IBM Newsroom

Joint Statement: Policymakers Must Stimulate Advanced Connectivity and Digitalization to Secure Europe's Competitiveness

• Ericsson, IBM, Intel, Nokia, and Vodafone call for policymakers to stimulate advanced connectivity and digitalization to secure Europe's competitiveness

• Policymakers should strive to achieve a true Digital Single Market, address the digital connectivity investment gap, and avoid introducing unnecessary regulatory burdens on businesses

• Joint statement comes ahead of a meeting between D9+ Ministers in Dublin on April 19, 2024

Five leading technology companies today called for urgent action from policymakers to stimulate Europe's digital competitiveness and ensure that it remains on the priority list for the incoming European Commission.

Ahead of a meeting between D9+ digital ministers in Dublin, Ericsson, IBM (NYSE:IBM), Intel, Nokia, and Vodafone argued that policymakers should strive to achieve a true Digital Single Market, address the digital connectivity investment gap, and avoid introducing unnecessary regulatory burdens for companies operating in the digital ecosystem.

Senior representatives of the five companies – Robert Condon, (Head of Government & Policy Advocacy, EMEA, Ericsson), Thomas Reynaert (Vice President, Government & Regulatory Affairs, EMEA, IBM), Hendrik Bourgeois, (Vice President, Government Affairs Europe, Intel), Marc Vancoppenolle (Vice President, Policy & Government Affairs, EU & Europe, Nokia), and Joakim Reiter (Chief External & Corporate Affairs Officer, Vodafone) – said:

"Europe must seize the opportunity to become a global leader in the industrial internet, capitalizing on the potential of emerging technologies like AI, quantum computing, and 5G Standalone connectivity. Member States and the EU must work with industry to drive the deployment of a world-class digital infrastructure, the adoption of productivity-boosting tools, and ensure that the regulatory environment is fit for the future."

The companies highlighted five key policy actions needed to drive EU competitiveness through technology:

- **Accelerate the development of a true Digital Single Market.**

Policymakers must focus on the consistent, coherent implementation of existing regulations on the digital ecosystem, working to leverage the power of a true Digital Single Market. They should avoid introducing new regulatory burdens that make it difficult for telecoms companies speed up network deployments, or for other businesses to adopt digital tools.

- **Incentivise investment in advanced connectivity.**

Europe needs healthy telecoms operators with the scale to invest in 5G Standalone, fibre and, in the future, 6G. The regulatory framework for telecoms needs modernising, including through a fresh approach to merger control and spectrum allocation, involving longer licences and harmonised rules across Member States. Advanced connectivity solutions, which are needed to optimise the use of energy and natural resources in line with EU sustainability goals, should also become part of the EU's taxonomy in order to attract green financing to support network deployments.

- **Regulate B2B and consumer-facing technologies differently.**

European policy objectives should focus on fixing market failures, ensuring a level playing field, and addressing identified risks to society. When considering regulation, policymakers should distinguish between B2B service providers – usually operating under well-functioning contractual agreements, with limited access to client data – and companies with consumer facing products or services.

- **Foster policies that make trusted companies thrive in Europe.**

The policy environment must encourage trusted companies to thrive in Europe through trade, recruitment, and research. Cooperation between like-minded countries, including transatlantic cooperation, also remains essential to supporting a positive business environment.

- **Ensure Europe is ready to reap the benefits of quantum and AI.**

The quantum era will be as transformative as it is disruptive, leading to breakthroughs in strategic industries like healthcare, finance, and logistics. It will also create new challenges for security. Policymakers should prepare for the quantum era by promoting early-stage experimentation in industrial application and deployment, encouraging resilient supply chains, and incentivising private sector investment in Europe. Policymakers should also focus on preparing critical infrastructure for migration to quantum-safe standards as part of their cybersecurity policy planning – areas that deserve particular and increased R&D support. In that context, European R&D funding mechanisms and processes should be better coordinated and improved.

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