

First Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy

On 11 June 2015 the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in close cooperation with the Commission organized in Luxembourg the first Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy. The meeting was co-chaired by the Minister of Transport of Latvia Mr Anrijs Matīss, and Commission's Vice President Andrus Ansip.

EU Ministers responsible for the Digital Economy and their representatives met their Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belarus, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian counterparts in the afternoon of 11 June to discuss the challenges and opportunities of the digital economy of the Eastern Partnership. The meeting was organised by the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.

The digital economy was recognised as an area with untapped potential for both the EU and six partners at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga on 21-22 May 2015. The declaration reflects the two main priorities of the Latvian Presidency – Digital Europe and Engaged Europe.

Speaking at the meeting, Andrus Ansip, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Digital Single Market outlined the Commission's plan to make the EU's single market fit for the digital age – tearing down regulatory walls and moving from 28 national markets to a single one. This could contribute €415 billion per year to our economy and create hundreds of thousands of jobs. Vice-President Ansip also underlined that closer digital integration offers great potential for trade growth and wider economic cooperation – for the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries. The 75 million consumers of the six partner countries also benefit from the potential of the Digital Single Market to bring economic growth, to generate more jobs, to improve their people's lives and help businesses. [Speech in full](#)

Representatives of European Financial Institutions, the network of Eastern Partnership regulators for electronic communications (EaPeReg), the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC), as well as representatives of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) industry and civil society were also present.

- [Joint Press Statement](#)
- [Joint Declaration](#)

EaPConnect

At the meeting, the European Commission signed a €13 million contract to expand connectivity in the Eastern Partnership countries. The project will create a regional high-speed Internet network dedicated to research and education (R&E) across Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It will interconnect the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in the EaP partner countries and integrate them in the pan-European GÉANT network and enable researchers

and students in the European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood, to fully participate in the digital economy. Two million scientists, academics and students at over 700 institutions across the region are expected to benefit from this connectivity boost.

Set up more than a decade ago to enable research collaboration and knowledge sharing among European researchers and beyond, GÉANT has played a pivotal role in facilitating research projects that help maintain European competitiveness and provide insight into solving some of humanity's biggest challenges. GÉANT's advanced network and services enable research projects across fields as varied as climate change and environmental monitoring, food and energy supply, particle physics and radio astronomy, medicine and bioinformatics.

Closer digital integration offers great potential for trade growth and wider economic cooperation – for all of us. It is in everyone's interests, on all sides, for the Eastern Partnership countries to build stronger EU ties, whether in transport, energy or in aligning digital markets: the next stage of our cooperation, which starts today. – Andrus Ansip

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