Digital V4 Group's position regarding European Union's „digital budget"

As organisations and associations representing the digital and advanced technologies industry in the countries of V4 Group: Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia, we are satisfied to see digitisation-related expenses included in the project of the EU budget 2021-2027. We believe that digital transformation is a key element for development of our collective functioning. At the same time we would like to express our disappointment in the proposed share of the public resources earmarked for this particular purpose. In our opinion 3 percent designated for digital transformation in the project of EU budget is definitely not enough in comparison to the resources intended for other goals. We appeal to the leaders of our countries – Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary – for supporting our position and taking action during budget negotiations in Brussels in favour of increasing the share of funds expected to be spent in the field of digitisation up to 10 percent.

Amount of resources which will be invested in digitisation in the broad sense is especially important for the counties of Central and Eastern Europe, which are still catching up to their western partners. It will have a fundamental impact on the growth of innovation in our region, digitisation of our economies compared to the countries of „the old EU" as well as on the economy of the European Union as a whole. We must keep in mind that R&D centers are currently preferably opened in Central and Eastern Europe, which generates innovative solutions and job opportunities. One must also remember that all over Europe 900 thousand ICT specialists are needed. Therefore, we must provide a chance for well-trained workforce, which is essential for developing innovation. Moreover, comprehensive digitisation of SME sector companies operating in Central and Eastern Europe is vital. It is a key to their success and competitiveness on domestic and international markets. Even more so, we are certain about a dire need to relocate resources in the EU budget towards fields, which will accelerate the process of digitisation and prepare Europe, including our region in particular, for the future.

Nowadays, United States invest four times as much in AI alone compared to Europe, while China invests twice as much as we do. This is why, we as Europe can not afford to fall behind. As Digital V4 Group we asses that expenses earmarked for the „Digital Europe" project scheduled to start in 2021 should be increased to 25 billion Euro and digitisation should be included in the structure of „Horizon Europe" project for research and development. We believe that R&D financing should be turned up to

3 percent of EU's GDP. It is critical because the funds would help the whole EU including countries of Central and Eastern Europe develop e-services, boost citizens' digital competences and support innovative projects of V4's start-ups so they can commercialise their ideas even easier and more boldly.

Our common appeal to the governments of Visegrád Group countries results from a deep concern for future prospects for developments in digital transformation of our society and guarantee of prosperity. Leaders of our countries have joined their voices more than once in regard to issues important for our region of Europe and represented a unified position on the European forum. We hope that this time issues of digitisation will also prove to be significant for our leaders and be well understood by prime ministers of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

About Digital V4

Digital V4 is a project by organisations from digital and advanced technologies industry in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary with a goal of cooperatively creating a policy supporting development of innovativeness and digitisation in Central and Eastern Europe. The initiative refers to political and economical collaboration between the four countries in scope of the Visegrád Group (V4).

The enterprise has been established in October 2019 during Congress 590 in Rzeszów (Poland). The project is created in cooperation by four organisations: Digital Poland Association, IT Association of Slovakia – ITAS, Consumer Electronics Association in Czech Republic – ASE and ICT Association of Hungarian – IVSZ.