



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 3 June 2019

**Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council
(Telecommunications Issues)
Luxembourg, 7 June 2019**

Chair: **Alexandru Petrescu**, Minister for Communications and the Information Society of Romania.
The **meeting** will **start** at 10.00.

The Council will hold a policy debate and adopt conclusions on the **future of a highly digitised Europe beyond 2020**: 'Boosting digital and economic competitiveness across the Union and digital cohesion'.

The Council will adopt a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) **World Radiocommunication Conference 2019** (WRC-19).

Ministers will take note of the progress report on a proposal to update **privacy rules for electronic communications (ePrivacy)**.

Under 'Any other business', the presidency will update ministers on current legislative dossiers: the **Digital Europe** programme, and the **European Cybersecurity Competence Centre and the Network of Coordination Centres**.

The presidency will provide an overview of the most important presidency events held in Romania. The Czech delegation will brief ministers on the Prague 5G security conference.

Lastly, the incoming Finnish presidency will present its work programme.

Press conference: +/- 15.00

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>
Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: <http://nwsr.eu/p/209610>

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Press Office.

Highly digitised Europe beyond 2020

The Council will hold a policy debate and adopt conclusions on the **future of a highly digitised Europe beyond 2020**: 'Boosting digital and economic competitiveness across the Union and digital cohesion' ([policy debate document](#)).

The digital single market (DSM) strategy adopted in May 2015 aimed to ensure an area in which the free movement of persons, services and capital is ensured and where individuals and businesses can seamlessly access and engage in online activities under conditions of fair competition, irrespective of their nationality or place of residence, and with a high level of consumer and personal data protection.

According to Commission estimates, completing a DSM can contribute €415 billion per year to Europe's economy, create jobs and transform our public services.

The [informal Telecommunications Council meeting](#) on 1 March 2019 in Bucharest launched a strategic debate on the post-2020 digital policy, addressing topics such as artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber security.

In the **Council policy debate**, the presidency will invite ministers to address the following questions:

- Which are the main actions Europe should take immediately in order to maintain its global competitiveness in e-commerce and the data economy, including in relation to the rapid adoption of AI by companies and SMEs?
- How can we better address challenges such as digital disparities in such a way that no one is left behind in the digital transformation?

The conclusions to be adopted by the Council following the debate are expected to touch on a large number of issues, including the importance of ensuring efficient implementation of current EU rules; the need for a comprehensive assessment of existing laws, where necessary followed by appropriate actions; the need for the new policy to be evidence-based; the need to support innovation and foster European key digital technologies; the importance of bridging the digital divide and connecting, where needed, the less connected regions, industries, administrations and citizens; the development of digital skills; the importance of ethics in artificial intelligence; the importance of promoting the development of the gigabit society, including 5G; the need to reinforce Europe's cybersecurity capacity; the need to take gender equality into account in all areas of digitalisation; and the need to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital transformation.

The European Council has on several occasions stressed the importance of digital. In March this year its Conclusions stated: "the EU needs to go further in developing a competitive, secure, inclusive and ethical digital economy with world-class connectivity. Special emphasis should be placed on access to, sharing of and use of data, on data security and on Artificial Intelligence, in an environment of trust."

The ministers' discussion and the Council conclusions will feed into the development of future EU digital policy.

The Council will discuss and adopt the conclusions in a public session.

[Digital single market for Europe \(background information\)](#)

World Radiocommunication Conference 2019

The Council is due to adopt a decision establishing the positions to be taken, on the behalf of the EU, by member states at the [World Radiocommunication Conference 2019 \(WRC-19\)](#). The conference will take place from 28 October to 22 November 2019 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

WRC-19 is held under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which is the United Nations specialised agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs).

WRC-19 will revise the ITU Radio Regulations, the international treaty which allocates radio-frequencies to different radiocommunication services and sets the technical conditions for the use of those frequencies in order to avoid harmful interference.

The envisaged WRC-19 Final Act is aimed at adapting the radio spectrum for different types of networks in response to technological advances and changes in demand. It will be binding on the parties.

EU negotiating positions are needed because certain WRC-19 agenda items could affect common EU rules or alter their scope.

The latest revisions to the Radio Regulations entered into force in January 2017.

The ITU has 193 members, and all EU countries are members of the ITU. Each ITU member has a vote. The EU is a sector member of the ITU, with no vote or right to speak.

Procedure: The Commission presented its proposal for a Council decision in February 2019. The decision will enter into force on the day it is adopted by the Council. It will be made public once WRC-19 is over.

ePrivacy

The Council will take note of the progress report on a proposal to update **privacy rules for electronic communications (ePrivacy)** ([progress report](#)).

The draft regulation sets out to ensure a high level of protection of private life, communications and personal data in the electronic communications sector. It also aims to create a level playing field for providers of various services and to ensure free movement of electronic communications data and services in the EU. It will replace the [current ePrivacy directive](#), which was last updated in 2009, and complement the [general data protection regulation](#), which became applicable on 25 May 2018.

Under the [proposal on e-privacy](#), confidentiality of communications would apply both to the content of the communication and to the metadata - for example, who was called, the timing and location of a call and websites visited. The proposal also includes stronger rules on spam and marketing calls.

The scope of privacy rules would be extended to cover not only traditional telcos, but also providers of new services such as instant messaging apps and web-based email.

The Commission has also proposed new rules on cookies and on the consent required to access information on a user's device.

The **Council** held a policy debate on the proposal on 8 June 2018 and an exchange of views on 4 December 2019.

In the working party discussions the Romanian presidency has addressed the vast majority of the issues raised by ministers. The main issues discussed have included the way in which the ePrivacy proposal would interact with new technologies, in particular in the context of machine-to-machine communication, the internet of things or artificial intelligence; the prevention and detection of child abuse imagery; aspects related to data retention regimes and their compliance with the requirements of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; and giving member states sufficient flexibility in the provisions on supervisory authorities, while respecting the independence requirements stemming from the Charter.

Procedure: The Commission presented its proposal in January 2017. It is one of the actions under the digital single market strategy to reinforce trust and security in the digital single market.

For it to be adopted, the text will need to be approved by both the Council and the European Parliament. The Parliament adopted its negotiating mandate in October 2017.

[Digital single market for Europe \(background information\)](#)

Other business

- Current legislative proposals:
Regulation establishing the Digital Europe programme for the period 2021-2027
[Digital Europe programme – Coreper confirms common understanding reached with Parliament \(13/03/2019 press release\)](#)
Regulation establishing the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre and the Network of Coordination Centres
[EU to pool and network its cybersecurity expertise – Council agrees its position on cybersecurity centres \(13/03/2019 press release\)](#)
Information from the presidency
 - Overview of presidency events in Romania
Information from the presidency ([presidency website](#))
 - Prague 5G security conference (Prague, 1 May 2019)
[Information from the Czech delegation](#) ([conference website](#))
 - Work programme of the incoming presidency
[Information from the Finnish delegation](#)
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