

## Greater consistency needed in accessibility

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**BRUSSELS (April 25th 2017)** - DIGITALEUROPE welcomes the compromise reached by the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection committee in their vote on the European Accessibility Act. We appreciate the European Parliament's efforts to achieve the right balance between the need for accessibility and the necessary flexibility for companies to find the right design responses and believe that many of the proposed changes go into the right direction.

"Persons with disabilities must not be excluded from digital society," said DIGITALEUROPE Director General Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl. "The digital industry has a long-standing commitment to make sure all of their products and services are accessible and we are glad to see the European Parliament has attempted to make accessibility requirements more future-proof and technology-neutral."

"However, we are concerned about the requirement on manufacturers to indicate accessibility on the product packaging," continued Ms Bonefeld Dahl. "There is such a variety of persons with disabilities addressed by the Directive that this will be both legally and practically difficult to implement, without bringing any real benefit for consumers."

In such a fast-changing industry with an extremely broad range of products and services, it is crucial that companies in the ICT sector have the flexibility to choose the accessibility design that best suits the needs of their customers. So DIGITALEUROPE regrets that a horizontal approach has not been followed through for all sections, leaving some very specific requirements in place which could hinder companies from employing the most innovative and effective technological solution. We suggest a consistent alignment with the existing European standards.

DIGITALEUROPE welcomes the recognition that the CE mark and full alignment with the New Legislative Framework (NLF) are not appropriate for the accessibility domain. We particularly appreciate the removal of the "risk language" as the requirements of the EAA should not be linked to health or safety. However, we regret that the European Parliament has not pursued the idea of partial alignment with the NLF more consistently. We are concerned some of the administrative requirements on manufacturers for documentation and reporting to Market Surveillance Authorities are still too burdensome and may make the goal of improving the accessibility of products and services more difficult to achieve.

We trust the Council will emphasise consistency as it builds on the Parliament's work – we all seek legislation that can bring about genuine improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities in the European Union.

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## ABOUT DIGITALEUROPE

DIGITALEUROPE represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members include some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe. DIGITALEUROPE wants European businesses and citizens to benefit fully from digital technologies and for Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital technology companies.

DIGITALEUROPE ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies. DIGITALEUROPE's members include 61 corporate members and 37 national trade associations from across Europe. Our website provides further information on our recent news and activities: <http://www.digitaleurope.org>

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