

A telecoms viewpoint on the EU-U.K. agreement

ETNO welcomes the achievement of the EU-U.K. Trade and Cooperation Agreement. An agreement on the future relationship between the U.K. and the European Union is of great importance to ETNO members and the whole telecommunication industry. Telecom network operators active in the U.K. are pan-European operators. Furthermore, in a time of deep transformations for telecommunications and digital markets overall, the EU and U.K. remain intrinsically connected as they face the same challenges and opportunities.

The Agreement

While the Agreement marks the start of a new chapter in the relationship between the EU and the U.K., both sides maintain in many ways a shared vision and principles, not least on the digital economy and society, and on the urgency to act to combat the impact of climate change, which is the motivation behind the EU Green Deal.

We welcome that the Agreement includes a common commitment to the basic principles of digital markets and regulation, including the main principles of the European Electronic Communications framework, consumer protection, competition law, and data protection. These commitments are vital to ensure a healthy and functioning relationship in the future. To fortify this commitment for an open digital economy, ETNO calls for a stable, durable, and future-proof framework for EU-U.K. data flows in the form of a swiftly adopted adequacy decision from the European Commission, and stresses the foundational importance of such a decision to facilitate ongoing trade and cooperation between the EU and the U.K. We trust in the ability of the EU to keep “open data borders” with a former Member State that has long adhered to European privacy and data protection standards and is committed by the Agreement to ensuring cross-border data flows.

The Relationship

The U.K.’s approach to digital regulation has long been an important influence in the formulation of EU policy, and with both taking a similar approach to competition and regulation of online platform ecosystems. The U.K. and the EU should continue to work together to be best equipped for the future, and remain competitive in the world, especially when it comes to tech start-ups and investment in Artificial Intelligence.

ETNO members stress the importance of continued cooperation between the EU and the U.K. going forward – especially in those areas of strategic importance, such as cybersecurity – where our shared principles, goals and expertise can serve as mutual reinforcement. To this end, we welcome the provisions in the Agreement which enable and facilitate UK cooperation with a number of EU agencies, including ENISA, on cybersecurity; and EUROPOL, on law enforcement.