Question for written answer E-007906/17
to the Commission
Giulia Moi (EFDD)
(20 December 2017)

Subject: Net neutrality

The Federal Communications Commission has voted to dismantle the US rules on net neutrality.

The authorities will cease to regard Internet connections as a public utility on a par with the telephone service, and Internet service providers will no longer be required to guarantee equal treatment for all online services, but will for instance be able to offer priority connection to certain content, make access subject to payment or limit access to users with certain types of subscription.

All this clearly implies a multi-speed Internet, which clearly conflicts with the principles of impartiality and independence of the network espoused by the Commission.

— What measures will the Commission take vis-à-vis the United States Government to protect European citizens who use US Internet connection services?

Answer given by Ms Gabriel on behalf of the Commission
(30 April 2018)

On 14 December 2017, the US regulator for telecoms, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), repealed the 2015 open Internet rules that prohibited Internet Service Providers in the US from blocking, throttling or providing paid prioritisation of Internet traffic.

In the EU, the regulation on open Internet (1) gives end-users the right to access and distribute the information, content, applications and services of their choice and bans blocking, throttling and discrimination between content, applications and services, or categories thereof. Adopted in November 2015 these rules have been directly applicable in all Member States since 30 April 2016. They ensure predictability and a consistent regulatory framework across the EU.

According to a recent Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) Report (2), the implementation of this regulation in the EU has been successful. The enforcement of the open Internet rules is an important task of national regulatory authorities which should respect the guidelines adopted by BEREC in August 2016. The Commission continues to closely monitor the application of the regulation.

European content and service providers serving customers in the US could be affected by the decision of the FCC, as they would not be protected by clear rules from practices such as blocking, throttling or prioritisation.

The Commission will follow the situation in the US following this repeal and its impact on Europeans.