

Europe To Invest In Free Public Wi-Fi

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'I am pleased that the plans to invest in thousands of public Wi-Fi access points throughout the European Union has broad backing in the European Parliament's Industry Committee. The establishment of these Wi-Fi access points will not only be a tangible benefit for citizens - locals and tourists alike - but will also underpin the development of new e-services like e-government', said Anne Sander MEP, the EPP Group's Spokeswoman on the Report 'Promotion of Internet connectivity in local communities'.

The initiative, which was launched by the European Commission under the heading 'Wi-Fi4Eu - Free Wi-Fi for Europeans', aims at bringing high-quality wireless internet access to at least 6000-8000 local communities and has a total planned budget of €120m until 2020. It will provide internet access for locals, visitors and tourists in parks, squares, libraries or public buildings.

'Public Wi-Fi is already a reality in some areas. It is therefore a priority that the programme should take rural areas more into account and bridge the digital and social divide', Sander pointed out. 'It is an important step to take action at European level in favour of a Gigabit society which is more visible in the everyday lives of EU citizens. The aim now is to make local communities aware of this opportunity.'

The general roll-out of high capacity and high quality internet access and services is closely related to the development of the fifth generation (5G) of mobile internet.

Micha? Boni MEP is the EPP Group's Rapporteur on an initiative Report on 'Internet connectivity for growth', which was adopted today.

5G is more than a mobile revolution. It will promote innovation. **Micha? Boni MEP**

'5G is more than a mobile revolution. It will promote innovation, make profound changes across industries and it will allow the development of new business models, create quality networks (Very High Capacity Networks) and high-quality services. The infrastructure will become a business. And Europe needs to ensure a leading role in setting technology standards allowing for the deployment of 5G networks and services', said Boni.

Critical points and requirements for the implementation of 5G and the so-called Gigabit Society are mentioned in the Report. These are related to a clear understanding of what 5G will mean for citizens and businesses, the skills required, technical conditions, the demand for new 5G services and products and investments.

'Investments are the key for achieving 5G goals so we need the simplification of the legal framework, flexible models for co-investments, and long-term certainty and predictability, a level playing field in Europe in that area, and conditions for the adequate return of investments, considering business and societal dimensions', Micha? Boni concluded.

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