



How digital is your country? Europe improves but still needs to close digital gap

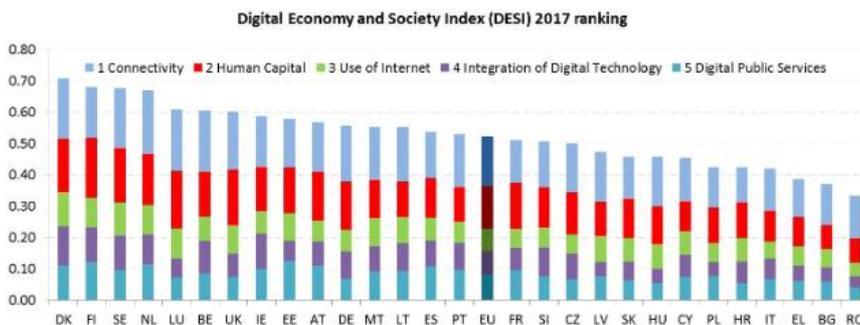
Brussels, 3 March 2017

The 2017 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) shows that the EU is making progress but the gap between top digital players and lower-performing countries is still too wide. More efforts and investments are needed to make the most of the Digital Single Market.

Today the European Commission published the results of the 2017 [Digital Economy and Society Index](#) (DESI), a tool presenting the performance of the 28 Member States in a wide range of areas, from connectivity and digital skills to the digitisation of businesses and public services.

Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, said: "*Europe is gradually becoming more digital but many countries need to step up their efforts. All Member States should invest more to fully benefit from the Digital Single Market. We do not want a two-speed digital Europe. We should work together to make the EU a digital world leader.*"

Overall the EU has progressed and improved its digital performance by 3 percentage points compared to last year^[1], but progress could be faster and the picture varies across Member States (the digital gap – between the most and least digital countries – is 37 percentage points, compared to 36 percentage points in 2014). Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands lead the DESI this year followed by Luxembourg, Belgium, the UK, Ireland, Estonia, and Austria. The top-three EU digital players are also the global leaders, ahead of South Korea, Japan and the United States. Slovakia and Slovenia are the EU countries which have progressed the most. Despite some improvements, several Member States including Poland, Croatia, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, are still lagging behind in their digital development compared to the EU average. Individual [country profiles](#) are available online.



The Commission has now presented [all the major initiatives part of its Digital Single Market strategy](#). The European Parliament and Member States are encouraged to adopt these proposals as soon as possible so that Europe can make the most of digital opportunities.

Taking into account the DESI results, the Commission will unveil its mid-term review of the [Digital Single Market strategy](#) in May to identify where further efforts or legislative proposals may be needed to address future challenges.

The [Digital Economy and Society Index](#) (DESI) shows:

Connectivity improved, but is still insufficient to address future needs.

- 76% of European homes can access high-speed broadband (at least 30 Mbps) and in some Member States a significant proportion of these households can already access networks capable of providing 100 Mbps or more. Over 25% of households have taken up a subscription to fast broadband.
- Mobile data subscriptions are increasing: from 58 subscribers per 100 people in 2013 to 84 in 2016.
- 4G mobile services cover 84% of the EU population.

However, this is not enough to address the growing needs for speed, quality and reliability of

connections in the future. Internet traffic is growing by 20% annually; and by more than 40% each year on mobile networks. The European Parliament and Council are currently discussing [Commission proposals to overhaul EU telecoms rules](#) and to encourage investment in very high-capacity networks to meet Europeans' growing connectivity needs, along with strategic objectives for a [2025 gigabit society](#). Member States should also redouble their efforts to meet objectives in terms of harmonised spectrum assignment, which now includes the [700 MHz band](#), so that the next generation of communication networks (5G) can be widely deployed as of 2020. Spectrum coordination in the EU is vital to ensure wireless coverage and new cross-border services. Additionally, municipalities across Europe will be able soon to apply for funding to bring free Wi-Fi to their public spaces under the [Commission's WiFi4EU scheme](#).

The EU has more digital specialists than before but skills gaps remain.

- The EU has more graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics than before (19 graduates per 1000 people in their 20s).
- There are more ICT specialists in the workforce (3.5% in 2015 as opposed to 3.2% in 2012).
- Almost half of Europeans (44%) still lack basic digital skills such as using a mailbox, editing tools or installing new devices.

The [Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition](#), launched in December 2016 as part of the [Skills Agenda for Europe](#) is working with Member States, industry and social partners to develop a large digital talent pool and ensure that individuals and the labour force in Europe are equipped with adequate digital skills.

Europeans are getting more digital.

- 79% of Europeans go online at least once per week, up by 3 percentage points on 2016:
 - o 78% of internet users play or download music, films, pictures or games.
 - o 70% of European internet users read news online (64% in 2013).
 - o 63% use social networks (57% in 2013).
 - o 66% shop online (61% in 2013).
 - o 59% use online banking (56% in 2013).
 - o 39% use internet to make calls (33% in 2013).

As part of its Digital Single Market strategy, the Commission is working to increase trust and confidence in the online world. The [new EU rules on data protection](#) will enter into force in May 2018 accompanied by [new rules on privacy in electronic communications](#). The Commission is also working to make more content available on the internet across borders. And, as of early 2018, Europeans will be able [to enjoy their films, music, video games, and e-book subscriptions when travelling in the EU](#). The Commission also proposed to [make it easier for broadcasters to make programmes available online](#) in other EU Member States.

Businesses are more digital, e-commerce is growing but slowly.

- European businesses are increasingly adopting digital technologies, such as the use of business software for electronic information sharing (from 26% in 2013 to 36% of businesses in 2015) or sending electronic invoices (from 10% in 2013 to 18% of in 2016).
- E-commerce by SMEs also grew slightly (from 14% in 2013 to 17% of SMEs in 2016). However, less than half of these companies sell to another EU Member State.

In 2016, the Commission proposed [new rules](#) to boost e-commerce by tackling geoblocking, making cross-border parcel delivery more affordable and efficient and promoting customer trust through better protection and enforcement. It also proposed [to simplify the Value Added Tax environment for e-commerce businesses in the EU](#). These initiatives, once adopted by the European Parliament and Member States, will make it easier for people and companies to buy and sell across borders.

Europeans use more public services online.

- 34% of internet users submitted forms to their public administration online instead of handing in a paper copy (up from 27% in 2013).

More and increasingly sophisticated services are available online, for example services allowing people to use the internet to inform the authorities about new residence, the birth of a child, and other important events. As part of the [eGovernment Action Plan](#), the Commission will launch a [Single Digital Gateway](#) to provide easy online access to Single Market information, an initiative [to further digitise company law and corporate governance](#), as well as an updated [European Interoperability Framework](#).

Background

The [DESI](#) is a composite index to measure the progress of EU Member States towards a digital economy and society. As such, it brings together a set of relevant indicators on Europe's current digital policy mix. The DESI aims to help EU countries identify areas requiring priority investments and action, in order to create a truly Digital Single Market – one of the top priorities of the Commission.

Building on the DESI findings and complementing the European Semester, the Commission's Digital Progress Report will give in May 2017 an in-depth assessment of how the EU and Member States are progressing in their digital development and will identify potential steps to help improve national performance in digital.

For more information

[Speech of Commission Vice-President Andrus Ansip, presenting the DESI](#)

[Q&A](#)

[Country profiles](#)

[Digital Single Market fact sheet](#)

[Advancing Europe's digital future – Digital Headlines](#)

[Digital Day](#) in Rome on 23 March 2017

#DESIEU

[1] *The DESI 2016 was re-calculated for all countries to reflect some improvements in the methodology. As a result, country scores and rankings may have changed from the previous publication. For further information please consult the [Q&A](#) and the [DESI methodological note](#).*

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