

Informal high-level videoconference for ministers in charge for telecommunications

Good morning, I would like to thank the Croatian Presidency for convening today's meeting and coordinating the European response during this dramatic semester.

The pandemic highlighted the importance of digitalisation across all areas of European economy and society.

I wish to quote President Von Der Leyen's remarks. We should take advantage of this tragic moment to speed "the transition to a fair, climate-neutral and digital Europe".

In Italy, we have been supporting the social and economic recovery, contributing with "digital initiatives" to fight the pandemic.

Q 1 What are the principal lessons learnt from the crisis and the role of digital in addressing them, and which aspects of the digital strategy should be addressed as priorities?

We learned several lessons:

1st Connectivity is vital for smart-working and distance learning. We promoted the infrastructure, and worked on demand measures. We unlocked **1.6 billion euros to connect schools and SMEs through ultra fast broadband.**

2nd The Digital Identity e-ID is the basis of digital services. Over the last months, there was a sharp increase in the use of the digital identity to access digital services. The national eID (SPID) has more than 7 million users, with 30% of new users over the last 5 months.

3rd Reducing the digital divide through the use of digital services. We issued a public call - **Digital Solidarity** - for the private sector and associations to offer digital services to citizens for free to boost uptake and reduce digital divide.

4th Reinforcing public sector digital transformation. We introduced new measures to **purchase IT goods and services** through a **simplified negotiated procedure**. We launched a **special fund of EUR 50 millions for the digitalization of the public administration.**

5th We introduced innovative applications in the public sector which can help to make the organization and management process more efficient and effective. We worked on an **"Exposure notifications app"**. The app (Immuni) is available as of June 1st and it was already downloaded **1.5 million times since its launch.**

The application is based on Google/ Apple operating system and complies with the European GDPR and Italian law on privacy, and with the "Common EU Toolbox" to which we contributed.

Q 2 Regarding strengths and vulnerabilities in the effort to secure our global competitiveness and in strengthening our digital sovereignty

These and the forthcoming measures will gain even more leverage when supported by a pan-European plan to boost digital transformation.

Coordinated and interoperable solutions will be key to find a way out of the crisis and further our economic recovery.

In doing so we should also **strive to ensure** that the use of digital technologies must be designed in a way that is both acceptable for our European citizens and compliant with our European values.

The pandemic affected most businesses with traditional business models, in particular SMEs, and businesses not ready to offer their services through digital channels as well.

Investment on **more and better connectivity** will help achieve a seamless European digital environment with enhanced access to e-learning, e-working and e-government services for all citizens, with no one left behind.

We have today an unprecedented opportunity to create one Digital Single Market with common rules and values but Digitally Simple.

Q 3. How can we ensure that the EU and Members States prioritise and invest even more in connectivity, data and digital technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence

Regarding question 3: To deliver a truly European digital transformation, we should have ambitious projects in line with the European vision with a robust financial support

The COVID-19 crisis reinforces the need for a co-ordinated policy approach to digital transformation. *Next Generation EU* has the financial firepower to incentivize States down the road of digitalization. Building on its synergies with *Digital Europe Programme*, *Connecting Europe Facility* and *Horizon Europe*, can act as a multiplier for investments and enabler for public-private partnerships.

Italy's efforts to leverage digital tools to boost social and economic recovery shows our commitment to play a key role in Europe's digital transition.

We should focus on few areas:

1. **Enhance access** by promoting investment in communications infrastructures, especially ultra-broadband networks.
2. **Promote an EU Cloud Space**
3. **Enhance the sharing of data.**
4. **Share Innovation, open science initiatives, government data and code as a common goods within Europe.**

5. **Increase effective use by** closing the **usage gap** between those with high education *versus* those with low education, and empower everyone.
6. **Boost diffusion of digital tools** to drive productivity growth in firms, and especially SMEs.
7. **Shift from an e-government** to a user-driven digital government.
8. **Address mistrust** and empower people and businesses to better manage digital risks.
9. **Re-evaluate regulations not fit for the digital age. Unleash innovation and Encourage policy experimentation and new business model, also through agile and flexible application of regulation while protecting citizens. (Diritto ad innovare)**
10. **Launch global initiative.** Italy joined the “Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence” (GPAI) together with the EU and OECD countries.
11. **Ensure good and innovative jobs.**
12. **Get ready for a massive training and review education systems. Improve the accessibility and quality of education and training for young people and adults.**

Governments and stakeholders must work together to shape a digital future that harnesses the immense opportunities of digital transformation to improve the lives of all european citizens.

thankyou