



**Eastern Partnership Platform 2**  
**“Economic Integration and Convergence with EU policies”**  
**Panel on Harmonisation of Digital Markets – HDM Panel**  
**Terms of Reference**

1. In accordance with the General Guidelines and Rules of Procedure of the Eastern Partnership Multilateral Platform (adopted on 5 June 2009), an “Eastern Partnership Panel on Harmonisation of Digital Markets” (the “HDM Panel”) is established.
2. The HDM Panel aims to contribute to economic integration and convergence with EU policies, through harmonisation of digital markets between Eastern European partner countries and with the EU and, where relevant, gradual approximation of legislation in partner countries to applicable EU *acquis*.
3. The Directorate General for Communications, Networks, Content and Technology – DG CONNECT **chairs** the HDM Panel.
4. The **policy framework** which sets out the objectives of the HDM Panel is the Commission Communication "A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe" (COM (2015) 192)<sup>1</sup> together with the Ministerial Declaration<sup>2</sup> of the First Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy, held in June 2015.
5. The **key objective** of HDM policy is to promote the harmonisation of digital markets within the Eastern European partner region, and between partner countries and the EU. Individuals and businesses, irrespective of their nationality or place of residence, will be enabled to exercise online activities seamlessly, under fair competition and with a high level of consumer and personal data protection. Harmonised digital markets will foster better online services at better prices, offer more choice and boost employment. Existing companies will be able to grow faster and start-ups will be created more easily within a pan-European digital market.
6. The **key issues** to be addressed by the HDM Panel include all ten topics addressed by the First EaP Digital Economy Ministerial Declaration: eGovernment, including open data, eHealth and eCustoms; eCommerce for SMEs; eLogistics and digital transport corridors; electronic identification and trust services; network and information security, cybersecurity and cybercrime; ICT-based infrastructures for eTrade; ICT-based infrastructures for research and education; digital skills; telecom rules; and Internet governance. Additional issues might be addressed by the HDM Panel, if these have direct relevance to the Digital Economy and are identified by the HDM Panel as priorities for the Eastern Partnership.
7. HDM Panel **participants** include representatives of EU institutions and relevant stakeholders from the Eastern European partner countries and EU Member States including public administrations, professional and industrial associations, regulatory bodies and civil

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market/docs/dsm-communication\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market/docs/dsm-communication_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://eu2015.lv/images/news/2015\\_06\\_11\\_EaP\\_Digital\\_Economy.pdf](https://eu2015.lv/images/news/2015_06_11_EaP_Digital_Economy.pdf)

society. Each partner country will appoint an **HDM national coordinator** who will represent the country at the HDM Panel and ensure appropriate follow-up at national level. The Panel will meet at experts' level. Experts participation will vary depending on the specific subjects covered in each Panel meeting. The EaP Civil Society Forum will be invited to participate in the work of the Panel. Experts from EU Member States, EU Agencies, IFIs, other organisations and third countries beyond the EaP can be invited to the HDM Panel meetings in order to share experiences, information and best practices.

8. The HDM Panel has an **indefinite duration** and will **meet at least once per year**.
9. The **work of the Panel** will consist of the following type of activities:
  - a) **Cooperation and dialogue** on developments in partner countries and in the EU, regarding the digital economy and the HDM process. The Panel will provide for a multilateral exchange of views, aimed at identifying challenges and opportunities for harmonisation, sharing of experiences and best practices and promoting strategic and technical cooperation for HDM. It will be assessing the progress of the HDM process and ensure consistency and coherence at national, bilateral and, where appropriate, at regional level.
  - b) **Studies** to be initiated on specific topics related to HDM.
  - c) **Technical workshops/seminars** on priority topics to be proposed by the partner countries. These workshops/seminars could be organised on the occasion of HDM Panel meetings or separately and should focus on topics which fall within the scope of the key issues addressed by the HDM Panel.
10. As the HDM is intrinsically cross-sectorial and multidisciplinary, the HDM Panel will seek to develop **synergies with other Platforms and Panels**:
  - Platform 1: synergies should be sought with the Panel on Integrated Border Management (e.g. in relation to eCustoms and cross-border parcel delivery), the Panel on Public Administration Reform (e.g. as regards eGovernment) and the Panel on Common Security and Defence Policy (e.g. as regards cyber-security).
  - Platform 2: synergies should be developed with the Panel on SMEs (e.g. as regards eCommerce for SMEs) and the Trade Panel (e.g. as regards the implementation of the parts of the Association Agreements which are related to the digital economy, notably the Information Society Chapter).
  - Platform 4: synergies should be sought with the Research and Innovation Panel (e.g. as regards ICT-based infrastructures for education and research, promotion of research & innovation in ICT, as well as digital skills).
11. The discussions of the HDM Panel will consider existing initiatives and planned assistance provided by the donor community, as well as bilateral or international agreements and frameworks. Decision making procedures applicable to the management of funds in the European Commission will always be duly considered.
12. The Panel Guidelines and Rules of Procedure of the Eastern Partnership Multilateral Platforms are applicable, in particular point 6 on Eastern Partnership Panels.

*Brussels, 30 October 2015*