High-Level Event on Digitalisation for Development

Mainstreaming digital technologies in EU development cooperation

Thursday, 1 December 2016

15:00-18:00 @ Egmont Palace, Arenberg Room
Place du Petit Sablon 8 bis, Brussels, Belgium
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The Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Government of Belgium are delighted to invite you to the high-level event on Digitalisation for Development.

The main goal is to promote close and strengthened partnerships between the EU and its member States as well as other key stakeholders, notably the private sector, civil society, and other donors and multilateral organisations that are active in the ICT sector, in order to enhance the positive impact of ICT on development.

The event will be inaugurated by the Slovak and Belgian Deputy Prime Ministers, Peter Pellegrini and Alexander De Croo, with opening statements by Vice President Ansip and closing remarks by Commissioner Mimica.

Debates will revolve around the role of digital technologies in tackling the root causes of irregular migration and the refugees crisis, and on access to finance and the role of the private sector in digitalisation for development.

Programme

15:00 - Welcome and Opening statements

- Peter Pellegrini, Slovak Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Investments and Digitalisation, Digital Champion of Slovakia
- Alexander De Croo, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation, Digital Agenda, Telecom and Postal Services
- Andrus Ansip, Vice President and European Commissioner for the Digital Single Market

15:30 - Panel 1: Role of digital technologies in tackling root causes of irregular migration and refugees crisis

Moderator: Alexander De Croo, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation, Digital Agenda, Telecom and Postal Services

Speakers:
- William Lacy Swing (Director General, International Organisation for Migration)
- Claire Melamed (Executive Director, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data)
- Amina Said (Commissioner for Population and Housing Census 2012, Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics)
- Sarah Rosengaertner, Adviser to the UN Special Representative for International Migration

16:30 - Coffee break

16:45 - Panel 2: Access to finance and role of private sector in digitalisation for development

Moderator: Lenard Koschwitz, Director European Affairs, Allied for Startups

Speakers:
- Marijeta Jager (Deputy Director-General, DG DEVCO) (tbc)
- Harald Gruber (Head of Digital Economy and Innovation, European Investment Bank)
- Elaine Weidman-Grunewald (Senior Vice President and Chief Sustainability Office of Ericsson AB)
- Olivier Vanden Eynde (Founder & Managing Director, Close The Gap)

18:00 - Reception
Key issue

This panel will focus on how big data and other data sources and technologies can help tackling the issues related to irregular migration and refugee crises and discuss the responsibilities and limitations involved.

Objective

Enhance insight into the challenge of providing accurate figures on refugee and migration flows, as well as improve cooperation and exchange between relevant public and private actors to ensure access to reliable data.

Context

Improving data collection and analysis, including through digital technologies, is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for measuring progress in their implementation. In particular, improved migration data can contribute to better monitoring and achievement of several SDGs, including SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 2 (hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequality), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Human mobility is one of the constants in history, and continues to grow along with globalization, population growth, economic and environmental challenges, conflicts and disasters.

More recent technological advances in transportation and telecommunications have enabled more people to travel further afield than at any previous time in history.

Migration provides vast benefits and opportunities to migrants, their families and societies in countries of origin, transit and destination. It is a vector of social and economic progress, scientific development and contributes to inter-cultural dialogue and awareness. At the same time migration has emerged in recent years as a major political and policy challenge for host and transit countries (cf. issues like integration, social cohesion, human rights abuses, brain drain, environmental pressure).

While it has improved significantly, information and data on human mobility remains uneven, fragmented and often under-analysed globally. Analysing available data as well as identifying and developing new data sources is critical in order to better understand migration patterns and processes and start addressing the root causes of irregular migration and refugee crises.

The potential of digital technologies

Migration is one of the areas in which digitalisation and the use of big data can potentially be effective in better understanding trends, changes in migration patterns and migrants’ behaviour. Also digitalisation can be of great importance in dealing with refugee crises by allowing states to map the number of
persons leaving or entering a country, as well as their age, gender, etc. This offers the possibility to better address the needs of refugees and host communities. In addition, digital technologies can enhance information management and communications and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance.

While quality, type and geographic coverage may be highly uneven, there is no denying that a huge amount of data (e.g. from mobile phones, GPS and internet-based platforms) are available. The challenge remains however to continually enhance provision of accurate, reliable and accessible figures and data analysis on international and internal migration in a timely fashion.

**Topics to be discussed**

Topics and questions for the debate include:

- Better understanding of the factors underpinning irregular migration and the demographic characteristics of migrants, specified for different geographic areas and societal groups

- The ethical and civil liberties issues associated with collecting and analysing such data

- Better understanding of the positive impacts and the challenges of migration, as well as the needs of host societies and migrants/refugees

- Quality Data are essential to reach the missing millions: how do we fill the gap?

- Better understanding of how development interventions can make best use of digital technologies to tackle the identified root causes

Moderator: **Alexander De Croo**, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation, Digital Agenda, Telecom and Postal Services

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Developing countries now account for the vast majority of Internet users and the spread and adoption of mobile phones has been fast and socially widespread. However, there is still a large digital divide between “haves” and “have-nots”, and also between men and women. Up to a billion people are unconnected to any form of telecommunications, while around four billion remain offline, unable to access vital information. This digital divide is mainly due to the lack of effective policies, corresponding tools and investment. Access to finance for digital technologies remains a challenge in many developing countries, particularly when it comes to improving access to ICT in rural and remote areas, developing local content and applications, and building capacity. Connectivity and affordability remain a problem both across and within regions along with the required skills to adopt technology. There is a need for innovative investment models in order to bring the benefits of digital to everyone. The use of public funds to provide guarantees and subsidised loans that catalyse private sector digital investment is a model that is now being used in Europe and may hold potential for replication in developing countries. In particular, the new European External Investment Plan will act as a key innovative tool to encourage investment in Africa and the Neighbourhood.

Through strategic deployment of digital solutions, the ICT sector can act as the catalyst for helping the world’s nations solve critical social, economic and environmental challenges. Support to digital entrepreneurship such as start-ups is essential.
For the digital economy to contribute to sustainable growth. But for the private sector to play a greater role, it requires policy reforms, enabling environments to encourage private investment into digital platforms and telecommunication networks. In turn, investing in digital solutions that contribute to SDGs achievement would make good business sense: improving people’s lives, creating jobs, boosting the world’s growth and protecting the environment provide attractive value creation opportunities for the ICT sector.

Topics to be discussed

Questions for the debate include:

- Where do we stand in terms of access to finance for ICT, and what are the needs of the sector on the short, medium and long term?

- What new ways are there to work with multilateral development banks, international donors, national governments and the private sector to find new solutions to bridge the digital divide?

- How can digitalisation contribute to job creation in developing countries?

- How can blending best leverage public and private sector investment in the developing world ICT sector?

- What risk based financial products (i.e. Debt or Equity or both) are most suitable for investments related to connectivity and the SDGs?

- What role is there for advisory support to increase the investment readiness of public-private initiatives with a focus on rural areas and high development impact?

- What is the potential of Development Impact Bonds to mobilize additional resources for digital development?

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