

Joint statement by Vice-President Ansip, Commissioners Bieńkowska and Gabriel following the European Parliament's vote to end unjustified geoblocking

"The European Parliament voted to end unjustified discrimination when people shop online in the European Union. Banning unjustified geoblocking is great news for consumers in Europe.

Thanks to the European Parliament, another building block of the Digital Single Market has been put in place delivering concrete benefits to citizens and businesses. It is a great step forward for e-commerce in Europe.

We are encouraged that all EU institutions share a common vision on what the future of the Digital Single Market will look like.

From Christmas 2018, people will not have to worry about a website blocking or re-routing them just because they – or their credit card – come from a different country. Wherever they are in the EU, they will be able to access goods and services online.

But this achievement does not stand alone to make e-commerce more comfortable and easier for consumers and businesses alike: it is an important piece of the puzzle together with more transparent and affordable cross-border parcel delivery prices, simpler value added tax rules for e-commerce and stronger consumer protection. We also call for an agreement on harmonised rules for the sale of digital content and online purchases. All these elements are crucial for creating a well-functioning and competitive Digital Single Market.

It is high time to step up efforts and conclude the pending legislative initiatives for making the European Digital Single Market a reality for all."

Background

Consumers and businesses – especially SMEs – show an increasing interest in shopping and selling across the EU. Online sales of products are growing by 22% per year. However, frequently traders still refuse to sell to customers from another EU Member State or to offer equally advantageous prices in comparison with local clients.

The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission reached a political agreement to end unjustified geoblocking in November 2017. Today's plenary vote in the European Parliament will be followed by the adoption of the Regulation in a Council meeting in the coming weeks.

The Regulation will enter into force nine months after the day of publication in the Official Journal, which is planned for March 2018.

In addition to the end of unjustified geoblocking, EU citizens and businesses will benefit from several e-commerce legislations proposed by the Commission:

- The revised [Consumer Protection Cooperation](#) Regulation will improve the EU-wide cooperation mechanism for consumer protection. It entered into force on 16 January 2018 and will apply from 17 January 2020.
- The new VAT rules for electronic commerce, adopted in December 2017, will make it easier to collect VAT when consumers buy goods and services online. They will also make it much simpler for online businesses to comply with VAT obligations. Member States must now implement the new rules.
- Rules for more transparent and affordable cross-border parcel delivery prices. This will allow consumers and small e-retailers to buy and sell products and services online more easily and confidently across the EU. A political agreement was reached in December 2017. Formal approval of this regulation is still pending.
- The Digital Contracts [proposals](#) from December 2015 are currently under negotiation by co-legislators. These proposals aim at harmonising rules for the sale of digital content and online purchases for all 28 EU countries.
- New rules for broadcasters to obtain more easily the authorisations they need from right holders to transmit online programmes in other EU Member States. The proposal from September 2016 is currently under negotiation by co-legislators.

For More Information

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[Petr Osvald presented #CohesionAlliance at the V4 Ministerial Meeting in Budapest](#)

Cohesion policy is becoming the most important investment tool supporting growth and jobs in the European Union

Petr Osvald (Member of Plzeň City Council, Czech Republic / PES Group), Chairman of the CoR Commission for Territorial Cohesion (COTER) presented the views of the CoR at the meeting of Ministers for Regional Development of Visegrad countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) together with Croatia and Romania on 2 February 2018 in Budapest. The meeting, organised by the Hungarian Presidency of [V4, adopted a joint Statement](#) that underlined that the Cohesion policy is one of the most important and successful tools in fostering economic development and contributing to the better functioning of the Single Market, as well as the main investment policy of the EU.

Participants agreed that Cohesion policy needs to remain a priority for all

regions of the EU, with less developed regions and Member States remaining its main focus. To make the case for a stronger cohesion policy after 2020, the CoR, together with leading EU territorial associations, launched the [#CohesionAlliance](#): a grass-roots movement open to anyone who believes that EU cohesion policy must continue to be a pillar of the EU's future. Since its launch in October last year, the Alliance has continued to attract new signatories every day, including regional and local authorities, business associations, academia, trade unions and think tanks. The CoR welcomes the broad convergence between many of the priorities set out by the [#CohesionAlliance](#) and those outlined in the joint Statement of the V4 adopted today.

Furthermore, the CoR plenary session adopted the own-initiative opinion drafted by Petr Osvald on “Integrated Territorial Investments” (ITI) yesterday. [The recommendations](#) recall that ITI provide an important opportunity for the delivery of a genuine place-based approach, where local and regional authorities can play an active role in shaping and optimising local and regional development. They also recommend drawing on experience to date and building on existing examples of good practice to optimise the regulatory context of ITI post-2020. In particular, the CoR recommends that it should be mandatory for all Member States to facilitate the implementation of ITI in the next programming period – this will help the ITI tool to fulfil its potential both as a key instrument for implementing Cohesion policy and for capacity-building and multilevel governance. The ITI approach should be more fully exploited beyond urban areas and implemented more widely in rural and functional areas; the CoR also highlights the specific potential of the tool to contribute to addressing the increasing inequalities at sub-regional level highlighted by the Seventh Cohesion Report.

Referring to his report, Mr Osvald said that he welcomes the positive impact of the Cohesion policy across European territories. However he regrets that there “has been a considerable delay in the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investment and that the tool has not yet been able to produce all of the synergies that it could and should produce. However, this cannot and must not be extrapolated to suggest that implementing EU cohesion policy through integrated territorial investment is not effective.” He added that “integrated approach should also enable the creation of thematic links between neighbouring regions, taking into account the interests or requirements of lower territorial units. Such as cross-border projects are very important for all Visegrad countries”.

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ESMA provides standards on supervisory cooperation for market abuse investigations

ESMA's ITS clarify how national competent authorities (NCAs) and ESMA should cooperate with each other as well as with other EU authorities, entities and public bodies in the field of market abuse.

Market abuse can take many forms and concern different markets at the same time. As markets' integration is increasing further, smooth cooperation between authorities, entities and public bodies is paramount in order to track down on abusive behaviour. Therefore, ESMA's ITS set out procedures and forms for NCAs and ESMA to facilitate those exchanges of information and assistance.

ESMA submits its ITS today for endorsement to the European Commission, which has three months to do so. Once fully implemented, these ITS will contribute to delivering a regulatory rule-book for securities markets.