



Behind the Digital Networks Act there is a common direction to dismantle Europe's digital ecosystem. Goal: create an oligopoly in the TLC sector in the hands of funds

**From the EU three more converging measures to destroy digital pluralism.
AIIP: "join forces to avert this threat"**

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After the Digital Networks Act, the EU measure that aims to disrupt the European digital ecosystem and is expected to come into force in December, other consultations have been pouring in over the last few weeks, all converging in the same direction: reducing ex-ante regulation, consolidating competences at European level, and simplifying access to physical networks. In concrete terms, these measures translate into the end of digital pluralism in favour of an oligopolistic structure supported by large hedge funds.

A convergent regulatory package which, thanks to a clever political makeover, is being presented as a process of modernisation and streamlining.

'While public attention is focused on large digital platforms and the impact of artificial intelligence,' claims Giovanni Zorzoni, chairman of the Italian Internet Providers Association, the long-standing association of independent operators in the telecoms and cloud sector, 'a more silent but equally significant reform is taking place in Europe. This transformation concerns the heart of the digital infrastructure and could redefine the rules of the game in the telecommunications sector forever. The DNA,' continues Zorzoni, 'is accompanied by a series of consultations all published within a few weeks and with aligned timelines, which show a common direction.'

After the public consultation on the Digital Networks Act, three more were added, all heralding reforms: the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC, the 2018 European directive that is the legislative cornerstone of the telecommunications sector in Europe); the revision of the Recommendation on Relevant Markets (a milestone in European telecommunications regulation that guarantees competition and innovation in the sector); and the mapping of the quality of service (QoS) of mobile networks and fixed wireless access 5G.

27 June, 11 July, 17 September: these are, in order, the deadlines for consultations on QoS, DNA and EECC (which share the deadline of 11 July), and the recommendation on relevant markets.

'A tight schedule,' adds the head of AIIP. "The documents, all published within a few weeks and with aligned timelines, together form a coherent and organic framework but hide a single objective: to profoundly change the mechanisms that today guarantee the plurality of operators, infrastructure



competition and the existence of independent national authorities. They are the technical engine of the entire project. However, defining them as merely “technical” is reductive: in fact, they represent a major political and industrial choice.”

The European model for the telecoms sector over the last twenty-five years has been based on a clear principle, digital pluralism: infrastructure and service competition is the means to ensure low prices, innovation and pluralism. Why change something that works well?

“The paradox, and what is most frustrating, is that the current system, despite its limitations, has delivered positive results. Europe is the only macro-region where Internet access prices have not skyrocketed. European citizens pay less, on average, than those in the United States, Canada or Japan. In Italy, in particular, the level of competition has allowed for widespread adoption of fibre optics even in marginal areas, thanks to the efforts of hundreds of independent operators. The pluralism of networks has also fostered innovation in services: regional clouds, local data centres, public exchange points, vertical solutions for industrial districts and production chains. All this is the result of a diversified ecosystem, rather than centralised management. Those who today call for a return to concentration, arguing that we need big “European champions”, should explain why a system that has worked for citizens should be changed in favour of one that, by definition, reduces the options available.”

Two weeks ago, AIIP launched the #stopDNA campaign (www.stopdna.eu), which has received widespread approval and support at national and European level and attracted media attention. The aim is to encourage associations, institutions and citizens to participate in the public consultation, which will close on 11 July, just two weeks from now, and to counter this systemic threat.

‘Everyone – organisations, entrepreneurs, consumers – must feel empowered to have their say and join forces against one of the most dangerous legislative proposals the telecommunications sector has ever faced. The stakes are not technical or bureaucratic: they are market freedom, digital sovereignty and the very future of telecommunications in Europe,’ concludes Zorzoni.

The Association's staff is available to provide information and support: stopdna@aiip.it.

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AIIP

The Italian Internet Providers Association (AIIP) is the first and oldest Italian association of Internet operators. For thirty years, it has been committed to promoting an open, competitive and innovative telecommunications market and representing the interests of small and medium-sized operators with strong local roots.

Founded in 1995, today AIIP is composed of over 60 telecommunications and Internet companies – with over 250,000 business customers, 1 million residential customers and a total turnover of more than €1.2 billion - offering various types of Internet services throughout the peninsula: from connectivity, including wireless and ultra-broadband fibre optics, to data centre and cloud services, etc.