

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

In response to the Commission's European gigabit society communication, the Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee of the European Parliament has adopted an own-initiative report, due to be discussed in plenary in May. It calls for European global leadership in 5G, the next generation of wireless communication. Due to be available in 2020, 5G is expected to enable an array of new innovative services that will transform sectors such as manufacturing, energy, automotive, and health, bringing them into the era of the internet of things.

Background

In September 2016, the European Commission presented a [communication](#) 'Connectivity for a competitive digital single market – Towards a European gigabit society', proposing three new connectivity targets and policy measures as part of its [digital single market \(DSM\) strategy](#). The policy measures include three legislative proposals, that will review the current telecom framework dating back to 2009, and a 5G action plan. To achieve the European gigabit society by 2025, the Commission wants to roll out ubiquitous, very high-capacity networks and [5G](#), to boost Europe's global competitiveness and the [digitalisation of its industry](#). High-speed connectivity is also needed to cope with increasing internet [traffic](#) demand from consumers, businesses and connected devices. The Commission is keen to accelerate 5G deployment in Europe, so as not to fall behind other regions in the world, as has been the case [with 4G](#), still available in only 36 % of rural areas.

The 5G action plan

The Commission presented its 5G strategy in the [communication](#) '5G for Europe: an action plan'. It envisages, in particular, (i) a common EU calendar for a coordinated 5G commercial launch in 2020; (ii) encouraging national 5G deployment roadmaps, with early roll-out in at least one city per Member State in 2018, and all urban areas and major terrestrial transport paths to have uninterrupted 5G coverage by 2025; (iii) joint work with Member States and industry stakeholders to identify, allocate and coordinate spectrum bands for 5G ahead of the 2019 world radio communication [conference](#); and (iv) support to develop common global 5G standards through co-funding research and development. There is now a global race to research, develop and roll out 5G. The Commission supports this under the umbrella of the [Horizon 2020](#) EU research programme with the 5G-Public Private Partnership project ([5GPPP](#)), the world's largest programme, with €700 million in EU funding, to be topped up with private funding to reach a total budget of €3.5 billion by 2025.

European Parliament position

In the European Parliament, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) adopted an own-initiative [report](#) 'Internet connectivity for growth, competitiveness and cohesion: European gigabit society and 5G' (rapporteur: Michal Boni, EPP, Poland) on 25 April 2017. It welcomes the Commission's strategy and supports its targets, while calling for an explicit 5G deployment timetable including a technology-neutral approach that tackles the digital divide, and an ambitious 5G financing strategy including potential and existing EU funds. It also calls for an investment-friendly regulatory environment for fair competition, a coherent European spectrum strategy with improved coordination in the allocation of spectrum, and it demands the acceleration of the EU's 5G standardisation efforts. It also highlights the positive societal impacts that 5G would bring to Europe for improved learning, health, culture, cohesion and new job opportunities. To that end, it also calls for the development and improvement of digital skills. Finally, the report requests the Commission provide Parliament with an annual 5G action plan review, that includes progress made and recommendations.

Own-initiative report: [2016/2305 \(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: ITRE; Rapporteur: Michal Boni (EPP, Poland).

