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Contribution by

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National experiences of Montenegro: Digital Platforms Development

- From the scope of competencies of the Ministry of Economy, Directorate for Electronic Communications, Postal Services and Radio-Spectrum:

The Strategy for Information Society Development in Montenegro (2016-2020) set the strategic directions of development in this area aimed at achieving the EU standards, as defined in the Digital Agenda 2020 and the Single Digital Market Strategy. Besides the ICT development issues in key areas, the Strategy also addresses the problem of digital skills lacking, as it significantly affects the multiplication effects that modern technologies should have on general productivity growth.

Digital technologies push the developments in industry, trade, services and strengthen the overall national competitiveness. Rapid adoption of digital technologies in the economy guarantees rapid diffusion of the benefits that they bring. Like energy or traffic, the Internet has become an integral part of a critical infrastructure and an important factor in the development of a modern economy.

Current electronic communications networks and infrastructure in Montenegro enable the use of state-of-the-art technologies for the provision of services. Via such networks and infrastructure, users in Montenegro are served with all existing electronic communications services provided globally. We can say that the current service portfolio and quality of services meet the needs of citizens and industry. This is valid for electronic communication services, while advanced Internet of Things (IoT) solutions are yet to be implemented in full extent.

The legal framework for electronic communications in Montenegro has been harmonized with the *acquis* (EU law). It has already been implemented thoroughly, so now the operators have a stable business environment, while customers have the possibility to select service providers and quality electronic communications services at affordable prices.

Operators' investments in the networks and infrastructure are significant in recent years. This is supported by a stable, transparent and predictable environment for investments promoted by the Government.

Having in mind its indispensable role in the provision of e-health services, e-education, e-government, ecommerce and many other services, broad band is treated as a critical infrastructure. The goal is to provide accessible and affordable broadband internet access that citizens will use in business, as well as in carrying out everyday activities. Special attention in this part is dedicated to the extension of the coverage in rural areas, since a balanced regional development of Montenegro is of great importance.

One of the most relevant institutions dealing with analysis of the situation in global and individual markets is The World Economic Forum. In the latest Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017, area of Network Readiness Index, Montenegro is ranked as 52nd out of 139 countries, with an index of 4,6.

According to the coverage of the population by mobile network signal (99%), Montenegro can be compared to the most developed countries in Europe. Coverage of the territory is over 90%. The coverage of the population by 3G signal has been significantly improved and it goes well over 90% in the networks of all of the three operators. The state-of-the-art LTE technology is currently available in about 70% of the territory of Montenegro, and LTE signal covers more than 90% of the population. Given the number of users, the level of competition, diversity of services and applied technologies, mobile communications networks and services represent the most developed segment of the electronic communications market in Montenegro.

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- From the scope of competencies of the Ministry of Economy, Directorate for Multilateral and Regional Trade Cooperation and Economic Relations with Foreign Countries:

Within the CEFTA Additional Protocol 6, which is expected to be adopted in 2018, there is an article concerning electronic commerce, which, inter alia, defines that CEFTA parties will not charge customs on cross-border consignments ordered in this way. At the same time, as part of the creation of a regional economic area through the Multi-annual Action Plan (MAP), one of the activities is the establishment of dialogue between the countries of the Western Balkans in the e-commerce area.

Note:

Negotiations on the amendments to the existing Free Trade Agreement between Montenegro and Turkey are in progress.