The Internet is undergoing a major evolution that will see more and more physical objects connected to it. As such, previously unconnected objects, such as books, clothes, food, will progressively be linked to the network.

This evolution will have profound effects on our society, with large implications on how people live, how business operates and how public authorities govern. Among others, early applications foreseen include smart electrical grids and intelligent transport systems.

Europe has a card to play if it wants to shape this new Internet according to its values while contributing to the development of its industry. Furthermore, the development of the Internet of Things brings a number of challenges that Europe must seize early enough to be heard. First, the Governance aspects: who decides how it operates, who sets the rules, who is accountable for what? These are all questions in which Europe needs to pro-actively voice its preferences.
Second, another set of challenges related to privacy, security, trust and acceptance: will applications be secure? How can the fundamental right of privacy and protection of personal data be respected? How can industry prepare for increased industrial spying potential? How can public authorities ensure that the technology brings benefits to all?

Additional challenges remain: scientific research is still needed, so are efforts in terms of standardisation and innovation. Lastly, all this progress is essential so that Information and Communication Technologies can fully play their role in respect of European commitments in terms of sustainable development.

The Commission will adopt in the coming weeks a Communication on the Internet of Things presenting these challenges and proposing an action plan that describes how to address them.