

# Vice-President Andrus Ansip's speech at the Mobile World Congress

*Ladies and gentlemen*

*The internet has been an open, fair and neutral platform from the start.*

*Its online freedom brings endless innovation and a dynamic digital economy.*

*But so much has changed in a relatively short time:*

- quality and speed of access.*
- platforms and website sophistication.*
- sharing files in the cloud.*
- an exponential growth in social media.*
- and of course, 24/7 online shopping.*

*It was as long ago as 2000 that the EU's e-commerce Directive came into force.*

*This sets the basic legal environment for online services in the single market.*

*It sets liability limits for digital platforms.*

*It guarantees freedom of expression online.*

*Both are vital for an open internet.*

*Europe's rules on net neutrality are the other side of the same coin:*

- end-users gain the right to access and distribute the content, applications, services and information of their choice.*
- internet providers must treat all traffic equally. No blocking, throttling or discrimination.*

*For me, the idea that all legal internet traffic should be treated equally is the vehicle for innovation that sparked the digital economy in the first place.*

*It is vital for consumers, business customers and content providers.*

*Our liability regime and net neutrality rules are two principles that have guaranteed an open internet.*

*They work, and they should remain.*

*I think Europe and the United States can agree on the need to preserve the freedom of the internet economy. Where we may differ is how to do it.*

*I mentioned change. Today, platforms have more influence and market power*

*than anyone could have imagined.*

*It is only natural that in this position they will need to become more transparent in their dealings.*

*Most of them are already.*

*The same goes for illegal material posted online that promotes terrorism, violent extremism, hate speech. Online platforms have taken measures to combat this.*

*In a couple of days, the Commission will issue a recommendation dealing with illegal content, in particular terrorism.*

*It will complement our earlier guidance on detection, take-down and stay-down. It will help platforms to act proactively, urgently and decisively.*

*If the internet is to remain open – and I believe that it should – then illegal content must be blocked at the source, not in the network. This is also more effective and proportionate.*

*This recommendation will be built on the e-commerce liability regime, which we will not change. Not today. Not tomorrow.*

*Why? Because I do not want Europe to become a ‘big brother’ society in online monitoring.*

*George Orwell aside, I believe everyone has the right to access an open internet, where all traffic should in principle be treated equally. EU law has protected these principles for almost two years.*

*Since our experiences are positive so far, I will continue to protect and defend net neutrality and an open internet in Europe.*

*These rules allow space for everybody, for innovation and experimentation. Space for specialised services that come with a certain quality, where necessary.*

*But this cannot be at the expense of other internet users. I do not want a digital motorway for the lucky few, while others use a digital dirt-track.*

*Access to the internet is a basic right. It has to stay open for everybody. No discrimination.*

*I know that you will all have views as well – and that some will be very different to mine. I look forward to the discussion.*