

## Connectivity Toolbox: Member States agree on best practices to boost timely deployment of 5G and fibre networks

On 25 March 2021, the Member States, in close cooperation with the Commission, agreed on a Union-wide Connectivity Toolbox, pursuant to the Connectivity Recommendation of 18 September 2020. The Toolbox consists of a set of best practices that are considered as the most efficient in allowing and encouraging operators to roll out very high capacity networks.



European Commission

The best practices will help network operators to reduce the cost of gigabit broadband deployment and Member States to adopt an efficient approach for ensuring timely and investment-friendly access to 5G spectrum to mobile operators and other users of spectrum, including for industrial applications.

Connectivity has supported citizens, businesses and public administrations through the pandemic, it will be an essential pillar of the recovery. The swift implementation of the Connectivity Toolbox will enable Member States to fully exploit the potential of the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Earlier this month the Commission presented a Communication on Europe's Digital Decade that sets out the aim to connect all European households with gigabit speeds and to ensure 5G coverage for all populated areas in the EU as well as major transport routes. The Connectivity Toolbox will continue playing a fundamental role as the EU steps into the Digital Decade.

Thierry **Breton**, Commissioner for the Internal market, said:

In the Digital Decade all Europeans should benefit from fast and secure connections. We must start today turning this ambition into a reality. The Connectivity Toolbox is the result of Member States' cooperation and commitment to remove obstacles and boost the deployment of very fast networks.

## **Measures to cut the cost and speed up network rollout**

Fixed and mobile network deployment requires costly civil works to lay down cables and network elements, as well as lengthy and burdensome administrative procedures to obtain the necessary permits. The Connectivity Toolbox contains best practices to cut these costs, to promote access to physical infrastructure and to streamline permit granting procedures to carry out civil works. As part of these efforts, the Connectivity Toolbox calls on enhancing the availability of information about existing physical infrastructure, planned civil works and permit procedures through the Single Information Points or equivalent platforms, as well as to promote the electronic handling of all permit granting application procedures. More so, Member States are encouraged to facilitate the installation of network elements, in particular relevant for 5G, by giving operators greater access to public infrastructure (in a similar manner as the European Electronic Communications Code already provides for small cells). Additionally, the Connectivity Toolbox contains measures to make dispute resolution, between the actors involved in network deployment, more transparent and efficient. Finally, the Connectivity Toolbox encourages Member States to undertake initiatives to limit adverse environmental effects and to enhance the sustainability of networks.

## **Measures to ensure timely and investment-friendly access to radio spectrum for 5G rollout**

For 5G network deployment, operators and users of spectrum for industrial applications should have timely access to EU-harmonised radio spectrum under pro-investment conditions. Member States are responsible for granting the authorisations for the use of spectrum, and should ensure that spectrum authorisation procedures are timely and that they encourage further investment in 5G networks. In this regard, the Connectivity Toolbox focusses on measures that incentivise spectrum use and 5G rollout. In addition, the Connectivity Toolbox promotes coordinated measures that support wireless connectivity for industrial use cases, including with a cross-border dimension. Furthermore, the Connectivity Toolbox includes proposals for Member States to address general public interest, namely to increase transparency and information about 5G and public health protection.

The Member States are committed to start implementing the Toolbox as soon as possible. As a next step, according to the timeline laid out in the Connectivity Recommendation, Member States should prepare and share with the Commission by 30 April 2021 their national roadmaps to implement the Toolbox, timely matching the finalisation of the Member States' recovery and resilience plans.

## **Background**

The Commission works continuously to improve connectivity across the EU. The initiative to adopt and implement a Connectivity Toolbox comes from the Commission's Connectivity Toolbox Recommendation published in September 2020. The Recommendation builds upon the Broadband Cost Reduction Directive and the provisions in the European Electronic Communications Code with the aim to identify measures that are most efficient in allowing and encouraging operators to rollout very high capacity networks, including fibre and 5G. The work kicked off in the Connectivity Special group, which compiled a report on the identified best practices at the end of last year. In parallel, the

Commission is working on reviewing the Broadband Cost Reduction Directive, which will further aid Member States in targeting the right areas to reach the Gigabit Connectivity objectives across the EU. The Commission is expecting to make a proposal in Q1 2022.

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The Connectivity Toolbox.pdf  
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