

GSR-21 CONTRIBUTION BY THE COMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY COMMISSION (CRC) OF COLOMBIA

Our intention in putting forward this document is to make the following contributions to the topics associated with the theme: *“Regulation for digital transformation: Accelerating inclusive connectivity, access and use.”*

Inducing new, effective and agile financing mechanisms to digital infrastructure, access and use.

In 2021, we can say that just over half of the world is connected. An important factor in this connectivity is the public’s appropriation and increased awareness of the use of the Internet for productivity. This would not have been achieved had it not been for the preventive confinement measures taken in 2020, forcing people to use ICTs in order to continue their daily lives, whether working from home or for education.

Governments, businesses, academia and the general public now recognize the importance of having the requisite telecommunication infrastructure to perform activities, such as education, work, health care, justice and entertainment, that did not use to require 100 per cent use of the Internet. Thus, telecommunication regulators have had to reinvent themselves in 2020 to streamline the spectrum allocation procedure, speed up the installation permit process, adjust quality indicators and take special measures to avoid infrastructure collapses.

In Colombia, the national government has been seeking since 2015 to eliminate barriers to the deployment of municipal telecommunication infrastructure. Initially, CRC was tasked with reviewing complaints in this regard and identifying measures for municipal authorities to take to improve the situation. These measures, however, did not provide the motivation for remedying the situation. This being the situation, under Law 1955 of 2019, municipalities accredited by CRC¹ as being free from barriers to the deployment of telecommunication infrastructure have been given the motivation to be candidates to expand their mobile communication infrastructure through the obligations to take action.² As of the beginning of May 2021, CRC had accredited 390 municipalities, or 37 per cent of national territory.

¹ List of accredited municipalities available at: <https://www.crc.com.gov.co/es/pagina/infraestructuraDisponible> en

² Article 309, Law 1955 of 2019 http://www.secretariassenado.gov.co/senado/basedoc/ley_1955_2019_pr006.html#309

Seeking to promote deployment in Colombia's major cities, CRC has designed an index to illustrate how conducive conditions are to telecommunication infrastructure deployment. This index³ is considered a tool for the development of smart cities and territories.

Prototyping regulatory patterns for the post-COVID digital world.

CRC has proposed a first Regulatory Sandbox for Communications to identify need, relevance and impact regarding modification of the current regulatory framework, involving the implementation of new measures, the modification or elimination of existing mechanisms or the introduction of different rules.

Similarly, this mechanism will help to promote the satisfaction of public interest as an essential driver in the State's pursuit of its fundamental objectives and to foster the economic development of ICT sector actors through the generation of innovative products and services which benefit users, on the basis that regulatory sandboxes around the world are playing a key role in the accelerated transformation of new technologies and business models.

This mechanism will allow for experimentation with different scenarios during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transformational leadership to unleash the power of emerging technologies and business models

It is widely recognized that digital transformation has burst into all areas and sectors at a global level, bringing with it benefits in terms of agility, efficiency, transparency and social well-being. The public sector in particular has been gradually incorporating technological advances in its management. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has also accelerated digital transformation in the public sector.

CRC is aware of the importance of being a regulator that stays abreast of trends, can call on data to make informed decisions and is sufficiently flexible and innovative to leverage the digital transformation. Consequently, CRC has adopted the concept of smart regulation, which includes, in addition to the above, regulatory simplification, reduction of regulatory burdens, creation of spaces for self-regulation and implementation of innovative models, such as the Sandbox.

³ Index available at: <https://www.crc.com.gov.co/es/pagina/infraestructura>

In line with the above, in order best to leverage the digital transformation, CRC is taking action on three fronts: regulation as a tool for the digital transformation of the sector; digital transformation of the regulator; and the exploitation of data, for which we have implemented machine learning tools, an open data platform, web scraping and robotic process automation for activities both inside and outside CRC.

