



Plenary sitting

A8-0338/2018

16.10.2018

REPORT

on digitalisation for development: reducing poverty through technology
(2018/2083(INI))

Committee on Development

Rapporteur: Bogdan Brunon Wenta

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on digitalisation for development: reducing poverty through technology (2018/2083(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 208, 209, 210, 211 and 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- 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 to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
- having regard to the European Consensus on Development - ‘Our world, our dignity, our future’, adopted in May 2017 (2017/C 210/01),
- 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 staff working document of 2 May 2017 entitled ‘Digital4Development: mainstreaming digital technologies and services into EU Development Policy’ (SWD(2017)0157),
- having regard to the Digital Single Market for Europe (DSM) strategy adopted in May 2015,
- having regard to the European External Investment Plan,
- 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 its resolution of 12 December 2017 entitled ‘Towards a digital trade strategy’¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 December 2015 on preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit: Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance²,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 13 May 2014 entitled ‘A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries’ (COM(2014)0263),
- having regard to the Council conclusions on ‘Digital for Development’ of November 2017,

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0488.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0459.

- having regard to the 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO, held in Buenos Aires (Argentina) from 10 to 13 December 2017,
 - having regard to the UN International Telecommunication Union’s initiatives in support of Developing Countries (ITU-D),
 - having regard to the World Trade Organisation’s Information Technology Agreement (ITA),
 - having regard to the ministerial declaration made in Cancún in 2016 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the digital economy,
 - having regard to the joint declaration made by the ICT ministers of the G7 at their meeting held in Takamatsu (Japan) on 29 and 30 April 2016,
 - having regard to the ‘eTrade for All’ initiative of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD),
 - having regard to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106),
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Development (A8-0338/2018),
- A. whereas the European Consensus on Development 2017 highlights the importance of information and communications technologies and services as enablers of inclusive growth and sustainable development;
- B. whereas the Commission’s Digitalisation for Development strategy (D4D) covers economic growth and human rights, health, education, agriculture and food security, basic infrastructure, water and sanitation, governance and social protection, as well as cross-cutting goals in terms of gender and the environment;
- C. whereas digital technologies offer a potential for ensuring sustainability and environmental protection; whereas, however, the production of digital equipment uses certain rare metals with low recyclability and limited accessible reserves, and electronic and electric waste represents an environmental and health challenge; whereas, according to a joint study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Interpol¹, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) is a priority area of environmental criminality;
- D. whereas according to the 2017 update of the World Bank database Identification for Development Global Dataset (ID4D), an estimated 1.1 billion people worldwide cannot officially prove their identity, including their birth registration, and of those 78 % live in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia; whereas this is a major barrier to achieving target 16.9 of the SDGs, but also to being an actor in and benefiting from the digital environment;

¹ UNEP-Interpol study, ‘The Rise of Environmental Crime: a growing Threat to Natural Resources, Peace, Development and Security’, 2016.

- E. whereas the SDGs explicitly mention digital technologies in five of the goals (SDG 4 on education; SDG 5 on gender equality; SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth; SDG 9 on infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation; and SDG 17 on partnerships);
- F. whereas the SDGs stress that providing universal and affordable access to the internet for people in least developed countries (LDCs) by 2020 will be crucial for fostering development, as the development of a digital economy could be a driver of decent jobs and inclusive growth, export volumes and export diversification;
- G. whereas according to UNCTAD, digitisation is increasingly giving rise to monopolies and poses new challenges for antitrust and competition policies of both developing and developed countries¹;
- H. whereas in its overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society², the UN General Assembly committed to harnessing the potential of ICTs in order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals, noting that ICTs could accelerate progress across all 17 SDGs;
- I. whereas connectivity remains a challenge and a concern lying at the root of various digital divides in both access to and use of ICTs;
- J. whereas the speed at which the digital economy is unfolding, and the significant gaps that exist in developing countries with regard to the digital economy in terms of development of secure national policy, regulations and consumer protection, point up the urgent need to upscale capacity-building and technical assistance to developing countries, and especially to LDCs;
- K. whereas digital literacy and skills are key enablers for social and personal improvement and progress, as well as for promoting entrepreneurship and building strong digital economies;
- L. whereas digitalisation should also help improve the delivery of humanitarian relief and resilience, disaster risk prevention and transitional support, linking humanitarian aid and development aid in fragile and conflict-affected contexts;
- M. whereas more than half of the world's population is still offline, and progress has been slow towards achieving the SDG 9 target of significantly increasing access to ICTs and striving to provide universal and affordable access to the internet in LDCs by 2020;
- N. whereas a huge increase in mobile services is occurring across the planet and the numbers of mobile users are now surpassing the numbers of people having access to electricity, sanitation or clean water;
- O. whereas humanitarian innovation must be consistent with the humanitarian principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence) and the dignity principle;
- P. whereas humanitarian innovation must be conducted with the aim of promoting the

¹ UNCTAD, 'South-South Digital Cooperation for Industrialisation: A Regional Integration Agenda' (2017).

² UN General Assembly, GA/RES/70/125.

rights, dignity and capabilities of the recipient population, and it should be possible for all members of a crisis-affected community to benefit from innovation without discriminatory barriers to use;

- Q. whereas risk analysis and mitigation must be used to prevent unintentional harm, including harm affecting privacy and data security and impacting on local economies;
- R. whereas experimentation, piloting and trials must be undertaken in conformity with internationally recognised ethical standards;

The need to support digitalisation in developing countries

1. Welcomes the Commission's D4D strategy, insofar as it mainstreams digital technologies into EU development policy, which should aim at contributing to the achievement of the SDGs; insists on the importance of enhancing an SDG-centred digitalisation; recalls that the digital revolution presents societies with a whole set of new challenges, bringing both risks and opportunities;
2. Reiterates the huge potential of digital technology and services in the achievement of the SDGs provided that action is taken to address the disruptive effects of technologies, such as automation of jobs impacting on employability, digital exclusion and inequality, cybersecurity, data privacy and regulatory issues; recalls that any digital strategy must be fully in line with and contribute to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably with reference to SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, and SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure; recalls that if the SDGs are to be achieved by 2030, a strengthened global, national, regional and local partnership is needed between governmental, scientific, economic and civil society actors;
3. Points out that, despite the increase in internet penetration, many developing countries and emerging economies lag behind in benefiting from digitalisation, many people still have no access to ICTs, and major disparities exist both between countries and between urban and rural areas; recalls that digital technology remains a tool and not an end, and considers that given financial constraints priority should be assigned to the most effective means of achieving the SDGs, and that in some countries, even though digitalisation may be useful, it is still necessary to ensure the fulfilment of basic human needs, notably in terms of access to food, energy, water and sanitation, education and health, as highlighted by the UN report on the SDGs of 2017; considers, however, that the conditions for digital development must be provided for at the design stage of infrastructure, even if implementation takes place at a later stage;
4. Stresses the imperative that any digital trade strategy must be fully in line with the principle of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), which is essential for achieving the SDGs; underlines that access to internet connectivity and digital payment methods that are reliable and compliant with international standards, with legislation protecting consumers of online goods and services, intellectual property rights, rules protecting personal data and tax and customs legislation appropriate to electronic commerce are pivotal to enabling digital trade, sustainable development and inclusive growth; notes in

this regard the potential of the Trade Facilitation Agreement to support digital initiatives in developing countries to facilitate cross-border trade;

5. Calls for the development of an action plan for technical innovation for humanitarian assistance, to ensure compliance with the legal and ethical principles laid down in documents such as the New European Consensus on Development - 'Our world, our dignity, our future' and 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development';
6. Underlines that all aspects of humanitarian innovation should be subject to evaluation and monitoring, including an assessment of primary and secondary impacts of the innovation process; stresses that ethical review and risk analysis should be undertaken prior to embarking on humanitarian innovation and digitalisation projects, and should incorporate external or third-party experts where appropriate;
7. Calls for the implementation in EU external action of the principles embodied in the Digital Single Market for Europe (DSM) strategy, through support for EU partners' regulatory frameworks;
8. Calls for sufficient funding under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 to enable the streamlining of digital technologies into all aspects of development policy;
9. Notes that the introduction of digital technology in developing countries has often outpaced the establishment of state institutions, legal regulations and other mechanisms that could help manage new challenges that arise, notably regarding cybersecurity; stresses the importance of deepening collaboration between researchers and innovators at interregional level, encouraging research and development activities that promote scientific progress and the transfer of technology and know-how; calls for digitalisation to be featured prominently in the future post-Cotonou agreement as an enabler of inclusive and sustainable development, in accordance with the negotiation guidelines;
10. Calls for further joint actions in digital infrastructure cooperation, as this should become one of the key activities in the EU's partnerships with regional organisations, particularly the African Union; points to the importance of technical assistance and transfer of expertise to institutions that are developing digital policies at national, regional and continental levels;
11. Calls for digitalisation to be incorporated into Member States' national strategies for development;
12. Calls for a more concerted and holistic cross-sectoral effort from the international community, including non-state actors such as representatives of civil society, the third sector, private companies and academia, to ensure that the shift towards a more digital economy leaves no one behind and contributes to the achievement of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, guaranteeing access to digital technologies and services to all economic actors and citizens and avoiding an excess of different approaches that would create incompatibilities, overlaps or gaps in legislation; calls for the improvement of political articulation between the EU, the Member States and other relevant actors, with a view to enhancing coordination, complementarity and the

creation of synergies;

13. Points out that technology, artificial intelligence and automation are already replacing some low and mid-skilled jobs; calls on the Commission to promote an SDG-centred digitalisation and stresses that state-funded social protection floors, such as minimum income security, are essential in addressing some disruptive impacts of new technologies, in order to overcome the changes in global labour markets and the international division of labour, affecting especially low-skilled workers in developing countries;
14. Calls on the private sector to responsibly contribute to D4D through technology and innovation, expertise, investment, risk management, sustainable business models and growth, which should include prevention, reduction, repair, recycling and reuse of raw materials;
15. Regrets that less than half of all developing countries have data protection legislation, and encourages the EU to provide technical assistance to the relevant authorities in drafting such legislation, relying in particular on its experience and its own legislation, which is internationally recognised as a model of its kind; stresses the need to take into account the cost that may be involved in standardising such legislation, particularly for SMEs; observes that because of the cross-border nature of digital technology data protection legislation should not vary too much, since that would lead to incompatibilities;
16. Calls on all stakeholders to collect, process, analyse and disseminate data and statistics at local, regional, national and global levels in order to ensure a high level of protection of data, in accordance with the relevant international standards and instruments and so as to pursue the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; notes that accurate and timely collection of data ensures adequate monitoring of implementation, adjustment of policies and intervention where necessary, as well as evaluation of results achieved and their impact; recalls, however, that while the 'data revolution' makes it easier, faster and cheaper to produce and analyse data from a wide range of sources, it also raises huge security and privacy challenges; stresses, therefore, that innovations in data collection in developing countries should not replace official statistics but complement them;
17. Deplores the persistent digital divides existing within each country relating to gender, geography, age, income, ethnicity, and health condition or disability, among other factors of discrimination; insists, therefore, that international development cooperation should work towards greater advancement and inclusion of persons who are disadvantaged or in vulnerable situations, while promoting the responsible use of digital tools and an adequate awareness of possible risks; calls for support for innovation that is adapted to local needs and the transition to knowledge-based economies;
18. Calls, therefore, for increased efforts to address the challenges of digital exclusion through education and training in essential digital skills, as well as initiatives to facilitate the appropriate use of ICTs and the utilisation of digital tools in the implementation of participative methodologies, in accordance with age, personal situation and background, including elderly people and persons with disabilities; notes that international development cooperation could build on digital technologies geared to

better integration of disadvantaged groups on condition that they have access to digital technologies; welcomes the initiatives such as the Africa Code Week, which contribute to the empowerment of the young African generation by fostering digital literacy; stresses the importance of e-learning and distance learning in reaching remote areas and people of all ages;

19. Calls for the introduction of digital literacy in curricula at all levels of education, from primary school to university, in developing countries, with a view to the acquisition of the skills needed to improve access to information; believes, however, that ICT tools and new technologies should not substitute real teachers and schools, but should be used as a means of improving access to education and enhancing its quality; stresses that new technologies are a key tool for the dissemination of knowledge, the training of teachers and the management of establishments; insists also on the need for enhanced local training centres (including programming schools), to train developers and to encourage the creation of digital solutions and applications corresponding to local needs and realities;
20. Highlights that bridging the digital divide implies deployment of and access to infrastructure, especially in rural and remote areas, that is adequate in terms of high-quality coverage and is affordable, reliable and secure; notes that the main causes hampering connectivity include poverty and lack of essential services, together with underdeveloped terrestrial networks, lack of enabling public policies and regulatory frameworks, high taxation of digital products and services, low market competition and absence of an energy grid;
21. Expresses its concern regarding technological dependence on a small number of operators, and especially on GAFA (Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon), and calls for alternatives to be developed to promote competition; notes that this aim could be pursued in partnership between the EU and Africa;
22. Recalls that developing countries are far from being immune to cyber-attacks and underlines the risks of disruption of economic, political and democratic stability if digital security is not guaranteed; calls on all stakeholders in the digitally connected world to take active responsibility by adopting practical measures to promote greater cybersecurity awareness and know-how; points out, to this end, the importance of developing human capital at all levels in order to reduce threats to cybersecurity through training, education and increased awareness, and of establishing appropriate criminal law and transnational frameworks to combat cybercrime, as well as participating actively in international fora such as the OECD Global Forum on Digital Security;
23. Recalls the potential of digitalisation for reducing disparities in social inclusion, for access to information and for reducing economic marginalisation in peripheral areas;

Digitalisation: a tool for sustainable development

24. Welcomes the EU's External Investment Plan promoting investment in innovative digital solutions for local needs, financial inclusion and decent job creation; points out that digitalisation is an important investment opportunity and that, on a basis of working together with European and international financial institutions and the private sector, blending would therefore constitute an important tool for leveraging financial resources;

25. Calls on the Commission to launch new initiatives with a special focus on developing digital infrastructure, promoting e-governance and digital skills, strengthening the digital economy and fostering SDG-centred start-up ecosystems, including funding opportunities for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), to enable them to interact digitally with multinational enterprises and to access global value chains;
26. Calls on the Commission to further mainstream digital technologies and services into the EU's development policy, as outlined inter alia in the D4D agenda; underlines the need to promote the use of digital technologies in specific policy areas, including e-governance, agriculture, education, water management, health and energy;
27. Calls on the Commission to increase investment in digital infrastructure in developing countries, in order to bridge the significant digital divide in a development-effective and principle-based manner;
28. Recalls that MSMEs in developing countries make up the majority of businesses and employ the majority of manufacturing and service sector workers; reiterates that facilitating well regulated cross-border e-commerce can have a direct impact on improving livelihoods, fostering higher living standards and boosting employment and economic development; reaffirms the contribution that such endeavours could make to gender equality, since a great number of these companies are owned and run by women; stresses the need to reduce legal, administrative and social barriers to entrepreneurship, particularly with regard to women; calls for digitalisation to be used also to promote education and capability-building for entrepreneurship in developing countries, while also creating a favourable environment for start-ups and innovative companies;
29. Stresses the need to stem trade in minerals whose exploitation finances armed conflicts or involves forced labour; recalls that coltan is the basic raw material for many electronic devices (e.g. smartphones) and that the civil war that has engulfed the Great Lakes region of Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, due to its exploitation and extraction and illegal trade in it has resulted in more than eight million deaths; calls for an end to the exploitation of children in coltan mines and to illegal trading in coltan, in order to bring about a situation in which it is extracted and marketed in an acceptable way which also benefits the local population;
30. Points out that as the largest sector of the African economy, agriculture can potentially benefit from digital technologies; highlights that digital platforms can be used in developing countries to inform farmers about market prices and link them with potential buyers, as well as to provide practical information about growing methods and market trends, weather information, and warnings and advice about plant and animal diseases; underlines, however, in a context where agriculture is becoming more and more knowledge-intensive and high-tech, that digital agriculture can also have a huge social and environmental disruptive effect in developing countries, as access to the latest technology may remain restricted to big and industrialised farms active in the export market and cash crops, while limited knowledge and skills could marginalise further small-scale farming in developing countries;
31. Insists that EU funding for agriculture in developing countries must be in line with the transformative nature of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Climate Agreement, and consequently with the conclusions of the International Assessment of Agricultural

Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) and the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food; stresses that this implies the recognition of the multifunctionality of agriculture and a rapid shift from monoculture cropping based on the intensive use of chemical inputs towards a diversified and sustainable agriculture, based on agro-ecological farming practices and strengthening local food systems and small-scale farming;

32. Points out that ICT tools can be used for information dissemination which can be crucial during both natural and technological disasters and emergencies, as well as in fragile and conflict-affected areas; highlights that digital technologies can enable low-income communities and other vulnerable communities to have access to quality basic services (e.g. health, education, water, sanitation and electricity), as well as to humanitarian relief and other public and private services; highlights the importance of the fight against online disinformation (fake news), and emphasises the need for specific programmes focusing on media literacy as a tool to tackle these challenges;
33. Underlines that technological innovation in humanitarian assistance is a priority, most especially in the context of forced displacements, for contributing to sustainable solutions that bring stability and dignity to people's lives and may facilitate the humanitarian development nexus; welcomes global initiatives to facilitate humanitarian innovation, such as the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI), the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) and UN Global Pulse, and calls for the EU to promote open data and strongly support the global communities of software developers and designers who are building practical open technology with a view to solving international development and humanitarian problems;
34. Stresses that digital technologies such as SMS and mobile phone applications can provide affordable new tools for circulating important information, which could be used by poor or isolated people and people with disabilities; notes the potential of mobile phone technology, which may have advantages including lower access costs due to increasing network coverage, user-friendliness and falling costs of calls and text messages; recalls equally, however, that mobile phones generate health and environmental risks, notably due to extraction of mineral resources and increasing levels of electronic and electric waste; underlines that digitalisation has the potential to either boost or undermine democracy, and calls on the EU to duly reflect upon these risks with a view to controlling the misapplication of digital technologies, when promoting the use of technological innovation in development aid, and also to promote internet governance;
35. Stresses the importance of building a sustainable ecosystem for the digital economy in order to reduce the ecological impact linked to digitalisation by developing an efficient use of resources in both the digital and energy sector, notably by prioritising the circular economy; calls for the External Investment Plan (EIP) to support producer responsibility, concretely by supporting SMEs which develop reuse, repair and refurbishment activities and incorporate take-back schemes into their business activities with the aim of removing the hazardous components used in Electric and Electronic Equipment (EEE); calls for enhancement of consumer awareness of the environmental effects of e-devices and for the effective addressing of business responsibility in the production of EEE; stresses likewise the need to support electronic and electric waste

statistics and national e-waste policies in developing countries, so as to help minimise e-waste production, prevent illegal dumping and improper treatment of e-waste, promote recycling, and create jobs in the refurbishment and recycling sector;

36. Acknowledges that digital technologies provide the energy sector with innovative tools to optimise the use of resources; however, recalls that digital technologies have a significant ecological footprint, as a consumer of energy resources (digital CO₂ emissions are estimated to account for 2-5 % of total emissions) and metals (such as silver, cobalt, copper and tantalum), calling into question their long-term sustainability; reasserts the need to shift patterns of production and consumption in order to combat climate change;
37. Acknowledges the potential role of digital technology in promoting democracy and citizens' participation in decision-making;
38. Stresses the importance of creating and implementing state-run digital information platforms which increase opportunities for people at large to inform themselves fully about their rights and the services that the state makes available to its citizens;
39. Stresses that e-government applications contribute to making public services faster and cheaper to access, improve consistency and citizen satisfaction, facilitate the articulation and activities of civil society, and increase transparency, thus contributing significantly to promoting democratisation and fighting corruption; stresses the vital role of technology and digitalisation for effective fiscal policy and administration, enabling an effective increase in domestic resource mobilisation and helping fight tax fraud and tax evasion; insists that it is imperative to create secure digital identities, as this could help determine the numbers of those in need of certain basic services;
40. Calls for exploitation of the opportunities afforded by digital technology as a means of improving registration of children in registers of births, deaths and marriages; stresses that UNICEF estimates that, in sub-Saharan Africa alone, 95 million children remain unregistered at birth¹ and therefore have no birth certificate, and that this fact prevents the children concerned from being legally recognised, so that their existence as members of society goes unrecorded from birth and through into adult life, which distorts countries' demographic data, with significant consequences for the assessment of the needs of populations, particularly in terms of access to education or healthcare;
41. Acknowledges the central role of digital technology in management of health services, emergency response to epidemics, dissemination of public health campaigns, public access to health services, as well as in the training of health workers, the support and promotion of basic research, and the development of health and e-health information services; calls, therefore, on policymakers to introduce the appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks to scale up e-health projects; asks the Commission to provide the necessary financial resources in this regard;
42. Welcomes the 'DEVCO Academy' on-line programme, which makes it possible to train people from the EU's partner countries on-line; calls for the further development of training programmes for local leaders and the establishment of procedures for applying

¹ https://www.unicef.org/french/publications/files/UNICEF_SOWC_2016_French_LAST.pdf

for EU subsidies, so that those partners can gain a clearer picture of expectations, aims and conditions and thus improve the prospects of gaining acceptance for their projects; stresses that such initiatives, provided they are easily accessible, efficient and relevant, would have a positive impact on the absorption of aid and on the image of the EU among its partners;

43. 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.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

'Communication technologies have transformed the way people live and the manner in which countries develop. They have the potential to enable us to solve many of the critical problems confronting us. If this potential is to be realised, then we must find ways of turning these technologies into a resource for all people despite the challenges they face within their communities.'

Nelson Mandela

Digitalisation is global and it affects all aspects of our lives. And yet still, some people are left behind, although new technologies create opportunities. Internet is not only the place for goods and services, but it also helps us to exercise our economic, civic and political rights. In developing countries, modern communication technology is a necessity and can allow people to participate successfully in the changing world.

According to the 2016 World Development Report on digital dividends, six billion people lack access to high speed internet and four billion still have no internet access at all. At a time when digitalisation is growing exponentially, this lack of access is a major challenge to development as it continues to widen gaps and inequalities in the world.

Bridging the digital divide must be given a central role in all development policies: not just as a stand-alone policy but mainstreamed into every other policy area. Affordable access to broadband connectivity must be the basis for any such effort.

The Sustainable Development Goals recognise and take on this challenge. Several of the Goals incorporate a digital dimension; SDG 9 on infrastructure, industrialization and innovation has as one of its targets to *'significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020'*.

Delivering on the SDGs requires a joint and continuous effort by all countries, developing and developed, and by all actors, both public and private.

The European Union has shown commitment to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and must continue to show leadership in acting on the SDGs.

As regards action to bridge the digital divide, the European Consensus on Development makes the commitment very clear, saying that the EU and its Member States will continue to support information and communication technologies in developing countries as powerful enablers of inclusive growth and sustainable development and will work on better mainstreaming digital solutions in development and promoting the use of digital technologies in a range of priority areas. They will also support digital literacy and skills to empower people, especially women and people in vulnerable and marginalised situations, to promote social inclusion and to facilitate their participation in democratic governance and the digital economy.

Digitalisation: a tool for sustainable development

Digitalisation can be a powerful development tool in a number of policy areas, such as governance, education, health, gender equality, economic growth and agriculture.

For micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, e-commerce can facilitate cross-border commerce and create business opportunities on the global market. For farmers, digital platforms can provide information on weather forecasts, growing methods and outbreaks of plant and animal diseases.

E-government applications can provide faster, cheaper and more easily accessible public services and information, which promotes a participatory democracy and transparency and contributes to fighting corruption. Digitalisation is also a useful tool for an effective tax policy, contributing to improved domestic resource mobilisation.

In education, digitalisation can help through e-learning and distant learning, reaching remote areas where schools are far apart and there is a short supply of teachers.

Promoting education in ICT and digital skills is a necessary ingredient to digitalisation policies. It needs to be inclusive and put emphasis on access for all, both in rural and remote areas.

In the health sector, e-health services can go a long way to reach populations who would otherwise not have any access to such services.

Finally, ICT can also play an important role prior to and during natural disasters and emergencies, by issuing warnings and providing up to date information on developments and humanitarian assistance.

The need to support digitalisation of developing countries

The European Union actions to bridge the digital divide must be comprehensive. Digital technologies should be part of the answer in all EU development policy, while remaining fully in line with the principle of Policy Coherence for Development. The Commission strategy 'Digital4Development' does precisely this and is therefore very welcome.

Key to implementing such action will be to involve all actors, in developing countries as well as in the international community, in the public and in the private sector, both in the civil society and in the scientific community. Only by such an inclusive approach can we ensure that the digitalisation process leaves no one behind.

Public funding will not be sufficient for a truly transformative digitalisation process. Further funds will need to be leveraged. In this context, the EU External Investment Plan can play an important role. The private sector can play an instrumental role through its expertise and its technology and innovation know-how. Of course, any public-private cooperation in this area must be solidly based on development principles and objectives.

Infrastructure, in particular in rural and remote areas, needs to be central in any digitalisation strategy, to improve coverage, quality and security. Creating energy grids, reducing taxation

on digital products and services and promotion market competition are among the factors promoting a better infrastructure and improved access.

With increasing digitalisation, further measures will also be taken to address the downsides, namely cybercrime and cyber terrorism. All digital strategies should therefore include action to promote cybersecurity and data protection through legislation, training, education and awareness-raising.

In summary, investing in digitalisation can be a strong engine for inclusive growth in developing countries, provided such investment reaches everyone regardless of gender, geography or economic status. With the further commitment to this process from the developing countries themselves as well as with strong support from the European Union, the international community and the public and private sector, we can reduce the digital and economic divide. It is therefore time to deliver.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	9.10.2018
Result of final vote	+: 19 -: 1 0: 5
Members present for the final vote	Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Ignazio Corrao, Nirj Deva, Mireille D'Ornano, Enrique Guerrero Salom, Maria Heubuch, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Stelios Kouloglou, Linda McAvan, Norbert Neuser, Vincent Peillon, Lola Sánchez Caldentey, Eleni Theocharous, Mirja Vehkaperä, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Anna Záborská, Joachim Zeller, Željana Zovko
Substitutes present for the final vote	Thierry Cornillet, Ádám Kósa, Cécile Kashetu Kyenge, Florent Marcellési, Kathleen Van Brempt
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Krzysztof Hetman, Kati Piri

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

19	+
ALDE	Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Thierry Cornillet, Mirja Vehkaperä
ECR	Nirj Deva, Eleni Theocharous
PPE	Krzysztof Hetman, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Ádám Kósa, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Joachim Zeller, Željana Zovko, Anna Záborská
S&D	Enrique Guerrero Salom, Cécile Kашetu Kyenge, Linda McAvan, Norbert Neuser, Vincent Peillon, Kati Piri, Kathleen Van Brempt

1	-
GUE/NGL	Stelios Kouloglou

5	0
EFDD	Ignazio Corrao, Mireille D'Ornano
GUE/NGL	Lola Sánchez Caldentey
VERTS/ALE	Maria Heubuch, Florent Marcellesi

Key to symbols:

- + : in favour
- : against
- 0 : abstention