

*A Tale of Hidden Champions: The Telecom Challengers reshaping Europe's Competitiveness*

**Welcome Note**

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Dear,

Members of the European Parliament,  
Representatives of the Council and the Member States,  
Representatives of the European Commission,  
National Regulatory Authorities,  
Esteemed guests and colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to welcome you today on behalf of **VATM – the Association of German Alternative Telecommunications Providers**.

For more than **25 years**, VATM presents the full diversity of the German telecoms sector – across fixed and mobile networks, infrastructure and services, network operators and access seekers, serving private households and businesses alike.

VATM stands for competition and high-quality services. For those meeting us for the first time: we represent companies that compete with the former incumbent, Deutsche Telekom – and with one another, driving innovation and customer choice across the market.

This year is of particular importance for our sector, with **many key legislative initiatives ahead**. Today, we place at the heart of this discussion a topic that concerns every European:

**Europe's competitiveness** – with a focus on the challenges faced by national and pan-European telecom companies serving business customers.

As the **Draghi** report reminded us of last year: Investment is key to economic growth.

Since liberalisation, competition has driven growth and investment in the telecom sector. Alongside the incumbent, a wide range of network operators and access seekers have emerged – forming an ecosystem **based on regulated access**.

**This hasn't changed in the fibre era. In Germany, fibre rollout is still ongoing**, while in many other European countries, the peak of investment has already passed.

VATM members have been key drivers of this rollout. They took the initiative. They took the risk. Billions of euros in private investment have been committed – and more is still to come.

They brought entrepreneurial spirit to the sector – investing when Deutsche Telekom was still clinging to its copper network and only entered fibre late, using its SMP position.

But let me be clear: **Traditional infrastructure rollout is only one part of what drives growth in our sector.**

We also see established business models thriving – **especially nationwide access-seekers in the retail market**, offering strong competition and customer-focused services.

**At the same time**, we must not overlook a second pillar: the **business segment**. This part of the market – serving enterprise customers – has long played a strategic role in digital transformation. Yet it is too often overlooked by legislators and regulators.

Business service providers support industry and commerce, hospitals, banks, public authorities, schools – in short: everything that keeps Europe running and prosperous.

Today's panel features two companies that embody this spirit: innovative telecom providers driving digital transformation – offering infrastructure and services tailored to the needs of businesses and entrepreneurs across Europe.

Each brings unique strengths, tailored to meet their customers' specific needs – whether nationally or pan-European.

But let me be clear: None of them could operate without regulated access. **National and Europe-wide business providers rely on access that often wouldn't be granted without clear rules.**

To meet the needs of industry, serve consumers, and continue to invest, expand, and innovate, business providers need a robust ex-ante regulatory framework.

This includes:

- SMP-based competition rules
- Fast and effective enforcement

We support reducing unnecessary bureaucracy. But especially in today's political climate, it must be said clearly: Regulation is not bureaucracy – it is what ensures fair and competitive conditions.

And to make this possible, ladies and gentlemen, representatives of the European Institutions – we need your support. We need your vision. **And we need a shared commitment to a strong and competitive digital Europe.**

VATM stands ready – with expertise and commitment to a competitive digital Europe. Thank you.

Thank you for your attention.

**I look forward to a constructive and forward-looking discussion.**