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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2016 to implement the outcome of the WSIS

Submission by

European Union

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 20th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

1. Executive summary

Digitalisation has an important role to play in a wide range of areas including job creation and private sector development, gender equality and women empowerment, good governance, transparency and accountability, the fight against corruption, access to micro-finance, improving access to public services - notably energy, education, health, developing agriculture or protecting the environment and addressing climate change. As such, digital solutions can help combat poverty, manage migration and address shortcomings in a number of EU partner countries where digital entrepreneurship and SME's, mobile financing or blockchain secured transactions, eServices, eGovernment, eIdentification and civil registries, can increase prosperity and reduce inequalities.

For the last two decades the EU has been active in the promotion of the digital technologies in the developing countries. The EU assistance for digitalisation has mainly targeted regulatory harmonisation and infrastructure deployment. The main goal was to create the enabling environment for investments and affordable connectivity. Today, many partner countries, especially the lowest income ones, are unable to fully participate in and benefit from the digitalisation, reduce inequalities and address the root causes of migration.

The EU in its Digital4Development initiative is planning to mainstream digital technologies and services across overall development policies and projects touching governance, food safety, education, health and promote growth and jobs by supporting the development of local digital economy and entrepreneurship.

Ensuring that the Internet continues to function in a reliable and stable way and its governance is balanced, inclusive and transparent is a fundamental building block for many initiatives at European level, most notably for the completion of the Digital Single Market.

2. Contribution to date

EU development cooperation support to the ICT sector has been focused predominantly within two areas: infrastructure (broadband and connectivity); and policy related issues such as harmonisation of policy and legal and regulatory frameworks, interconnection of research and education networks etc.

In the ACP countries, examples within the first category include the Seychelles East African Submarine Cable System (€4 million contribution), African Internet Exchange System (AXIS) project (€5.1 million contribution), the Satellite enhanced Telemedicine and e-Health for sub-Saharan Africa (4M€ EU contribution), EASSy (€2.6M EU contribution) and Africa Connect (€20 million for all components). These investments are all funded through the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF) - an important funding instrument to leverage loans for infrastructure investment including for ICT. The

AITF has allocated a total of €18.6 million, close to five percent of its portfolio, as grants in support of a number of ICT projects.

Within infrastructure the investments made have been of moderate scale, for example the ongoing discussions with Brazil, regarding a new transatlantic connection between Europe and Brazil[1], foresee an EU budgetary contribution of €25 million. The satellite-enhanced telemedicine and e-health for sub-Saharan Africa project is another example being funding up to approximately €4 million.

Policy harmonisation has been targeted with the main objective to achieve strong legal and regulatory frameworks, and independent national regulators, in order to further market liberalisation and subsequent private sector investment. This has been done for the ACP contents under the 'Support for Harmonisation of ICT Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa' (HIPSSA), its planned successor HIP Africa and the EMERG platform There is currently a project proposal under preparation which will support national authorities in charge of spectrum to manage spectrum allocations.

In the second group there is also a category of projects concerned with connecting European research and education institutions with institutions based in partnership countries. The GÉANT network was initially a Pan-European initiative to interconnect national research and education networking (NREN) organisations. GÉANT currently manages networking projects serving Europe (GÉANT Project), the Eastern Partnership countries (EaPConnect), the Mediterranean (EUMEDCONNECT3), Central Asia (CAREN2), Latin Ametrica (RedClara), the Caribbean ((C@ribnet), and Africa (AfricaConnect2). Initially these networks were pure infrastructure networks but with time they have evolved into research collaboration platforms and have the potential to expand ICT cooperation even further.

In Asia and the Pacific, the EU has supported the Trans-Eurasia Information Network (TEIN), a similar initiative to GÉANT for the Asia-Pacific region. It interconnects Asian researchers and counterparts in Europe via direct links to the GÉANT network, providing the Asia-Pacific countries with a gateway for global research collaboration. TEIN currently connects eighteen countries in the Asian and South Asia region. The current TEIN4 is the fourth generation of TEIN network. In the same region there are also various cooperation platforms with India for research and the forthcoming EU-India co-operation on ICT-related standardisation, policy and legislation.

In CELAC, support is provided to the consortium BELLA: Building European Link to Latin America who will benefit from the planned optic fibre cable connection between Latin America and the EU. BELLA is composed of 12 European and Latin American Research and Education Networks: RedCLARA (the Latin American regional network, leader in collaboration with GÉANT), GÉANT (the European regional network), and the networks from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Germany. In total €93 million has been allocated to ICT in Latin America with a focus on institutional strengthening and broadband connectivity.

As accompanying support measures, there are a number of projects focusing on cyber-security and cybercrime some of which are implemented together with the Council of Europe such as the GLACY+ project and a cyber-security initiative about to be launched as a collaborative effort between Member States.

A list of on on-going and planned EU-funded ICT programmes and projects worldwide (not including those in accession countries) is provided at the end of Annex I[2].

H2020 programme

In parallel to the external actions framework, important support to ICT has been channelled in the form of research grants through the Horizon 2020 (H2020) programme. To date, approximately €11 million worth of grants have been allocated to four projects, all located in Sub-Saharan Africa (two within e-health, one within Big Data and one within geospatial data for land tenure[3]). The next phase of programming (2016-2017) expands opportunities to low income regions by way of an Innovations Action component focusing on new technology adaptation.

The upcoming Call under Horizon 2020 on international partnerships in low- and middle income countries emphasises the importance of innovation actions for end-beneficiaries. This may include technological improvements and adaptations as well as innovative service creation based on existing technologies. The targeted countries under this action are sub-Saharan Africa and ASEAN countries. The development of end-user representatives (e.g. Innovation Hubs or Living Labs) is expected to strengthen cooperative research links and support greater awareness among regional stakeholders.

Internet governance

In the area of Internet governance, the EU continued to promote a vision firmly anchored in the defence of human rights and democratic values (including freedom of expression, the right to privacy and the freedom of peaceful assembly and association) and where the same rights that apply offline are also protected online. An open, stable and robust Internet, accessible to all, is essential to the continued development of the digital economy, as well as for the empowerment of citizens.

Concrete progress has been made with the establishment of the first EU-wide rules on net neutrality. They protect the right of every European to access internet content, applications and services without discrimination while leaving space for network innovation.

The EU remained committed to the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance which ensures that all interested parties have a voice in determining issues of interest to all. The European contribution to the successful transition of the stewardship of the IANA functions to the multistakeholder global community has been substantial.

At the same time, efforts continue for improving and enhancing the multistakeholder model by making it more inclusive, balanced and responsive to the challenges of Internet governance. In this context, the EU showed continued support for the work of the Internet Governance Forum as well as its regional and national "off-springs". In June 2016 the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) was held in Brussels in

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[3] See: http://www.hahn-schickard.de/projekte-publikationen/projekte/dmc-malvec/; https://www.create-net.org/news/waziup-first-opensource-platform-internet-things-and-big-data-africa; https://www.itc.nl/Pub/services/Major-projects/its4land.html;

close cooperation with the European Commission. Its outcomes are summarised in the booklet "messages from Brussels"[4].

Work on the development of a Global Internet Policy Observatory (GIPO) continued with the creation of a first prototype[5] at the disposal of all interested users and organisations to increase capacity)building on Internet governance. GIPO is an automatic online tool to monitor and analyse Internet policy in real-time across the world. An African civil society organisation[6] for ICT4D has already embedded the tool in their website and tailored it to their particular needs and objectives.

3. Future initiatives

The Commission Communication[7], which proposes a new Consensus on Development, aims to update the development response to current global challenges and to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It also provides a shared vision regarding the promotion of information and communication technologies in developing countries. The Communication proposes that the EU and its Member states will continue to develop their support for promoting information and communication technologies in developing countries as powerful enablers of growth ("Digital for Development") and will focus on better mainstreaming digital solutions in development across the priority areas

EU Development policy will play a role in helping partner countries to tackle challenges and to seize the opportunities digitalisation can offer in a globalised environment. It can contribute to the promotion of the vision of access to affordable broadband connectivity for all, creating relevant content and globally competitive services enabled by an open and free Internet and protecting human rights, including privacy.

In that respect, it is considered important that the Commission continues to develop its support for promoting information and communication technologies in developing countries as powerful enablers of growth. For that purpose, the Commission proposes "Digital4Development" as a framework for mainstreaming digital technologies, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensuring an effective delivery.

We will pursue the following priorities:

  i.   ensure access to affordable and secure broadband connectivity and to digital infrastructure;
 ii.   promote digital literacy and skills;
iii.   foster digital entrepreneurship (SMEs) and job creation; and
 iv.   promote the use of digital technologies as an enabler for sustainable development

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[4] https://www.eurodig.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Messages_from_Brussels.pdf

[5] http://observatory.giponet.org/

[6] http://www.acsis-scasi.org/en/acsis-gipo-cooperation-global-internet-policy-observatory/

[7] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-3884_en.htm