

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

Panel on Harmonisation of Digital Markets – HDM Panel (chaired by the Directorate General for Communications, Networks, Content and Technology – DG CONNECT).

The HDM Panel was established in autumn 2015. The Commission Communication "A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe" (COM (2015) 192)¹, as well as the Ministerial Declaration² of the First Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy, held in June 2015, provide the policy framework of the Panel and set out its objectives.

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.

The HDM Panel will address all the topics which are included in the First EaP Ministerial Declaration on the Digital Economy: 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 topics 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. Priority actions to be addressed in the period 2016-2017 will be further detailed by the first HDM Panel meeting.

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 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. The HDM Panel will meet at least once per year.

In line with its Terms of Reference, the Panel will focus on the following types of activities:

- a) Discuss the state of play of developments in the area of digital economy and digital markets in partner countries and in the EU and as regards priority topics which are identified by the Panel. Exchange experiences and best practices, discuss the gaps between the partner countries and the EU and identify challenges and opportunities for harmonisation. Use the findings of the HDM study as input to this discussion.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market/docs/dsm-communication_en.pdf

² https://eu2015.lv/images/news/2015_06_11_EaP_Digital_Economy.pdf

- b) Contribute towards an HDM strategy, taking into account the relevant policy and financial frameworks in the EU, national priorities in partner countries and relevant bilateral agreements.
- c) Explore implementation possibilities for the HDM strategy, including funding sources for relevant actions. These would typically comprise ongoing projects and programmes, IFIs, the wider donor community, EU Member States and partner countries (see also below the section on synergies with other Platforms and Panels). Explore the best approach to secure the recognition of the strategic importance of HDM, including with regard to the creation of any future EaP Flagships.
- d) Assess implementation progress of the pilot HDM activities and ensure consistency and coherence at national, bilateral and where appropriate, at regional level. Based on implementation progress, contribute to refine/revise the HDM strategy.
- e) Studies to be initiated on specific topics related to HDM. Studies could be initiated to support any of the activities (a)-(d) listed above.
- f) Workshops/seminars on priority HDM topics to be proposed by partner countries: These workshops/seminars could support any of the activities (a)-(d) listed above. They 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.

As the HDM is intrinsically cross-sectorial and multidisciplinary, the HDM Panel will seek to develop synergies with other Platforms and Panels. In 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 cybersecurity). In 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). In 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).

Objectives

- Harmonisation of Digital Markets within the Eastern European partner region, and between partner countries and the EU, and where relevant, gradual approximation of legislation in partner countries to applicable EU acquis.

Targets to be achieved

- Improved exchange of experiences and best practices between partner countries and with the EU on issues related to the digital economy.
- Coordinated follow-up to the 1st EaP Ministerial meeting on digital economy through a carefully developed EaP regional strategy for HDM.
- Mobilisation of an optimal mix of sources for financing HDM actions in the priority topics identified.
- Concrete achievements during this first work programme, leading to the 2nd EaP Ministerial meeting on digital economy, to be held in 2017 before the next EaP Summit.
- Recognition of the importance of HDM as a strategic priority, including with regard to the creation of any future EaP Flagships.

Brussels, 30 October 2015