



## Speech by Henk Kamp, Minister of Economic Affairs, at the Informal Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Competitiveness, 28 January

### **A competitive and innovative Single Market for Digital & Services**

Vice-President Ansip, Commissioner Bieńkowska, Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to day two of this informal meeting on competitiveness. Today, we will discuss our future once again. We will discuss the prospect of creating 651 billion euros' worth of growth. And how we already hold the key to making this happen: Our economic growth may depend on global market developments; we ourselves are responsible for increasing Europe's competitiveness.

Growth comes through innovation. In the business and research sectors, which are working together more and more. And it comes from entrepreneurs bringing innovations onto the market. We, member states, the European Parliament and the European Commission, must guarantee the two most vital preconditions for this: a strong market and clear legislation.

Creating an effective market within the EU is not a new task. In fact, it's an aim as old as the EU itself. And since 1992 it has given us a great deal: over two-and-a-half million extra jobs and more than 200 billion euros' worth of extra prosperity.

But the Single Market is far from complete. There are still many differences, not only in legislation and standards but also in the implementation of EU rules. This is certainly true when it comes to services.

These differences put companies that don't have the time or resources to adapt to a new set of rules for each country, at a disadvantage. So they stay away from the European market. They don't contribute to growth and prosperity. This means we are holding ourselves back.

If we want consumers and businesses to enjoy the full benefits of both the Single Market and technological progress, we must tackle the obstacles that are now in their way. And the Commission has announced a range of new instruments to do this.



It includes instruments like the services passport, which will make it easier for businesses to offer cross-border services. And an analytical framework that member states can use to review their regulation of professions. Today, we'll discuss how far we want to move these forward.

If we want to seize all the opportunities the digital era offers, we must also learn from the challenges we now face. We have to make new legislation future-proof. It's a wish shared by many. And it also came up during the research component of this informal meeting. New legislation must be able to accommodate technologies and earnings models that don't even exist yet. Rules quickly become obsolete or outdated. So, we should aim to develop ones that are attuned to the nature and risks of the products and services in question.

At the lunch session on the opportunities and impact of the sharing economy, we can amongst other things, discuss this point.

Digitisation also poses new challenges. While the worldwide web has made the world smaller, it has also created new, virtual borders. During the geo-blocking session, we'll look at when these borders are established knowingly or unknowingly, rightly or wrongly.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The most important factor in successfully moving Europe forward is us. Whether we will make that extra 651 billion euros a reality depends, in part, on our ambition. We mustn't sell ourselves and future generations short. We must stay sharp and keep aiming high. Colleagues – let's therefore roll up our sleeves!

Thank you.