Madam Chair, Honourable Members,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to present the priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union within the Digital Single Market. We will focus on four main areas during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council: the future of Europe and young people; security and stability in a strong and united Europe; digital economy and digital skills; and the perspective of the Western Balkans and their connectivity.

Our aim is to deliver specific results that ensure that Europe remains strong and united through consent, competitiveness and cohesion.

With your cooperation, Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria have remained focused on delivering their programme within the context of their Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU. Accordingly, we are continuing to prioritise work on the digital economy and digital skills. This is essential for the completion of the Digital Single Market Strategy initiatives. In active cooperation with our partners, we will ensure continuity as regards these dossiers and our ambition is to deliver the best possible results. Bulgaria has taken over the Presidency during a period in which a lot of work...
is being done on the digital agenda, both with regard to the current dossiers and to the European Commission's initiatives.

The main task of the Bulgarian Presidency in the spring will be to direct our efforts to continue and successfully complete the negotiation process on the reform of the regulatory framework for electronic communications, which will bring us another step towards the Gigabit society. Consumers should be aware of the real benefits of the new rules on convergent electronic communications services. The revised telecoms framework should ensure a high level of consumer rights protection regardless of the type of electronic communications service provider; access to modern high-speed connectivity, regardless of geographic location; equivalent access and choice of services for users with disabilities; access to emergency services, various telecommunication devices and affordable voice and internet services.

Bulgaria is ready, in the spirit of good cooperation, to advance on the file on the free movement of non-personal data - an important component for building a data-based economy. The free flow of non-personal data is a prerequisite for a functioning digital economy that generates new jobs and requires future skills. In order to unleash the potential of the digital economy, we must ensure that data can circulate freely within the Union, and we are therefore ready to start negotiations when the European Parliament votes on its amendments.

Over the coming months, we will work to ensure centralised, full and non-discriminatory access for citizens and businesses in the EU to online information, procedures and services. This will be another step towards transforming public administration so as to offer an open, efficient and inclusive, easy-to-use digital service. In this connection, we are planning to start negotiations with the European Parliament as soon as possible and to work towards their successful completion.
One of the key priorities in the area of employment and social policy is to ensure equal rights for people with disabilities. In this regard, we will work to make significant progress and, if possible, conclude the trialogue under the European Accessibility Act during the Bulgarian Presidency.

Cybersecurity, which is an important element of today's digital economy and society, has a significant place on our political agenda. We will strive to achieve a general approach to the proposed Cyber Security Act, which will build a single cyber-environment through the creation of a European cyber framework. This must promote trust and security on the Internet and address the current fragmentation of the market.

We are aware that our citizens need to be sure of the confidentiality of their communications and of privacy within an electronic environment, and we will therefore seek compromise solutions to achieve a balance between an adequate level of protection and sufficient incentives for innovation.

During the Bulgarian Presidency, discussions will start on the so-called "third data package". The benefits of opening up public sector data are indisputable and, in connection with the Commission's forthcoming legislative initiative on revision of the Public Sector Information Directive, we will organise a ministerial discussion on the added value of opening up publicly-funded data. This package will also present a non-legislative initiative in the field of artificial intelligence and robotics, on which we intend to prepare Council conclusions, and we will begin reviewing the Top Level Domain ".eu". These initiatives will address the opportunities and challenges posed by the Internet and new technologies, as well as the need to establish Europe as a world leader in these areas.
In the first half of this year, legislative initiatives aimed at building a safe and innovation-friendly ecosystem around online platforms in the EU - regulating platform to business relations and tackling harmful content online - will be announced. These are horizontal, socially relevant topics that concern different countries and we intend to initiate intensive discussions on them within the competent preparatory bodies of the Council.

During the Bulgarian presidency, discussions will be launched on the multiannual financial framework after 2020, where we expect to have a special subsection concerning digital technology. There is a need for more financial resources for digital infrastructure, digital skills, the transformation of digital services, and cybersecurity.

We will seek to promote the EU's digital policies among the Western Balkan countries, in particular guaranteed broadband coverage for all, by encouraging ultra-high speed cross-border connectivity and emphasising the introduction of EU rules for the gradual reduction of roaming charges for these countries.

Until the end of our Presidency, we will make every effort to offer common European solutions, relying on effective and fruitful cooperation with the European Parliament. The motto of our presidency is "United we stand strong" and I am convinced that together with the Member States and in close cooperation with you, we can achieve a great deal for a united digital Europe.

Thank you!

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