

CEPI Statement

Digital Agenda for Europe

According to the European Commission, Europe needs a new action plan for making the best use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to speed up economic recovery and lay the foundations of a sustainable digital future. The new action plan proposes to remove current obstacles to maximising the potential of ICTs, with long-term investments to minimise future problems.

The aim of this document is to provide CEPI members with general views about the EU Digital Agenda, which can be referred to in communication documents (internal and external) and used when commenting externally on the European Commission's related initiatives.

- 1) **CEPI supports the EU Digital Agenda as a contributor to competitiveness and economic growth.** The benefits of using ICT for citizens and companies are undeniable. It can make people's and companies' lives easier and reduce administrative burdens and costs.
- 2) **The paper industry has been a large user of ICT.** It has been a large user of ICT in all application areas along the value chain, as described in the 2006 E-Business watch study¹. It has developed EDI² standards as well as a global transaction standard for the paper and forest supply chain - known as papiNet³ - in 2002 for facilitating B2B trade processes.
- 3) **Digital and paper-based media provide the same or equivalent service.** Looking at market developments, digital and paper-based media can provide the same or equivalent service, side by side. While some of these parallel services could shift gradually towards digital alternatives, complementary options - in the advertising and publishing area for instance - will remain and even further develop.
- 4) **The paper-based media is an important component of multi-channel communications.** An effective marketing campaign works best when print is used with other media as one element of an integrated solution. By adding print to TV and online media, the brand awareness can nearly double, and increase buyers' purchasing intentions by over 50%⁴.
- 5) **The paper industry and the related industry sectors are drivers of economic growth.** The paper industry and related industry sectors - such as forestry, printing and publishing, postal services - are drivers of economic growth and important means of communication and business development that are vital for a healthy society. Together, these sectors account for close to 3 million jobs in Europe.

¹ ICT and e-Business in the Pulp, Paper and Paper Products Industry - E-Business Watch study (2006).

² EDI : Electronic Data Interchange.

³ For more information about papiNet : <http://www.papinet.org/>

⁴ Source : PrintPower - <http://www.printpower.eu/en/why-print-media/why-print-media>

- 6) **It is essential to have a comprehensive approach when considering potential cost savings.** Apparent financial savings from reducing administrative burdens and costs for companies and businesses often don't take into account the transfer of these burdens and costs to the recipients. The paper-based version of a service will, in many cases, be transformed into a digital format and then re-materialise as a print-out in the hands of the end-consumers.
- 7) **The issue of environmental impact is crucial and should be properly considered.** The choice of ICT and e-media is often made at the expense of paper-based options because of alleged higher environmental performance. The choice of ICT relies often on environmental impact analyses which compare parameters that are not identical, including geographical areas. Environmental impact analysis requires in-depth and comprehensive approaches that cannot be reduced to or based on raw material use or emissions. There is a growing understanding of the considerable environmental impact of electronic media.
- 8) **In many cases the choice of paper, from a sustainability point of view, is the preferable option.** CEPI has deeply analysed the interplay between the use of paper and ICT⁵. The aim was to explore how these two products/services can be compared from an environmental point of view. An important finding was that interpretations of results based on life cycle assessment (LCA) studies must be put into the right context and take into account the specificities and assumptions of the methodology used. When comparing LCA results stemming from different types of functional systems - such as paper-based invoicing and electronic invoicing - the results need to show substantial differences before it can be concluded that one option is 'environmentally' preferable.
- 9) **Companies and citizens should keep the freedom to choose between the available options based on accurate information.** The decision to promote the use of ICT and electronic media can be understood provided that it leaves companies and citizens the freedom to choose between both options, based on accurate and balanced information.
- 10) **The market should determine the best platform to meet the needs of the suppliers and customers.** Equal treatment, in terms of policy, taxation and promotion, between e-media and paper-based media is therefore essential. The equal treatment between companies - particularly SMEs - and also between citizens should also be guaranteed. This is particularly true for companies in the case of public procurement, for which the use of e-media should not be mandatory but based on voluntary use.

ICT and paper can provide the same or equivalent service, side by side. While ICT has developed over the years and provide valuable services and opportunities, complementary options will remain.

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⁵ Prof. Arnfalk, Peter. Analysing the ICT-paper interplay and its environmental implications. CEPI, 2010.