Pillar I: Support in preparing and adopting a broadband strategy and detailed implementation plan

An effective policy has the objective of providing all citizens with access to an information society, promoting participation, economic growth and prosperity. Advances in digital communications technologies have given rise to better telecommunications, media and internet-enabled services via fixed and mobile broadband services. These can best be provided as part of efficient competitive markets. To maximise consumer and economic benefits, the policy framework needs to maximise the conditions for consumers and investors to participate in open electronic communications markets.

For consumers, maximising competition enables choices of services and providers, giving rise to better quality, innovation and affordability of services. For the service providers, the sector policy needs to provide enablers to investment with clear competitive safeguards.

All telecommunications services can now be delivered through efficient broadband services, via fixed broadband connections and mobile broadband subscriptions. Where the means of provision is controlled by the state (principally spectrum resources and rights of way) then the required investments by service providers will be maximised if these key enablers are available without undue procedures and excessive costs.

It is no longer necessary to have separate policies and rules for different network technologies and services. Efficient broadband infrastructures can now meet all user needs. Policies should be technologically neutral to allow investors and service providers to make their own decisions to maximise market efficiencies.

In the case of EU countries, the timescale to achieve universal high-speed broadband access is by 2020. In other countries, it will be necessary to define the timescales in a formal "National Broadband Plan".

A National Broadband Plan should be agreed and presented in each country to define how universal access to modern electronic communications services will be achieved and by when.

Key components of a National Broadband Plan are the targets to be achieved – these should be universal, aiming at a single national target by a defined date (for example high speed broadband access for every citizen by 2020). Geographical sub-components could be relevant where key milestones towards the single national target are required (e.g. all urban areas by 2018 and all rural areas by 2020). Intermediate targets may also be relevant in countries where basic broadband coverage has not yet been achieved (e.g. basic broadband by 2018 and high-speed broadband by 2020). The targets should be technologically neutral, meaning that separate targets for fixed and mobile broadband service are unnecessary.

As the EU moves toward its new 2025 'Gigabit Society' targets, further refinements in approach will follow for this pillar.