



President Juncker is standing by his pre-election pledge of making the Digital Single Market a top priority. The estimated EUR250bn of new growth off the back of an efficient, connected European Digital Single Market together with the potential for export opportunities to advancing economies such as China – where new Smart Cities are being built from scratch – explains the continued focus on the Digital Agenda.

However, Ms Kroes has also expressed her view of the immediate challenge of a digitally divided Europe – which she described as a digital Europe versus an analogue Europe. As a consequence, the local impact of a Commission driven approach to the Digital Agenda and Smart Cities investment is likely to be vastly different across the Union. Germany and Italy were identified by Ms Kroes as two of the worst performers for connectivity which, with Italy currently presiding over the European Council, could either be a help or a hindrance.

But what could this mean for existing and new policy output from the Commission? The anticipated completion of the existing draft directives on data protection and cyber security reform remain high on the agenda – although the impact of ongoing negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the United States is not yet fully understood. It will probably also mean a harder push on reforming the telecoms market (including spectrum reform) following the recent Connected Continent package too – the lack of progress on this front being a failing that Ms Kroes recognised in her speech to the Broadband World Forum in Amsterdam last Wednesday.

Whilst the prioritisation of the Digital Agenda is welcomed, it is also clear that the challenges are still vast. The new Commission takes up post with an already full brief. Ms Kroes was well respected during her time as Vice President but the to-do list is as long as ever. Mr Oettinger's task is especially challenging: he has been asked to report on the obstacles preventing a connected Digital Single Market within

the first six months. That includes reform of the telecommunications market, including harmonising of spectrum rules. Getting this right will create the foundation on which Smart Cities can be built. Without harmonisation of rules and agreed standards to allow interoperability, a European revolution of Smart Cities advancement for the 21st century would appear to have significant obstacles in its path.

If the Commission delivers on its promises, Europe could see a Smart Cities revolution take place generating much needed economic growth and creating lucrative export opportunities. Mr Oettinger's report on the European Digital Single Market in six months' time will therefore be an eagerly awaited read.