

**Ms Margrethe Vestager
Executive Vice-President
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**Ms Věra Jourová
Vice-President for Values and
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European Commission**

**Mr Thierry Breton
Commissioner for Internal Market
European Commission**

JOINT INITIATIVE ON COUNTERACTING THE SPREAD OF DISINFORMATION RELATED TO 5G NETWORKS AND THE NEED OF PUBLIC AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES

Letter regarding a proposal for the European Union to create a communication strategy that provides reliable information related to EMF and radio equipment including 5G to the Member States and European Citizens by:

Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland and Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden.

Dear Madames Vice-Presidents
Dear Commissioner

We the undersigned Member States wish to express our concerns regarding the escalating disinformation around the effects of exposure to electromagnetic field (EMF) and fifth generation (5G) technology cellular networks and our condemnation of the recent acts of vandalism on critical telecommunication infrastructure. The European Union has demonstrated its commitment to the timely deployment and take-up of 5G networks in various legislative and non-legislative measures¹. The Council Conclusions on the significance of 5G to the European economy and the need to mitigate security risks linked to 5G adopted on 3 December 2019² highlighted the need of public awareness raising activities regarding

¹ Directive 2018/1972 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code and Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Connectivity for a Competitive Digital Single Market - Towards a European Gigabit Society, COM(2016) 587 final; Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions: 5G for Europe: An Action Plan, COM(2016) 588 final; Decision (EU) 2017/899 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on the use of the 470-790 MHz frequency band in the Union.

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/41595/st14517-en19.pdf>

emerging technologies. Also, the Council Conclusions on shaping Europe's digital future³ adopted in June 2020 stress the importance of counteracting the spread of disinformation related to 5G networks, with special regard to false claims that such networks constitute a health threat or are linked to COVID-19.

It is clear however that we are witnessing increasing activity of the anti-5G movement across the European Union. We would like to stress, that acts of vandalism against telecommunication infrastructure and escalating disinformation on EMFs and 5G are not only a threat to the economy of the affected Member States but hinder also the ability for the European Union to meet its ambitious 5G goals. The roll-out of 5G network infrastructure, contributing to the European Union's goals in the field of very high capacity networks requires appropriate planning, significant financial outlays and investments as well as complex administrative proceedings e.g. frequency awarding procedures. The increasing mistrust to the mobile radio equipment could have negative implications on the rollout of mobile network infrastructure (mast and antennas) as well as the 5G small-area wireless-access points infrastructure, and may hamper the smooth introduction of an easier deployment (permits-free) regime.

It is important to act now to inform the public of the benefits of 5G as enablers of the digital and green transformation of our businesses and society. As Member States, we think there is an urgent need for an EU communication strategy that provides reliable information to the EU citizens as well as awareness raising campaigns regarding 5G and EMF.

Therefore:

- We call on the European Commission to work with the Member States to implement measures which counter disinformation regarding EMFs and 5G. EU should take an active, long-term and systemic approach in this field. As Member States we need assistance from the EU already this half of 2020, in order to tackle the increasing amount of activities and concerns regarding 5G and EMF.
- We also recognize the need for continued scientific research on risks related to human health, spread of trusted information among the EU citizens and urgent need of engagement in awareness-raising campaign in this area at the European level. With our common coordinated actions we should be able not only to provide EU citizens and local authorities with scientific research but, also, with clear and loud message coming from a trusted sources. Such an awareness campaign must be based on digital literacy, education and transparency, enabling European citizens to critically assess the available information in order to independently discern between truth and falsehoods.
- We, as Member States are willing to contribute to this EU-wide initiative with our national expertise and best practice to tackle the issue of 5G and EMF disinformation.
- At the same time, the fears and worries of those people that are opposed to introducing 5G for reasons relating to EMF concerns have to be taken seriously. In this context, a broad and inclusive debate will ultimately contribute to creating trust among citizens regarding the actions towards continuous development of the mobile networks. Recent events show that joint actions in this field are needed.

³ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8711-2020-INIT/en/pdf>