

## CEO Statement – A new connectivity rulebook to strengthen Europe’s competitiveness

12 December 2024 – Europe is at a crossroads and it must embrace a growth-driven mindset in order to succeed. It is time for our continent to implement a bold competitiveness agenda that delivers for all Europeans. As CEOs of Europe’s leading providers of connectivity networks and services, we believe that robust digitalization will create growth opportunities and improved welfare for our citizens. Mario Draghi and Enrico Letta, in their high-level reports, both singled out digital infrastructure as a crucial factor in relaunching the European economy.

From manufacturing to healthcare, from transports to public services, from research to SMEs: we believe that Europe’s future prosperity is built on cutting-edge digital infrastructure and services. Today, [research](#) shows how 85% of European consumers think that connectivity is a basic need, while over 60% of small businesses say that 5G and fibre can help grow their company. It is our duty to do everything we can to provide citizens and businesses with best-in-class networks. This also means ensuring that European players remain in the lead in the evolving connectivity value-chain: from 5G to FTTH and other gigabit networks, from edge cloud to AI, from network virtualization to innovations such as quantum encryption and 6G.

This will not happen without a swift change in Europe’s policy approach. This is why we welcome the direction of the new European Commission. We agree with the objectives outlined in the Political [Guidelines](#) of President von der Leyen, who pledged to “make business easier in the Single Market, invest massively in sustainable competitiveness and (...) put innovation at the heart of our economy”. Executive Vice-President Teresa Ribera, [said](#) she will work to help companies scale and become more competitive globally. Executive Vice-President Henna Virkkunen had clear [words](#) on connectivity specifically: she stated that the upcoming Digital Networks Act will be an “opportunity to reduce bureaucracy and make sure that Europe is an attractive place for investments”. We welcome this approach and we agree that it can bring enormous benefits to our citizens.

The reasons and ways in which a pro-growth reform can be achieved were recently outlined in Mario Draghi’s milestone [report](#), who stressed that “competition for computing power and lack of investment in connectivity could soon translate into digital bottlenecks”. This is why his main recommendation for the connectivity ecosystem is to “reform the EU’s regulation and competition stance to complete the Digital Single Market for telecommunications”. We strongly agree and we call for urgent action by the European Institutions in at least four areas:

- **Simplification and deregulation at the heart of the Digital Networks Act.** All citizens must have access to gigabit networks and telecoms should become again a growth-oriented sector. This necessitates an urgent reform of the current regulatory framework with the upcoming DNA, aiming in general for a shift from ex-ante to ex-post control, as proposed by the European Commission in its White Paper as well as in Mario Draghi’s report. To put it in his words, we should be “increasing legal certainty and reducing regulatory and administrative burden by ensuring that there are fewer, clearer, more fit-for-purpose, future-proof and coherent rules”.
- **A new approach to competition policy, with competitiveness and society at heart.** Europe needs scale and consolidation if it is to remain relevant on the global tech map. Competition assessments should take into account the wide range of benefits mergers can bring for consumers and businesses in innovation, quality, security and sustainability. The current approach, which does not adequately take into account long-term efficiencies such as investment strength, weakens our ability to compete with global players and to deliver connectivity to all Europeans.

- **A real and fair Telecoms Single Market for growth and innovation.** Building on Enrico Letta's [report](#), we should overcome national barriers. We can do that by streamlining sectoral regulation, removing unnecessary rules and harmonising more at the EU level – especially on licensing conditions and availability of spectrum. We should also address the current regulatory asymmetries in the connectivity value-chain to achieve a level playing field, including in the IP data transport markets.
- **A robust industrial strategy for the European connectivity ecosystem.** We need agile industrial policy tools to support a competitive, AI-enabled telco edge cloud infrastructure and a trusted open RAN ecosystem, including by making public funding available. We should also support the climate transition for digital infrastructure, through affordable access to renewable energy and by including advanced networks in the EU taxonomy.

The investment gap in trusted digital networks is a strain on our ability to ensure all of Europe can access secure and resilient gigabit communications, thereby delivering more sustainable societies. There is no security without resilient networks. There is no green transition without widespread connectivity and digitalization.

The time for action is now. We should take swift action moved by a sense of urgency. We call on all stakeholders to join in this historic effort and ensure that innovation and growth-driven reform in connectivity helps us deliver better opportunities for all European citizens.

This statement is supported by the following CEOs:

Alejandro Plater, CEO, A1 Telekom Austria Group  
 Ana Figueiredo, CEO and Chairwoman, Altice Portugal  
 Allison Kirkby, CEO, BT Group  
 Timotheus Höttges, CEO, Deutsche Telekom  
 Luigi Ferraris, CEO, FiberCop  
 Joost Farwerck, CEO and Chairman of the Board of Management, KPN  
 Mike Fries, CEO, Liberty Global  
 Nikhil Patil, CEO, GO Malta  
 Harald Roesch, CEO, Melita Limited  
 Pekka Lundmark, President and CEO, Nokia  
 Christel Heydemann, CEO, Orange Group  
 Claude Strasser, CEO, POST Luxembourg  
 Guillaume Boutin, CEO, Proximus  
 Christoph Aeschlimann, CEO, Swisscom  
 Michel Jumeau, CEO, TDC NET  
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 Patrik Hofbauer, President and CEO, Telia Company  
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