



Speech by Vice-President Ansip at Mobile World Congress

Barcelona, 28 February 2017

Ladies and gentlemen

It is a pleasure to be with you again in Barcelona at the Mobile World Congress.

Last year I may well have said to you that telecommunications are the backbone of Europe's DSM.

They still are. They are the foundation for it to function fully and efficiently.

To me, it seems logical that this market will work much better with high-quality connectivity and joined-up networks.

We are working hard to make that a reality. There is no time to lose in getting ready for what we know is coming. And that is 5G.

Globally, this is a fast-moving and complex field.

Multiple business models and technologies are being developed rapidly for different home markets.

Countries as well as companies are positioning themselves fast.

If Europe is to remain a credible force in this global race, our industries should also move fast – urgently – to deploy and trial 5G capabilities.

But what are we aiming for? And what does 'fifth generation' actually mean?

5G has been called an evolution as well as a revolution.

It is a natural evolution from 4G. It allows the same applications as today - but with much improved performance and user experience.

Faster internet access, faster video downloads, better access in crowded places.

More of the same, but a lot better.

But it can, and will also be, a revolution.

The revolutionary part is that 5G has the potential to transform how people live, work, play and communicate.

To transform how businesses operate, driving countless innovative applications, services and business models not yet fully possible with existing technologies.

There is no doubt that the emerging 5G market has high socio-economic potential. This is not only about more speed and bandwidth for mobile.

It is about building the communication platform to power the digital revolution.

Transport and the automotive industry are perhaps the most obvious 5G uses - connected and automated cars, and all forms of connected mobility.

But there are many new potential uses across different sectors: healthcare and telesurgery, smart manufacturing and factories, logistics, robotics, smart city management, environment and energy, media and public safety.

In all of these, there has to be coordination between different sectors, whether industrial or public, and also between industry and EU countries themselves.

And if Europe wants to be visible, then European initiatives need to appear quickly. Since our 5G vision mainly relates to vertical business cases, these industries should get more actively involved in the process.

Ladies and gentlemen

For full coordinated deployment of 5G across the EU, we need three main things: vision, speed and cooperation.

This is why we developed the 5G Action Plan as part of the proposed telecoms reform, which will create the right conditions for a competitive telecoms market: to promote innovation and stimulate

investment in high-capacity networks.

The 5G plan is where Europe can make a real difference, especially as part of our wider policy goal of digitising European industry.

It is a European response to a European need. And what Europe needs is a large home market for 5G products and services – right from the start.

When 4G came along, Europe was slow to push ahead.

We do not want to make the same mistake with 5G.

That is why we have set a clear timetable to keep the EU ahead of the race.

We aim for fast movers to start 5G trials in selected areas in 2018, then coordinated commercial deployment of advanced 5G networks from 2020.

This raises some practical issues. Despite the huge interest, the world does not yet have any 5G standards or specifications.

Work on standardisation started early last year under the global alliance of regional standardisation bodies. We expect its decision soon to define what the first version of the 5G standard will include.

There is a great deal to say about 5G standards – technically as much as politically. You know this as well, if not better, than I do.

Firstly, it is important for the standardisation process to include everyone involved. There will not be a second chance to do this.

Move now, make your voice heard.

Secondly, we want to avoid global fragmentation, or interoperability gaps where people's mobile connections become patchy when they travel overseas.

So we should avoid short-term decisions and early choices that could set a 5G standard in stone and make it hard to change later.

That kind of commercial-based pressure is something that the world's emerging 5G community does not need.

What we need is a common understanding between countries and regions.

I know it may take a little longer to reach a consensus.

But it is worth the effort for the global market reach. This is why global coordination is so important at this stage of developing 5G standards.

Returning to Europe, what we need to make the 5G vision a reality is to make spectrum available throughout the DSM.

It must be consistent, timely and under conditions that favour the major investments needed to ensure adequate coverage across Europe.

This is what the proposed Communications Code aims to achieve.

We already have instruments to align *technical* conditions for spectrum use. And we are working hard to prepare key pioneer bands.

But I cannot stress enough the importance of also having EU-wide coordination of the *economic* conditions of spectrum use:

- rapid and effective availability of new bands;
- predictable assignment procedures and licence durations;
- clear public interest requirements, easy trading, leasing and sharing.

The alternative is to risk being left behind in the fast connectivity age.

We rely on EU countries to support our telecoms industry and the broad digitisation of industry. I urge them to do so – and to start cross-border 5G trials.

Ladies and gentlemen

5G is no longer being seen as a necessary cost to pay. It is already an intrinsic asset - of a digital product or service that either exists or is yet to be developed.

If you are a company, you know that your competitors are either investing in new technology or have it already. That is the natural competitive edge.

You cannot stop progress. If you don't take advantage, others will.

That is why we have to work together – regionally and globally.

In Europe, we have the experts, the experience, the know-how.

We have the possibility today to work across multiple sectors to define the connectivity that will be available tomorrow.

And tomorrow, people working in public services, utilities, manufacturing, healthcare, farming and transport will all be using 5G networks to provide new smart products and services based on next-generation connectivity.

This is not about individual countries. Everyone needs to play their part.

We can - and should - be a front-runner.

Let us work together to make sure that it happens.

Thank you.

SPEECH/17/342