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| Lithuania |
| Proposal of Lithuania for Regional Priorities: Digital Inclusion to reduce the digital divide by means of ICTs |
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| **Agenda item:** Item 8**Summary:** This contribution provides a proposal from Lithuania on the European Regional Priorities.**Expected results:**RPM-EUR is invited to review this document and approve the proposal therein.**References:**N/A |

**Rationale**

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have advanced to such level that they may be used in every aspect of modern society. ICTs prove its exceptional role in extreme emergency situations the most. COVID-19 was the big tests of the importance of ICTs and our ability to engage technologies to tackle the crisis. Yet, the pandemic revealed the huge gaps in the use of telecommunications/ICTs in some areas and by some groups of society. When fulfilling its mandate, ITU should strive to ensure that everyone has equal possibilities to benefit from modern technologies and support the activities of ITU Membership in reducing the digital gaps in favour of the most vulnerable groups. In Europe, there are initiatives on regional and national level in this regard, however, situation in European countries is different and more joint actions are needed.

**Proposal**

ITU and members of the European ITU community are invited to make **Digital inclusion** the regional priority and take necessary actions in these directions:

* **Accessibility of ICTs:** Taking a common approach towards accessibility issues in Europe would be of great benefit. Aligning the activities of ITU with other European organizations could guarantee the maximum effect of the accessibility-targeted efforts. Moreover, cooperation with industry is needed to promotethe ideaof“ICTs for all”. This should lead to the “accessible” design and functionality of devices and digital solutions, as well as simplicity of use/user interface what is vital for people with disabilities and special needs.
* **Empowerment of all social groups** by means of ICTs: Encouraging women, youth, elder people, etc. to discover the value of telecommunications/ICTs and giving real possibilities to become equal participants of digital society is needed. The special initiatives (public awareness campaigns, special programs, etc.) could be elaborated, aimed at helping marginalized groups to step over their fears and other barriers towards full-scale digital empowerment.
* **Digital skills:** Initiatives helping to acquire basic digital skills or to upgrade the skills should be promoted. Sufficient digital skills are a prerequisite for different social groups to avoid digital exclusion. Moreover, they enable to use digital public services, including health and other social services, participate in labour market, and achieve education on equal basis.

ITU could assist Member States in closing the digital exclusion by elaborating relevant strategies and policies, as well as supporting the related initiatives and best practice sharing among the European countries or even different regions. Wide partnerships with private sector, sub-regional organizations and other possible stakeholders could be of big benefit when reaching for the digital inclusion in European region and globally.

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