

**Meeting of the Telecommunications Directors-General on 1 September 2020**

The Directors-General responsible for the deployment of digital infrastructure in the Member States met on 1 September 2020 to discuss with the Commission how to further accelerate the deployment of communications networks. The meeting was hosted by the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure under the auspices of the German EU Council Presidency.

Steffen Bilger, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, said: “We need a broadband infrastructure that can keep pace with the digital transformation; not only in the major cities, but everywhere – in urban and rural areas – to make sure that everybody has access to education and health services, for instance.”

Roberto Viola, EU Director-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology said: “Connectivity is indispensable for a lasting recovery. Member States must intensify their investment in 5G infrastructure and accelerate the implementation of the new regulatory framework. In addition, they are called on to swiftly allocate 5G frequencies based on best practices and continue to reduce the costs of network deployment. The Commission is willing to support them in this and in making the best use of the funding possibilities the Union is providing.”

Alongside an investment-friendly and pro-competitive framework for network operators, numerous Member States think that it is also of great importance that approval procedures for the physical deployment of the network at national level be as lean and speedy as possible. The Member States want to have a wider exchange of best practices here. It should always be possible to take specific circumstances at local level into account. It is imperative that state aids available in the event of market failure can take effect quickly. To ensure this, the relevant EU legislation must be both flexible and easy to manage as well as consistent with the gigabit objectives. The required notification procedures must be carried out speedily.

Moreover, the Member States consider it essential that, especially in the mobile communications sector, the public be made more aware of the benefits of new technologies, such as 5G, by way of useful applications that are responsive to the needs of the citizens (e.g. in the fields of health services and emergency response).

Only clear and transparent information will help to allay fears of environmental or health impacts. It was agreed that the Union must speak with one voice here. Also, all key stakeholders from the market as well as from the relevant authorities should be brought together. On the issue of Open RAN, it is also intended to intensify the exchange.