveraging the public sector's buying power to shape the growing and maturing market for cloud computing services.

State aid: Commission clears UK umbrella support scheme for broadband investment 'BDUK'

20 November 2012 — The European Commission has found that a UK umbrella support scheme for investments in next generation access (NGA) broadband networks, 'BDUK', is in line with EU state aid rules. In particular, the scheme is aimed at supporting local projects in rural and remote areas, where such networks would unlikely be developed on commercial terms.

Digital Agenda: EU and US sign joint declaration to make the internet safer for kids

20 November 2012 — European Commission Vice President for the Digital Agenda Neelie Kroes and the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano have today signed a Joint Declaration in London, committing to make the Internet a safer and better place for children.

Council for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (26-27 November)

23 November 2012 — The Council for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport takes place in Brussels on 26-27 November. The Council will take note of the state of play of the European Commission's proposals for the 'Erasmus for All' and 'Creative Europe' programmes, which will start in 2014. Neelie Kroes, Vice-President responsible for the Digital Agenda, Joaquín Almunia, Vice-President responsible for Competition, and Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, will represent the Commission.

Digital Agenda: European Commission supports research on Cyber security

26 November 2012 — Cybercrime is a growing global problem that no company or country can tackle alone. At any given time, an estimated 150 000 viruses and other types of malicious code are circulating across the internet, infecting more than a million people every day. Anti-virus software developer McAfee counts 75 million unique pieces of malicious malware code on its databases, with botnets spewing out spam that account for a third of all the emails sent every day. Bots are one of the most sophisticated and popular types of cybercrime today. They allow hackers to take control of many computers at a time, and turn them into "zombie" computers, which operate as part of a powerful "botnet" to spread viruses, generate spam, and commit other types of online crime and fraud. The worldwide cost of cybercrime is estimated at over €750 billion annually in wasted time, lost business opportunities and the expense of fixing problems.

Digital Agenda: EU defends open internet at Dubai international telecommunications conference

30 November 2012 — The 193 Member countries of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) will meet in Dubai from 3rd to 14th December 2012 to review the International Telecommunications Regulations (ITR) Treaty. The World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) will review the Treaty for the first time since 1988. Since then the situation in many ITU countries has changed dramatically – in most cases the previously state-owned monopoly telecommunications providers have been privatised and competition introduced to national markets, not to mention the dramatic changes brought by the internet.

December 2012

Digital Agenda: Commission proposes rules to make government websites accessible for all

3 December 2012 — Over 100 million EU citizens would find it easier to use online public services to look for a job, register a car, submit a tax declaration and apply for a passport or driving license thanks to new rules proposed today by the European Commission on the International Day of People with Disability. The Commission's proposal for a Directive on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites would introduce mandatory EU standardised accessibility features, from the end of 2015, for 12 types of websites. Mandatory accessibility would apply to essential government services like social security and health related services, job searches, university applications and issuing of personal documents and certificates (see annex for full list) The proposed new rules would also clarify what web accessibility means (technical specs, methodology for assessment, reporting, bottom up testing), and governments would be encouraged to apply the rules across all services, not only the mandatory list.

Putting patients in the driving seat: A digital future for healthcare

7 December 2012 — The European Commission has unveiled an Action Plan to address barriers to the full use of digital solutions in Europe's healthcare systems. The goal is to improve healthcare for the benefit of patients, give patients more control of their care and bring down costs. While patients and health professionals are enthusiastically using telehealth solutions and millions of Europeans have downloaded smartphone apps to keep track of their health and wellbeing, digital healthcare has yet to reap its great potential to improve healthcare and generate efficiency savings.

eHealth action plan 2012-2020: Frequently Asked Questions

7 December 2012 — eHealth means using digital tools and services for health. eHealth covers the interaction between patients and health-service providers, institution-to-institution transmission of data, or peer-to-peer communication between patients and/or health professionals. Examples include health information networks, electronic health records, telemedicine services,

wearable and portable personal health systems and many other information and communication technology (ICT)-based tools assisting disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment and follow up.

Digital Agenda – European Commission raises serious doubts over contradictory Polish proposal on broadband market

10 December 2012 — The European Commission has expressed serious doubts over plans by the Polish telecoms regulator UKE to deregulate part of the Polish wholesale broadband access market. UKE's proposal is based on an out-dated market assessment from March 2011. Moreover, the proposal contradicts a more recent market analysis dating from March 2012 where UKE concluded that no single area was competitive enough in Poland to propose complete deregulation. The Commission has therefore suspended UKE's plans and started a two month in-depth investigation.

Digital Agenda: Commission suspends Czech proposal to regulate wholesale termination rates

10 December 2012 — The European Commission has expressed serious doubts about a new proposal from the Czech telecoms regulator (ČTÚ) regarding termination rates which would negatively affect consumers in the Czech Republic. The prices proposed by ČTÚ for certain termination services are twice as high as prices in other countries where proper price setting methodologies are applied. ČTÚ has imposed wholesale prices which do not take into consideration next-generation-network based efficient technologies. Termination rates are the rates telecoms networks charge each other to deliver calls between networks, and each operator has market power over access to customers on its own network. These costs are ultimately included in call prices paid by consumers and businesses.