

The politics of the completing the telecoms single market

I am going to do something unusual today.

Instead of delivering the speech I prepared - the list of digital progress and concerns since our last exchange - I will send it today as a letter to Malcolm (Harbour).

On the plane to Egypt this weekend I was reading the speech and I realised something; we need a different and very political discussion about delivering a telecoms single market. So I address this remark to all Members of Parliament.

I will of course answer any question you may have about the Digital Agenda, in particular cybersecurity. But let's do more than that today.

You and I share the stake in this debate, so tell me: will you join me in building something special between now and the European elections?

I want us to show citizens that the EU is relevant to their lives. That we made the digital rules catch up with their legitimate expectations.

I want you to be able to go back to your constituents and say that you were able to **end mobile roaming costs**.

I want you to be able to say that you saved their right to access the open internet, by **guaranteeing net neutrality**.

I want you to be able to say we took real action on cybercrime and other threats.

You know me: I am a person of strong opinions. And we have not always shared the same opinions.

But I want you to know that I've been impressed deeply by the commitment of this Parliament to telecoms and wider digital issues.

You kept fighting for change even when many leaders did not listen or understand. That's impressed me and influenced me in a positive way.

I want to channel your knowledge and passion into the legislation needed to deliver a real single market.

It is my belief that we can deliver such a package - this **full, final, package – around Easter 2014**. Imagine that.

It will be good for Europe.

Good for the economy, yes - growth stimulated by breaking down barriers. But when I think about this package I think about people rather than numbers.

Take the young generation - the generation that cares most about being connected, but who votes the least. They need a strong and digital economy to escape the unemployment trap.

Think also about our aging population: the people who need new digital services to stay healthy and active, without losing their dignity and independence.

If we do this right, then digital connections can bring political connections. Digital dividends can bring social ones.

I am not promising a single market package that gives you everything you dreamed of. This package will have to strike a sensitive balance if we are to agree it quickly.

But I am promising to spend the next 12 months building a bridge with you to our citizens, your constituents.

Whether they need it for travel, for trade, or for transactions – **our people need this reform.**

Everyone loves the benefits of EU price cuts to roaming. It is the one thing even Eurocritics agree the EU did well. And it could never have happened without the EU.

But this fact is also a challenge. Let me explain. On one hand my portfolio is the source of this incredibly popular EU policy. And I give you your full share of credit, by the way. But on the other hand we struggle to push other telecoms and digital issues to the top of the political agenda.

A strong single market package is the way to change that.

It's how we can tell the world that Europe **does** "get" digital, it is how we can show voters that the EU **does** listen.

Telecoms touches everything - and users are developing massive expectations of it.

Markets must function, devices must function, networks must function and investment needs to happen ... we can't afford today's countless, needless, artificial obstacles placed in the way.

Let me ask you this: why did you become a member of European parliament rather than a member of national parliament?

I am guessing in part because you do not like artificial borders. That you believe we can achieve more when the freedom and competition are greater, the opportunity is bigger, and consumer rights are real!

In telecoms, of all sectors, there is no place for borders!

It's called a world wide web for a reason!

There is no other sector of our incomplete European single market where the barriers are so unneeded, and yet so high.

The time for change is now.

Change must come from all directions, but it starts with all of us in this room.

Our mutual responsibility and our greatest contribution will be to develop a **radical legislative compromise**. One that our innovators and citizens can build on. A real result.

I chose those words carefully.

"Radical" because an economic disaster requires big action.

"Compromise" because everyone will have to give, in order to get.

We will each need to consider all the pieces in the jigsaw, not only our personal favourites, or the visible and sexy changes. Often the invisible investments are just as important for long-term consumer welfare. And in the case of roaming, it is only if a genuine single market actually exists that roaming can cease to exist, in legal or economic terms.

This is why we have to have to put in place all of the pieces in the jigsaw.

Having said that, we do need to avoid a fight about structures. We must keep citizens not bureaucracy at the front of this package.

That aside, I come to you with an open mind about how to assemble to jigsaw.

And I will take my responsibility for addressing the concerns of those who resist change. I am not afraid to do that, because the potential is enormous.

You see that I am passionate today. I'll tell you why.

It is useless for me to rock the boat on my own.

We have **support from the highest levels** in the institutions to push forward, but **I can't do it without you.**

I believe we have enough common ground to rock the boat together, and then sail it to a harbour.

All the political building blocks are there.

- Citizens want their frustrations dealt with
- More companies will invest if the artificial barriers go
- National governments tell us to do it

So if you believe in the single market; if you believe in a strong Europe that makes a practical difference to each citizen's life - then **Believe. In. This.**

This is the opportunity to stand up and be counted. I will fight with my last breath to get us there together.