

2nd December 2020

Dear Executive Vice-President Vestager,

Dear Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis,

Dear Commissioner Breton,

We hope our letter finds you well in these unprecedented times that, more than ever before, have emphasized the need for innovation and digitization of the EU's economy as well as in other areas of our society.

While we very much appreciate your efforts in the post-COVID EU economic recovery, we would like to use this opportunity to express our concerns about certain initiatives that are now being discussed within the framework of the Commissions' Digital and Data strategy.

There is no doubt that the EU must be strong and play a key role in the digital economy. However, this goal cannot be achieved by isolating ourselves. For that purpose, it is important to maintain and develop further international cooperation with our like-minded partners from outside the EU in bilateral and multilateral settings and to continue tackling unjustified barriers to digital trade and data flows. This is essential for our businesses, both in services and manufacturing, and for our consumers. We have to provide them with stability and predictability. The EU should distance itself from considering any prohibitive measures, such as unjustified data localization requirements or measures of similar nature. Doing so would hurt the international competitiveness of our manufacturers and service providers and hinder the development of new digital business in Europe. It would also be seen as justifying the protectionist policies of a number of third countries, despite the very negative impact these policies already have on European companies.

The EU is one of the most prominent proponents of the rules-based international order and has largely benefited from it. We have a serious interest to get third countries to comply with these rules; therefore, we must respect them as well. Furthermore, as indicated during the last FAC/Trade ministerial council, we all hope that the upcoming US administration would be more forthcoming to multilateral solutions and prospects for cooperation in the digital sector as this might open a new vital chapter for mutual work. We should aim for this goal rather than create a new line of conflict.

For these reasons, we would very much appreciate if key aspects of international trade, cooperation and openness were considered when developing new initiatives. We are convinced that coherence between our internal actions and international commitments has to be ensured.

Yours Sincerely,

Karel Havlíček
Minister of Industry and Trade
The Czech Republic

Raul Siem
Minister of Foreign Trade and Information Technology
Estonia

Jeppe Kofod
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Denmark

Simon Kollerup
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