

EU unveils 'digital agenda' to increase use of Web

May 19 2010, By ROBERT WIELAARD , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- The European Commission unveiled plans Wednesday to greatly increase the number of Europeans using public and commercial services online over the next decade.

Neelie Kroes, the EU commissioner for digital affairs, said 30 percent of Europeans have never used the Internet.

Beyond that, there are four times as many [music downloads](#) in the U.S than in Europe, and only 1 percent of Europeans have access to fiber-based high-speed networks, she said, compared to 12 percent in Japan and 15 percent of South Koreans.

And Europe lags behind its main competitors in developing cutting edge technologies, she said.

The reasons, Kroes told a news conference, are weak investments - EU spending is 40 percent of that of the US - and national borders that "hamper access to pan-European telecoms services, digital services and content."

To catch up, she said, EU governments must double their annual spending on research and development to euro11 billion by 2020.

Kroes' "Digital Agenda" includes steps to improve information technology standards and compatibility, eliminate regulatory barriers, encourage electronic payments and simplify digital copyright

management and licensing.

Kroes said the [European Commission](#) will put forward a raft of measures - including 31 EU laws - over the next 2-3 years to get more Europeans online by 2020. She outlined these goals:

- Broadband coverage for all EU citizens by 2013.
- By 2015, 50 percent of Europeans shopping and using public services online.
- By 2020, broadband coverage at 30 megabytes per second and more for at least half EU households.

Kroes said Europeans are unlikely to go online more unless they feel safe. That means EU governments must tackle "the rise of 'cybercrime,' ranging from child abuse to identity theft," she said.

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