DIGITAL AGENDA FOR EUROPE

Digital service platforms and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence profoundly influence our societal landscape. These innovations have redefined how we communicate, shop and access information online, making them daily essentials. The European digital agenda for 2020-2030 addresses these shifts. It prioritises establishing secure digital spaces, ensuring fair competition in digital markets and enhancing Europe's digital sovereignty, in line with the twin digital and green transitions.

LEGAL BASIS

While the Treaties do not specify provisions for information and communication technologies (ICTs), the EU can act within policy areas, based on the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) (TFEU), such as: industry, competition, trade, trans-European networks, research, energy, single market establishment, free movement of goods, movement of people and services, education and culture.

OBJECTIVES

The EU aims to empower businesses and people in a human-centred, sustainable and more prosperous digital future. Following the Lisbon strategy, the 2010 [digital agenda for Europe](#) underscored ICTs as pivotal for achieving the EU's objectives. In 2015, the [digital single market strategy](#) aimed to ensure better access to digital goods and services across Europe, foster optimal conditions for digital networks and services, and amplify the digital economy's growth potential. In 2020, the strategy on [shaping Europe's digital future](#) targeted technologies that benefited people, promoted a competitive economy and supported an open, democratic society. In 2021, the [digital compass](#) set out the EU's digital goals concerning skills, government, businesses and infrastructure for 2030.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A.   The first digital agenda for Europe: 2010-2020

The first digital agenda accomplished several key objectives:

— it reduced electronic communication prices ([Regulation (EU) 2022/612](#)) and eliminated roaming charges on 14 June 2017 ('[Roam Like At Home](#)');

— it enhanced internet connectivity by ensuring comprehensive basic broadband, using mobile and satellite technologies;

— it strengthened consumer protection in telecommunications through privacy ([Directive 2009/136/EC](#)) and general data protection measures ([Regulation (EU) 2016/679](#) and [Directive (EU) 2016/680](#)).

To encourage the development of digital networks and services, Parliament bolstered the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC). This body

fosters cooperation between national regulators and the Commission, encourages best practices and works to harmonise communication regulations (Regulation (EU) 2018/1971).

The first digital agenda emphasised digital growth by promoting digital skills, high-performance computing, industry digitisation, AI development and public service modernisation. In addition, the EU established rules on geo-blocking (Regulation (EU) 2018/302) and digital service portability (Regulation (EU) 2017/1128), enabling consumers to access online content across the EU.

In addition to the new regulatory framework on data protection, the Union has passed a number of laws to facilitate the development of a data-agile economy, such as:

— the Regulation on the free flow of non-personal data (Regulation (EU) 2018/1807), which allows companies and public administrations to store and process non-personal data wherever they choose;

— the Cybersecurity Act (Regulation (EU) 2019/881), which strengthens the EU Agency for Cybersecurity and establishes a cybersecurity certification framework for products and services;

— the Open Data Directive (Directive (EU) 2019/1024), which provides common rules for a European market for government-held data.

B.   The second digital agenda for Europe: 2020-2030

The second digital agenda addressed the changes brought about by digital technologies and the vital role of digital services and markets, emphasising the EU's technological and geopolitical goals. In its communications on shaping Europe's digital future and on Europe's digital decade, the Commission detailed actions for secure digital services and markets. It prioritised quantum computing, blockchain strategies, AI, semiconductors (European Chips Act), digital sovereignty, cybersecurity, 5G/6G, European data spaces and global tech standards.

In March 2021, the EU introduced a digital compass outlining four targets for 2030:

— skills: At least 80% of all adults should have basic digital skills and there should be 20 million ICT specialists employed in the EU, with more women taking up such jobs;

— businesses: 75% of companies should use cloud-computing services, big data and AI; more than 90% of small and medium-sized enterprises in the EU should reach at least a basic level of digital intensity; and the number of EU unicorns (high-value start-ups) should double;

— infrastructure: All EU households should have gigabit connectivity and all populated areas should be covered by 5G; the production of cutting-edge and sustainable semiconductors in Europe should make up 20% of worldwide production; 10 000 climate-neutral highly secure edge nodes should be deployed in the EU; and Europe should have its first quantum computer;

— public services: All key public services should be available online; all citizens should have access to their e-medical records; and 80% of citizens should use an electronic identity solution.

The [digital Europe programme](#), introduced by [Regulation (EU) 2021/694](#), is an EU initiative that allocates EUR 7.5 billion (2021–2027) to digital technology projects in areas like supercomputing, AI, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills and digital tech integration, supported by digital innovation hubs.

1. Data

Data sharing is central to Europe's digital vision. As the EU promotes data-driven innovation, it seeks to maintain a balance with privacy, security, ethics and safety, while looking into the use and sharing of non-personal data for new technologies and business paradigms.

The [EU data strategy](#) introduced the idea of having common European data spaces covering nine sectors, ensuring that more data becomes available for use in the economy and society, while keeping the companies and individuals that generate the data in control. The European regulatory framework on data is composed of the General Data Protection [Regulation (EU) 2016/679](#) and [Directive (EU) 2016/680](#), the European Data Governance Act ([Regulation (EU) 2022/868](#)) on data availability and trust, and the European Data Act ([Regulation (EU) 2023/2854](#)) on fair access and user rights, while ensuring the protection of personal data.

2. Artificial intelligence

The [White Paper on Artificial Intelligence](#) from February 2020 highlighted AI's crucial role in modern society and anticipated its societal and economic benefits across sectors. Parliament adopted the [AI Act](#) in March 2024. It safeguards general-purpose artificial intelligence, limits the use of biometric identification systems by law enforcement, bans social scoring and the use of AI to manipulate or exploit users' vulnerabilities, and guarantees the right of consumers to submit complaints and receive meaningful explanations.

In September 2022, the Commission introduced a [proposal for a directive on AI liability](#), which would ensure equal protection for those harmed by AI. Additionally, a [proposal for a new product liability directive](#) was unveiled to address digital products like AI.

3. Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act

A cornerstone of the digital strategy is forging a safer, more open digital single market that emphasises user rights and fair business competition. This involves two legislative pillars: the Digital Services Act ([DSA](#)) and the Digital Markets Act ([DMA](#)), both of which modernise EU digital service regulations. Adopted by the co-legislators in 2022 and in force as of May 2023, they offer a unified set of rules for the entire Union. The DSA delineates responsibilities for intermediary services, especially online platforms. Large platforms are subject to specific guidelines due to the risks they present regarding the dissemination of illegal and harmful content. The DMA outlines rules for companies with 'gatekeeper' status, targeting those most susceptible to unfair practices. This encompasses services such as online intermediation, social networks and cloud computing. Building on the DSA, the Commission proposed a regulation to streamline data collection and sharing for short-term accommodation rentals. The legislative procedure successfully concluded with the signature of the final act on 11 April 2024.

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4. E-government, e-identity and digital euro

The digital agenda emphasises e-government and cross-border public sector cooperation. In March 2024, after the Commission's proposal in November 2022, the Council adopted the Interoperable Europe Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/903) to enhance public services in the EU. It establishes an interoperable Europe board with representatives from the Member States, the Commission and other EU bodies.

Building trust online is crucial for societal and economic growth. Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 on electronic identification provides a framework for secure digital interactions among citizens, businesses and authorities. To work towards these objectives, a framework for a European Digital Identity aiming to allow 80% of EU citizens to access vital public services securely with a digital identity by 2030 was adopted by Parliament in February 2024. On 28 June 2023, the Commission presented a legislative package to establish a digital form of central bank money to complement its physical form and laid out the rules and conditions for its use.

5. Cybersecurity

On 10 November 2022, responding to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy introduced an EU cyber defence policy and an action plan on military mobility 2.0. Both aim to increase cyber defence investments, enhance cooperation between military and civilian cyber sectors, ensure efficient cyber crisis management and bolster the EU's position in critical cyber technologies. It reinforces the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, which seeks to create an integrated pan-EU defence industry. In December 2022, the NIS2 Directive (Directive (EU) 2022/2555) replaced its predecessor, broadening its reach to cover more sectors and entities. Furthermore, following a Commission proposal, in December 2023 an informal agreement on a Cyber Resilience Act to enhance the security of various tech products was reached. In April 2024, Parliament adopted the Cyber Solidarity Act, which aims to strengthen solidarity at EU level and to better detect and respond to cyber threats and incidents. Parliament and the Council also reached an agreement on amending the Cybersecurity Act.

6. Media and democracy

In December 2020, a Commission communication laid out an action plan to support the recovery and transformation of Europe's media sector. It emphasised the need for more national support through approved post-COVID-19 recovery plans and highlighted global online platforms' disruptive influence on media, specifically their dominance over data and advertising markets. The European democracy action plan complements the aforementioned media plan and focuses on strengthening the sector's digital adaptation, media freedom and pluralism, and on countering disinformation. It also discusses the decline in media freedom owing to increasing threats against journalists.

7. Education and skills

Beyond regulation, the EU emphasises digital education. The digital education action plan 2021-2027 helps the Member States to adapt their education systems to the

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digital era. It prioritises creating a robust digital education ecosystem and enhancing skills for digital transformation.

8.   Working conditions in platform work

On 9 December 2021, the Commission proposed a [directive with a set of measures to improve the working conditions in platform work](). The new rules aim to regulate how to correctly determine the employment status of platform workers and how digital labour platforms should use algorithms and AI to monitor and evaluate workers in this sector.

9.   Digital infrastructure

On 21 February 2024, the Commission presented [new initiatives for the digital infrastructure]() in Europe, with the aim of starting discussions on concrete proposals for fostering the innovation, security and resilience of digital infrastructure.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In its [resolution of 12 March 2019](), Parliament urged the Commission to reassess the Network and Information Security Directive's scope and to address digitalisation threats, calling for alignment with an enhanced EU cybersecurity policy and for a bigger role for the EU Agency for Cybersecurity.

On 20 October 2020, Parliament adopted three resolutions on AI addressing [ethics](), [civil liability]() and [intellectual property](), calling for a European legal framework for AI based on ethics. To advance the digital single market (DSM), Parliament adopted a resolution on the DSA. It suggested that the legislative package bolsters the internal market, guarantees consumer protection, ensures offline and online illegality parity, maintains transparency, respects rights and includes non-EU entities affecting EU consumers. It also called for increased fairness, transparency and accountability for digital service content moderation. The resolution drew from research, a [workshop]() and a [series of studies]() commissioned by the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection. The alignment of the DSA and DMA proposals with Parliament's resolution shows that Parliament can influence the legislative agenda, even without a formal right of legislative initiative.

On 20 May 2021, in its [resolution on shaping the digital future of Europe](), Parliament called for any barriers to the functioning of the DSM to be removed and for the use of AI to be improved for European consumers.

On 12 December 2023, Parliament called for a [ban on addictive techniques]() in the design of online services, such as endless scrolling or automatic play. Some MEPs also wanted to introduce a digital 'right to not be disturbed' along with a list of good design practices.

On 13 December 2023, MEPs underlined the [need to re-assess the EU's rules on geo-blocking]() to remove any remaining barriers and realise the full potential of the single market.

On 13 March 2024, under the European action plan for democracy, Parliament approved [a law on media freedom and pluralism](), enhancing the protection of

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media independence, and another [law on the transparency of democratic processes](#), regulating political advertising.

For more information on this topic, please see the websites of the [Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection](#) and the [Committee on Industry, Research and Energy](#).

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04/2024