SUMMARY RECORD

Working Group on 'Digital Transformation', Chaired by Ms Elina Valtonen, national Parliaments (Finland)/Ms Riina Sikkut, national Parliaments (Estonia)

Thursday 7 April 2022, 18:00-20:30

1. Introductory remarks by the Chair

The Chair explained that this would be the Working Group's final meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to go through the revised draft proposals, which reflected the feedback received from the previous meeting, including written follow-up to that, and the discussions in the last plenary session.

2. Introductory remarks by the Spokesperson

The Spokesperson expressed broad satisfaction with the draft proposals, which reflected the interests of citizens and the recommendations. He pointed to additional comments made in relation to human centric aspects and considered that some elements could still be added in this respect.

3. Discussion of the revised version of the Proposals

The group discussed each of the draft proposals (overall objectives and accompanying specific measures) in turn, focussing on suggestions for adjustments or additions to the text. The revisions included introductory wording to highlight the need for an ambitious approach to digital transformation and to refer to the implications of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Suggestions made in the course of the discussion included the following.

Proposal I: Access to digital infrastructure
- ➢ In measure 4, it was suggested to add a reference to avoiding vendor lock-in, so as to help ensure customers can move easily between providers.
- ➢ In measure 6, it was suggested to include a reference to access to helpdesks, to support citizens' right to access digital services.
- ➢ In measure 4, it was proposed to add a reference to gigabit and 5G coverage targets for 2030.
- ➢ In measure 6, it was proposed to add a specific reference to citizens' access to e-records. The Chair pointed out that this was covered under mobility of data.
- ➢ The title of this proposal should include reference to 'equal' access to digital infrastructure.
- ➢ In measure 4, reference should also be made to improving markets from the perspective of consumers.
- ➢ It was suggested to add a reference to a European Charter of Digital Rights, as a logical further step beyond the Commission's proposal for a Declaration of Digital Rights, which was an inter-institutional document. Although this may not have been recommended specifically by citizens, it was considered an appropriate tool to achieve their stated objectives. In more general terms it was confirmed by a citizens representatives that adding measure that help achieving the recommendations is welcome.

➢ The point was made that digital infrastructure is by its nature not fully sustainable and that therefore it is not sufficient to add sustainability as a word, but to develop that point further.

➢ In measure 3 it was suggested to refer to 'advancing deployment' of digital and electric infrastructures rather than to 'making them available'.

➢ In measure 4 it was suggested to replace the reference to 'non-democratic' counties with a reference to 'third countries', to make the text more neutral.

➢ Add a reference in measure 5 to elderly people, and in measure 6 include a reference to 'accessibility' of essential public and private services.

➢ In measure 2 it was suggested to include a reference to 'island regions' or (as a compromise) to the wider concept of 'remote and peripheral regions'.

Proposal II: Digital skills that empower people

➢ It was proposed to add reference to 'digital literacy' in the title of this proposal, given its importance in counteracting disinformation.

➢ It was proposed to add a reference to the healthy development of children in measure 1 and to 'socially and economically vulnerable groups' in measure 3.

➢ It was suggested to add reference to avoiding algorithmic gender bias and stereotyping, in the context of the digital gender gap, in measure 1. This addition could be placed elsewhere in the document if considered more appropriate.

➢ In measure 2, a reference to 'safe and responsible' use of the internet may be more appropriate than 'healthy use'. The Chair pointed out that the 'healthy use' was the term in the recommendation.

➢ In measure 5, instead of 'specific training' it was suggested to refer to 'develop training initiatives, coordinated at EU level' and to training of 'additional digital experts', given that this was a particular objective for 2030 under the Digital Decade policy programme. There were also suggestions to include specific skills (AI, quantum), members considered however that the wording covered all necessary skills, which could also develop.

Proposal III: Safe and trustworthy digital society – cyber security and disinformation

➢ It was suggested to add a reference to resilience in the face of crises in the overall objective of this proposal.

➢ It was suggested to delete the reference in measure 2 to ensuring 'similar sanctions' across the Member States (as going beyond what may be legally possible) and the reference in measure 4 to machine-learning algorithms (as being too limited in its context). The Chair pointed out that both of these are from the recommendations and it was considered to keep them.

➢ It was underlined that there was a need for full harmonisation of national legislation on cybersecurity to tackle cyber risks.

➢ Concerns were expressed regarding the reference in measure 5 to the financing of digital platforms to assess the trustworthiness of traditional media, as it was not clear how the impartiality of such platforms could be ensured nor why traditional media should be singled out for assessment. The Chair indicated that the text would be reviewed to address these concerns.

➢ In measure 2 it was suggested to add reference to 'national cybersecurity centres' to the reference to local and regional cybersecurity centres and authorities.

➢ In measure 4 it was suggested to include a reference to guidelines (such as codes of practice), as legislation was not the only means of tackling disinformation.

➢ In measure 5, it was proposed that a reference to 'full respect of the principles of media freedom' was preferable to the reference to censorship.

➢ A citizens' representative warned that the text should not move too far from the recommendations from citizens' panels, particularly in regard to recommendations on digital

education. The chair noted that some of these recommendations had been transferred to the Education Working Group and were dealt with there, but undertook to check if they were adequately covered and to see if the wording of measure 2 could be strengthened in this regard.

Proposal IV: Safe and trustworthy digital society – data protection
➢ With regard to measures 3 and 4, it was suggested that the references to 'swift' and 'short' procedures should be reconsidered, as speed was not always compatible with clarity and effectiveness and there was some duplication.
➢ It was suggested to include a measure to ensure individuals can easily move personal data from one provider to another. The Chair pointed out that this was covered already.
➢ In measure 6 it was suggested to replace the reference to 'creating a certification system at EU level' for GDPR compliance with a reference to 'encouraging a certification system', as this did not necessarily have to be at EU level.
➢ In measure 8, it was proposed to replace reference to 'ensuring' that the European Data Protection Supervisor and national agencies fully apply sanctions with a reference to 'supporting' enforcement by that body.
➢ Concerns that the GDPR certification system referred to in measure 6 could present a severe obstacle to SMEs conducting their business were expressed and that the precise purpose of measure 8 was unclear and could be out of line with existing data protection rules. On the latter point, it was suggested that the legal services be consulted as regards compatibility with the existing rules under GDPR. The reference to a ban on data processing in measure 8 was considered as going too far, as it could prevent data processing that was essential for a business's survival. The Chair suggested that this concern could be addressed by a reference to 'unwanted' data processing.

Proposal V: Digital innovation to strengthen the economy
➢ It was suggested to strengthen the general objective by referring to the single market, and more clearly express opposition to practices that hinder cross-border activities, such as geoblocking practices.
➢ In measure 6 it was suggested to strengthen the reference to research to focus more on cutting edge, frontier or fundamental research and strengthen the wording in measure 8 to tackle the use of discriminatory or biased algorithms.
➢ Further emphasise was proposed to be given to the need for transparency to ensure responsible use of artificial intelligence systems, notably in measures 3 and 8.
➢ There was a suggestion to delete reference to the right to disconnect in measure 1 to give the text wider application, this was however not agreed.
➢ It was suggested to refer in measure 4 to 'resources' for ergonomic equipment for workers and include a reference to avoiding lock-in effects in measure 8.
➢ It was proposed to strengthen the references to support mechanisms for SMEs and start-ups. It was also proposed to adjust the wording of measures 2 and 3 to make them more balanced and include positive aspects of mobility and artificial intelligence in the workplace.
➢ Finally it was suggested to make references to artificial intelligence broader, not just limited to AI in the workplace.

4. Concluding remarks
The Chair thanked all members of the Working Group and its supporting staff for their hard work and good cooperation.