



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2017)0488

Towards a digital trade strategy

European Parliament resolution of 12 December 2017 on “Towards a digital trade strategy” (2017/2065(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 207(3) and 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS),
- having regard to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Information Technology Agreement (ITA),
- having regard to the WTO Work Programme on E-commerce,
- having regard to the Joint Declaration by G7 ICT Ministers at the Meeting in Takamatsu, Kagawa on 29 and 30 April 2016,
- having regard to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Declaration on the Digital Economy in Cancun in 2016,
- having regard to the Dynamic Coalition on Trade at the Internet Governance Forum,
- having regard to the ongoing EU trade negotiations with third countries,
- having regard to the agreement in principle announced by the Commission on 6 July 2017 on the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement,
- having regard to Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000 on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market (Directive on electronic commerce)¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing

¹ OJ L 178, 17.7.2000, p. 1.

Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation)¹,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 October 2015 entitled ‘Trade for All: Towards a more responsible trade and investment policy’ (COM(2015)0497),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 April 2016 entitled ‘Digitising European Industry’ (COM(2016)0180),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 April 2016 entitled ‘European Cloud Initiative – Building a competitive data and knowledge economy in Europe’ (COM(2016)0178),
- having regard to the Commission report of 23 June 2017 on trade and investment barriers (COM(2017)0338),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 January 2017 entitled ‘Building A European Data Economy’ (COM(2017)0009),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the respect for private life and the protection of personal data in electronic communications and repealing Directive 2002/58/EC (Regulation on Privacy and Electronic Communications) (COM(2017)0010),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 13 September 2017 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a framework for the free flow of non-personal data in the European Union (COM(2017)0495),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 2 May 2017 entitled ‘Digital4Development: mainstreaming digital technologies and services into EU Development Policy’ (SWD(2017)0157),
- having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2016 on a new forward-looking and innovative future strategy for trade and investment²,
- having regard to its resolution of 3 February 2016 containing the European Parliament’s recommendations to the Commission on the negotiations for the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA)³,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2015 containing the European Parliament’s recommendations to the European Commission on the negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)⁴,
- having regard to the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development and the outcome document adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 entitled ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, and

¹ OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0299.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0041.

⁴ OJ C 265, 11.8.2017, p. 35.

the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

- having regard to the upcoming 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO, to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 10 to 13 December 2017, where e-commerce is likely to be discussed,
 - having regard to the UN International Telecommunication Union's initiatives in support of Developing Countries (ITU-D),
 - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to Article 8(1) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and to Article 16(1) of the TFEU,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the protection of freedom of speech on Freedom of Expression and the private sector in the digital age (A/HRC/32/38) and on the role of digital access providers (A/HRC/35/22),
 - having regard to the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline, adopted by the Council (Foreign Affairs) on 12 May 2014,
 - having regard to the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, European Treaty Series No 108, and the additional protocol thereto,
 - having regard to its resolution of 26 May 2016 on transatlantic data flows¹,
 - having regard to the Commission report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the Trade Policy Strategy Trade for All – Delivering a Progressive Trade Policy to Harness Globalisation (COM(2017)0491).
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on International Trade and the opinions of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (A8-0384/2017),
- A. whereas technological developments, access to the open internet and the digitalisation of the economy are an engine for growth as they enable companies particularly start-ups, micro-enterprises and SMEs, to create new opportunities in developing, ordering, producing, marketing or delivering products and services, and to reach customers all over the globe at a faster pace and lower cost than ever before; whereas emerging technologies such as distributed ledger technology have the potential to enhance digital trade by improving the transparency of international contracts and expediting the

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0233.

transfer of value; whereas trade in physical goods has been replaced by increasing amounts of cross-border transfers of digital content, sometimes blurring the distinction between goods and services;

- B. whereas data collection, data aggregation and the ability to transfer data across borders has the potential to be a key driver of innovation, productivity and economic competitiveness;
- C. whereas the globalisation and digitalisation of our economies and of international trade have enabled businesses to grow and provided economic opportunities for citizens; whereas the digitalisation of traditional industries affects supply chains, manufacturing and services models, which could lead to job creation in new industries, but could also disrupt current jobs and lead to precarious working conditions as more and more tasks traditionally performed by humans are either automated or off-shored, or both; stresses in this regard that the necessary social flanking measures must be put in place for them to benefit the whole society, such as strong education and training policies, active labour market policies and measures to overcome the digital divide;
- D. whereas the digital economy requires a rules-based framework, including modern trade rules which can reconcile the rapid changes in the market with the rights of consumers, providing the policy space and room for new regulatory initiatives needed by governments to defend and strengthen the protection of human rights;
- E. whereas access to a free, open and secure internet is a prerequisite for rules-based trade and development in the digital economy; whereas the principle of net neutrality should be a key part of the EU's digital trade strategy in order to allow for fair competition and innovation in the digital economy, while ensuring freedom of speech online;
- F. whereas investment in infrastructure and access to skills remain key challenges to connectivity and, therefore, digital trade;
- G. whereas the UN's SDGs stress that providing universal and affordable access to the internet for people in least developed countries by 2020 will be crucial for fostering development, as the development of a digital economy could be a driver of jobs and growth, e-commerce being one opportunity to increase the numbers of small exporters, export volumes and export diversification;
- H. whereas women can benefit as entrepreneurs and as workers from better access to global markets, and as consumers from lower prices, whereas many challenges and inequalities still hinder women's participation in the global economy, as many of women in low- and middle-income countries, still have no access to the internet;
- I. whereas e-commerce is also booming in developing countries;
- J. whereas governments around the world are engaging in digital protectionism by putting up barriers that hinder market access and direct investment, or create unfair advantages for domestic companies; whereas a number of broad measures in third countries taken in the name of national (cyber)security have an increasingly negative impact on trade in ICT products;
- K. whereas foreign companies currently benefit from far greater access to the European

market than Europeans do to third countries; whereas many of our trade partners are increasingly closing their domestic markets and resorting to digital protectionism; whereas the EU should anchor its digital trade strategy in the principles of reciprocity, fair competition, smart regulation and transparency with a view to restoring consumers' trust and restoring a level playing field for businesses;

- L. whereas geo-blocking should be put to an end and no forms of unjustified discrimination based on a customer's nationality, place of residence or place of establishment within the internal market should take place in the future;
- M. whereas the building blocks that preserve the open internet in the EU's digital single market, including principles such as fair competition, net neutrality and intermediary liability protections, should be promoted in all trade negotiations; whereas the global dimension of digital trade makes the WTO the natural venue for the negotiation of a rule-based multilateral framework; whereas the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2017 provides the platform for launching such a process;
- N. whereas the European Union is bound by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, including Article 8 thereof on the right to the protection of personal data, by Article 16 TFEU on the same fundamental right, and by Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU); whereas the right to privacy is a universal human right; whereas high data protection standards help to build trust in the digital economy among European citizens and thus foster the development of digital trade; whereas promoting high data protection standards, in particular as regards sensitive data, and facilitating international trade must go hand in hand in the digital era, in order to support freedom of expression and information, e-commerce, and encryption, and to reject digital protectionism, mass surveillance, cyber espionage and online censorship;
- O. whereas digital trade must protect endangered wildlife species, and whereas online market places must ban the sale of wildlife and wildlife products on their platforms;
- P. whereas private companies are increasingly setting norms and standards in the digital economy, which will have a direct impact on citizens and consumers, as well as on domestic and international trade and at the same time accelerate the development of technological solutions to safeguard business and customers;
- Q. whereas the OECD recommendations against base erosion and profit shifting and the EU's plans for a common consolidated corporate tax base have highlighted the need to address a number of tax challenges, including those posed by the digital economy; whereas taxes should be paid where profits are made; whereas a more transparent, efficient and fair system for calculating the tax base of cross-border companies should prevent profit shifting and tax avoidance; whereas a coherent EU approach to taxation in the digital economy is necessary to achieve fair and effective taxation of all companies and to create a level playing field; recalls that trade agreements should include a clause on tax good governance that reaffirms the parties' commitment to implementing agreed international standards in the fight against tax evasion and avoidance;
- R. whereas, according to the OECD, up to 5 % of goods imported into the EU are counterfeited, resulting in substantial losses in jobs and tax revenues;

- S. whereas sensitive sectors such as audio-visual services, and fundamental rights such as the protection of personal data, should not be subject to trade negotiations;
 - T. whereas digital trade must also aim to promote the growth of SMEs and start-ups, and not only that of multinationals;
 - U. whereas Mexico fulfils the conditions for accession to Council of Europe Convention No 108 on data protection;
 - V. whereas the protection of personal data is non-negotiable in trade agreements, and whereas data protection has always been excluded from EU trade negotiation mandates;
 - W. whereas trade agreements can be a lever to improve digital rights; whereas the inclusion of provisions on net neutrality, a ban on forced unjustified data localisation requirements, data security, security of data processing and data storage, encryption and intermediary liability in trade agreements can strengthen, in particular, the protection of freedom of speech;
1. Underlines that the EU, as a community of values and the world's biggest exporter of services, should set the standards in international rules and agreements on digital trade flows based on three elements: (1) ensuring market access for digital goods and services in third countries, (2) ensuring that trade rules create tangible benefits for consumers and (3) ensuring and promoting respect for fundamental rights;
 2. Stresses that even though the Digital Single Market strategy addresses many of the problems facing digital trade, EU companies still face significant global obstacles such as non-transparent regulations, government intervention and unjustified data location or data storage; points out that some of the key actions of the Digital Single Market strategy, such as the EU cloud initiative and the copyright reform, have an international dimension that could be addressed in a European digital trade strategy;
 3. Stresses the need to bridge the digital divide in order to minimise potential negative social and development impacts; underlines, in this regard, the importance of promoting female participation in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), of removing barriers to lifelong learning, and of closing gender gaps in access to and in the use of new technologies; calls on the Commission to explore further how current trade policy and gender equality are linked and how trade can promote women's economic empowerment;
 4. Notes that the network effect of the digital economy enables one company or a small number of companies to hold a large market share, which could lead to excessive market concentration; stresses the importance of promoting fair and effective competition in trade agreements, in particular between digital service providers such as online platforms, and users such as micro-enterprises, SMEs and start-ups, and of promoting consumer choice, reducing transaction costs, ensuring non-discriminatory treatment of all market players and avoiding the creation of dominant positions that distort the markets; stresses, in this context, the importance of including net neutrality as a key part of its digital trade strategy; considers that a digital trade strategy must be complemented by a reinforced and effective international framework for competition policy, including by increased cooperation between competition authorities and strong

competition chapters in trade agreements; calls on the Commission to ensure that businesses and companies comply with competition rules and that there is no discrimination against competitors to the detriment of consumers' interests;

5. Stresses that access to secure broadband internet connectivity and digital payment methods, effective consumer protection, in particular redress mechanisms for online cross-border sales, and predictable customs procedures, are essential elements in relation to enabling digital trade, sustainable development and inclusive growth;
6. Considers that trade agreements should provide for increased cooperation between consumer protection agencies and welcomes initiatives to foster consumer trust-enhancing measures in trade negotiations, such as disciplines on electronic signatures and contracts and unsolicited communications; highlights that the rights of consumers must be protected and must not in any event be diluted;
7. Underlines that SMEs in developing countries make up the majority of businesses and employ the majority of manufacturing and service sector workers; recalls that facilitating cross-border e-commerce can have a direct impact on improving livelihoods, fostering higher living standards and boosting economic development;
8. Recalls that nothing in trade agreements shall prevent the EU and its Member States from maintaining, improving and applying its data protection rules; recalls that personal data can be transferred to third countries without using general disciplines in trade agreements when the requirements – both at present and in the future – enshrined in Chapter IV of Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data¹ and in Chapter V of Regulation (EU) 2016/679, are fulfilled; recognises that adequacy decisions, including partial and sector-specific ones, constitute a fundamental mechanism in terms of safeguarding the transfer of personal data from the EU to a third country; notes that the EU has only adopted adequacy decisions with four of its 20 largest trading partners; recalls the importance of guaranteeing, in particular through adequacy dialogues, the transfer of data from third countries to the EU;
9. Calls on the Commission to prioritise and speed up the adoption of adequacy decisions, provided that third countries ensure, by reason of their domestic law or their international commitments, a level of protection 'essentially equivalent' to that guaranteed within the EU; calls on the Commission to adopt, and to make public, updated and detailed binding procedures with a specific timeframe for reaching these decisions, while fully respecting the powers of national supervisory authorities and the opinion of Parliament;
10. Recalls that the ability to access, collect, process and transfer data across borders has become increasingly important for every type of company that delivers goods and services internationally; notes that this matters for both personal and non-personal data and includes machine-to-machine communication;
11. Urges the Commission to draw up rules for cross-border data transfers as soon as

¹ OJ L 281, 23.11.1995, p. 31.

possible which fully comply with the EU's existing and future data protection and privacy rules; calls on the Commission, furthermore, to incorporate into the EU's trade agreements a horizontal provision, which fully maintains the right of a party to protect personal data and privacy, provided that such a right is not unjustifiably used to circumvent rules for cross-border data transfers for reasons other than the protection of personal data; considers that such rules and provisions should form part of all new and recently launched trade negotiations with third countries; stresses that any disciplines in this regard should be exempted from the scope of application of any future chapter dealing with investment protection;

12. Calls on the Commission to strictly prohibit unjustified data localisation requirements in free trade agreements (FTAs); considers that the removal of such requirements should be a top priority, and emphasises that the relevant data protection legislation should be adhered to; regrets attempts to use such requirements as a form of non-tariff barrier to trade and as a form of digital protectionism; considers that such protectionism seriously hampers opportunities for European businesses in third country markets and undermines the efficiency benefits of digital trade;
13. Calls on the Commission to put forward, as soon as possible, its position on cross-border data transfers, unjustified data localisation requirements, and data protection safeguards in trade negotiations, in line with Parliament's position, so as to include it in all new and recently launched negotiations and to avoid the EU being sidelined in international trade negotiations;
14. Calls on the Commission to combat measures by third countries, such as 'buy local' policies, local content requirements or forced technology transfers, to the extent that they are not justified by UN-led programmes on closing the digital divide or TRIPS-related exceptions, so as to ensure that European companies can operate in a fair and predictable environment;
15. Stresses that the EU should continue to pursue its efforts at bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral level to ensure that third countries offer a level of openness towards foreign investments equivalent to that of the EU, and that they maintain a level playing field for EU operators; welcomes the EU's proposal for a regulation establishing a framework for review of foreign direct investments into the Union and supports its objectives to better protect critical infrastructures and technologies;
16. Underlines that a digital trade strategy must be fully in line with the principle of net neutrality and safeguard the equal treatment of internet traffic, without discrimination, restriction or interference, irrespective of its sender, receiver, type, content, device, service or application; recalls, moreover, that traffic management measures should be permitted only in exceptional cases where they are strictly necessary, and only for as long as necessary, to comply with legal requirements, preserve the integrity and security of the network or prevent impending network congestion;
17. Highlights that the deployment of and access to infrastructure, especially in rural, mountainous and remote areas, that is adequate in coverage, quality and security and supports net neutrality, is crucial for digitising European industry and increasing e-governance;

18. Strongly deplores third country practices which make market access conditional on the disclosure and transfer to state authorities of the source codes of the software that companies intend to sell; considers that such measures are disproportionate as a blanket requirement for market access; calls on the Commission to prohibit signatory governments to FTAs from engaging in such activities; stresses that the foregoing should not prevent state authorities from promoting transparency of software, encouraging the public disclosure of source code through free and open-source software, as well as sharing data through open data licenses;
19. Recalls that in some cases local presence requirements are necessary to ensure effective prudential supervision or regulatory oversight and enforcement; reiterates its call on the Commission, therefore, to undertake limited commitments in Mode 1, so as to avoid regulatory arbitrage;
20. Believes that digital trade should be further facilitated in procurement policies, including by taking advantage of possibilities to provide services remotely and by enabling European companies, particularly SMEs, to obtain access to public and private procurement;
21. Notes that pro-development technology transfer requirements should not be ruled out by disciplines on digital trade;
22. Calls on the Commission to prohibit third country authorities from requiring the disclosure or transfer of details of the (cryptographic) technology used in products as a condition of manufacturing, selling or distributing these products;
23. Notes that the protection of intellectual property (IP) rights and investments in R&D are a precondition on the EU's knowledge-based economy, and that international cooperation is key to combating the trade in counterfeited goods throughout the entire value chain; encourages the Commission, therefore, to push for the worldwide implementation of international standards such as the WTO TRIPS Agreement and the WIPO Internet Treaties; recalls that legal protection throughout the EU, both online and offline, is needed for new creations since it will encourage investment and lead to further innovations; stresses, however, that trade agreements are not the place to extend the level of IP-protection for rights holders by providing for more extensive copyright enforcement powers; stresses that access to medicines in third countries should not be challenged on the basis of IP protection; stresses that trade in counterfeited goods requires a distinctly different approach to IP infringements in the digital economy;
24. Exhorts the Commission to keep a close eye on ICANN's gTLD Program, which expands domain names to thousands of generic names, and to guarantee, in line with its commitment to a free and open internet, the protection of rights holders, in particular those relating to geographical indications;
25. Calls on the Commission to use trade agreements to prevent parties from imposing foreign equity caps, to lay down pro-competitive wholesale access rules for incumbent operators' networks, to provide transparent and non-discriminatory rules and fees for licensing, and to secure genuine access to last-mile infrastructures in export markets for EU telecom providers; recalls that rule-based competition in the telecommunications sector leads to higher quality services and lower prices;

26. Calls on the Commission to continue its efforts towards developing a set of binding multilateral disciplines on e-commerce in the WTO, and to continue focusing on concrete and realistic deliverables;
27. Calls on the Commission to urgently re-launch TiSA negotiations in line with Parliament's adopted recommendations; espouses the view that the EU should seize the window of opportunity to take the lead to set state-of-the art global digital standards;
28. Recalls that, since 1998, members of the WTO have upheld a moratorium on tariffs on electronic transmissions; stresses that such tariffs would entail unnecessary additional costs for businesses and consumers alike; calls on the Commission to transform the moratorium into a permanent agreement on banning tariffs on electronic transmissions, subject to careful analysis of the implications in the area of 3D printing;
29. Notes the efforts made by the WTO to advance its work programme on e-commerce; asks the Commission to seek the further expansion of the WTO's Information Technology Agreement to include more products and more WTO members, and takes note of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires scheduled for December 2017; asks the Commission to consult European businesses and Member States as soon as possible on its position on e-commerce and other digital trade matters to be agreed at the conference in order to ensure a united European position;
30. Calls on the Commission to use trade agreements to promote the interoperability of ICT standards that benefit both consumers and producers, notably in the context of a secure Internet of things, 5G and cybersecurity, while not circumventing legitimate fora for multi-stakeholder governance which have served the open internet well;
31. Supports the Commission communication of 19 April 2016 on ICT standardisation priorities for the digital single market (COM(2016)0176); stresses that while ICT standardisation must continue to be primarily industry led, voluntary and consensus driven, based on the principles of transparency, openness, impartiality, consensus, effectiveness, relevance and coherence, a clearer set of priorities for ICT standardisation, together with high-level political support, will boost competitiveness; notes that this process should make use of the instruments of the European Standardisation System and involve a wide range of stakeholders, both within the EU and at international level, to ensure delivery of improved standard-setting processes, in line with the Joint Initiative on Standardisation; calls on the Commission to foster the emergence of global industry standards under EU leadership for key 5G technologies and network architectures, notably through the exploitation of the 5G public-private partnership (5G PPP) results at the level of key EU and international standardisation bodies;
32. Stresses the importance of international standards on digital equipment and services, especially in the area of cybersecurity; asks the Commission to work to ensure the introduction of basic cybersecurity measures into Internet of things products and cloud-based services;
33. Considers that particular consideration should be given to the increasing number of consumers and individuals who are selling and buying items on the internet and are caught up in burdensome customs procedures for goods purchased online; recalls the

need to put in place simplified, tax- and duty-free customs treatment of items sold online and returns unused; recalls that the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement aims to speed up customs procedures and improve their accountability and transparency; stresses the need to digitise customs information and management via online registration and operation of information, which should facilitate clearance at the border, cooperation in fraud detection, anti-corruption efforts and transparency of prices relating to customs; believes that the broader use of tools such as online dispute settlements would be beneficial for consumers;

34. Calls on the Commission to encourage signatories of trade agreements to include, in the telecommunications chapter of their FTAs, provisions making both international roaming fees and the fees applied to international calls and messages transparent, fair, reasonable and consumer-oriented; calls on the Commission to support policies that promote cost-oriented retail prices for roaming services with a view to reducing prices, promoting transparency and preventing commercial practices that are unfair or in any way negative for consumers;
35. Recognises that the principles of the E-commerce Directive (2000/31/EC) have contributed to the development of the digital economy by creating favourable conditions for innovations and by guaranteeing freedom of speech and the freedom to conduct a business; recalls that the Commission is bound by the EU *acquis* in its trade negotiations;
36. Calls on the Commission to further mainstream digital technologies and services into the EU's development policy, as outlined, inter alia, in the Digital4Development agenda; calls on the Commission to use trade agreements to improve and promote digital rights; recognises that only 53,6 % of all households worldwide have access to the internet; deplors the fact that there is still a significant digital divide; calls on the Commission to increase investments in digital infrastructure in the Global South in order to bridge this digital divide, including by stimulating public-private partnerships, but while still respecting the development effectiveness principles; notes in this context the contribution of the UN ITU-D in the creation, development and improvement of telecommunication and ICT equipment and networks; urges the Commission to make investments in broadband infrastructure in developing countries contribute integrally to, and contingent on, respect for a free, open and secure internet and to develop adequate solutions to promote mobile internet access; stresses that such investments are particularly important for local micro, small & medium enterprises, especially in developing countries, in order to enable them to interact digitally with multinational enterprises and to access global value chains; recalls that facilitating cross-border e-commerce can have a direct impact on improving livelihoods, fostering higher living standards and boosting economic development; recalls the contribution that such endeavours could make to gender equality since a great number of these companies are owned and run by women; reiterates that digital trade could also be a resource for public administrations and thus support the development of e-government;
37. Stresses that it is imperative that any digital trade strategy must be fully in line with the principle of policy coherence for development, and should in particular seek to promote and enable start-ups and micro, small & medium enterprises to engage in cross border e-commerce, recalling the contribution this could make to gender equality;

38. Considers that digital issues should also feature more prominently in the EU's Aid for Trade policy to facilitate the growth of e-commerce via increased support for innovation and infrastructure and access to financing, notably via micro finance initiatives, as well as assistance in increasing online visibility for e-commerce businesses in developing countries, facilitating platform access and promoting the availability of e-payment solutions and access to cost-effective logistics and delivery services;
39. Stresses that any digital trade strategy, including its flanking measures, must be fully in line with and contribute to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; notes that SDG 4 on quality education: providing free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education to all girls and boys, SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, SDG 8.10 on promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, in particular by strengthening the capacity of domestic financial institutions and expanding access to financial services, as well as SDG 9.1 on developing reliable and resilient infrastructure with a focus on equitable access for all and SDG 9.3 on increasing the access of small enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets, are particularly relevant in this regard;
40. commits to updating its digital trade strategy every 5 years;
41. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the EEAS.