

PRESS RELEASE

BEREC and VP Kroes meet to discuss their shared commitment to boosting broadband connectivity in Europe

At an extraordinary Plenary meeting of Europe's regulators held on 15 November 2012 in Brussels, Commissioner Neelie Kroes elaborated on her vision for incentivising private sector investment in NGA, following her public statement on the issue in July.

VP Kroes and BEREC agreed on the importance of increasing current levels of infrastructure investment, not only as a response to the current economic and financial challenges facing Europe, but to enable Europe to grow and prosper thereafter. As well as providing the necessary conditions for future employment and business growth within individual Member States, the widespread availability of high-speed broadband will be a key enabler of the digital internal market, bringing together Europe's economies as well as its citizens.

Commissioner Kroes outlined several Commission initiatives in this area, including recently announced plans for legislation aimed at reducing the civil engineering costs of high-speed broadband roll-out, and the role of the Connecting Europe Facility. But the meeting focused primarily on the Commission's planned recommendation aimed at harmonising costing methodologies and the implementation of non-discrimination obligations across Europe.

BEREC members took the opportunity of this informal exchange of views to pose a series of questions aimed at better understanding the Commission's policy thinking in these areas, and at informing their own thinking, both within BEREC and at the national level. The regulators reflected on the specific investment challenges facing their national markets, and there was widespread agreement that transparency, predictability and stability are essential components of any successful package. Furthermore, the Commission and BEREC are both committed to ensuring that the competitive gains made over the last ten years are not lost in the process of securing investment.

VP Kroes expressed her desire for continued close cooperation with BEREC and its members in pursuing this policy agenda, welcoming the opportunity of this open and constructive dialogue as an important input into the Commission's thinking: "Today's meeting helped us develop a common understanding of how to implement the policy orientation I announced in July. Our shared objective is to boost investment in high-speed networks and we are now another step closer to creating the conditions for that investment."

The BEREC Chair, Georg Serentschy of Austrian regulator RTR, noted BEREC's own initiatives in this area, in particular the adoption of revised broadband common positions (expected December 2012), a key instrument for the furthering of the internal market. He also confirmed BEREC's commitment to work closely with the Commission on its initiatives,

and in particular to provide the Commission with a formal opinion (under Article 19 of the Framework Directive) next month, once the Commission officially launches the process of adoption of the eventual recommendation. Mr Serentschy said, “This meeting marks an important development in BEREC’s relationship with the Commission, bringing its members’ on-the-ground regulatory experience to bear on the development of the Commission’s wider policy agenda, and we look forward to continuing this dialogue over the coming years.”

Note to the editor:

BEREC is composed of a Board of Regulators consisting of the Heads of the 27 national regulatory authorities (NRAs). BEREC will advise the European Commission and the NRAs, and assist the European Parliament and Council, on issues related to the application of the EU regulatory framework for electronic communications. BEREC will help to ensure fair competition and consistency of regulation in the internal market for electronic communications to benefit consumers. In particular providing expert advice on market definitions, analysis and remedies, definition of transnational markets, cross-border disputes and numbering issues. Furthermore, BEREC will provide expert opinions on emerging challenges such as the promotion of broadband, net neutrality and converging markets, and is ready to play an active role in the discussions in the public domain on these issues.

Contact details:

For more information please contact:

berec@berec.europa.eu, tel. +371 6611 7590, Website <http://berec.europa.eu>

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