Subject: Huawei-related security risks

On 28 March 2019, the UK’s cybersecurity agency reported that it had identified new risks linked to serious technical affecting Huawei software (1).

Its concerns are shared by European Commissioner Andrus Ansip who, in a statement given on 7 February 2018 (2), stressed that the EU should be worried about Huawei and other Chinese companies.

These statements come against a backdrop of tensions stemming from the decision by some Member States to deploy 5G with Chinese assistance, despite warnings from the US. According to the New York Times (3), new Chinese security laws force Huawei and other companies to provide information to intelligence services.

1. Does the Commission intend to protect the EU institutions, including members of their staff, from any security risks associated with Huawei software?

2. Where does the Commission stand on the involvement of Huawei and other Chinese companies in the deployment of 5G in the EU?

Answer given by Ms Gabriel on behalf of the European Commission
(30 September 2019)

The Commission has implemented all the required security measures to protect itself and its staff from any cybersecurity risks in close cooperation with the Computer Emergency Response Team for the EU institutions, bodies and agencies (CERT-EU). When acquiring its equipment, the Commission follows the principles of the EU directives on public procurement (4) (in particular transparency, open and fair competition …) while ensuring the highest security level standard.

On 26 March 2019, the Commission adopted a recommendation (5) to address the cybersecurity aspects of 5G at European level. Following this recommendation, most EU Member States have submitted national risk assessments. These assessments will feed into the next phase, a EU-wide risk assessment which should be completed by October 2019. By 31 December 2019, the Cooperation Group on security of network and information systems (NIS) should agree on a toolbox of mitigating measures. However, each Member State remains responsible for implementing specific measures related to the deployment of 5G.

The Commission Recommendation does not target individual suppliers or countries, but cybersecurity threats, which arise from technical and non-technical factors. The Commission launched an objective process in March 2019 to develop a common European approach to support Member States in identifying threats and vulnerabilities and mitigating risks.

The Commission has also launched a European 5G Observatory to monitor market developments, including trials and other actions taken by industry stakeholders and Member States in the context of 5G rollout in Europe.