

"Digital Transformation"

Europe must become a world leader and standard setter in digital transformation and charter a European way to build an ethical, human-centred, transparent and safe digital society. Europe needs to be ambitious in its approach and fully use the opportunities digitalisation offers, while at the same time managing the risks and challenges brought about by digitalisation. Digitalisation touches on and must be given consideration in all areas of our society. Reference was made in this context to the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade and suggestions were made to consider a possible future Charter of Digital Rights.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine has only reinforced many of the points addressed in the proposals, such as the need for digital sovereignty, an increased focus on cyber defence and protection against disinformation. It has also made it evident that conflicts nowadays have consequences in the digital sphere, raising new issues like the long-term consequences of the seizure of personal information and the illegitimate use of that data in the future.

1. [Proposal: Access to digital infrastructure](#)¹

Objective: Equal access to the internet is a fundamental right of every European citizen. We propose that everyone in Europe should in practice have access to the internet and to digital services, and that the sovereignty of the EU's digital infrastructure is enhanced through:

Measures:

1. Investing in high-quality and innovative European digital infrastructures (including 5G and 6G being developed in Europe); (ECP1 recommendation number 40 and 47, Dutch NCP 1)
2. Ensuring fast, affordable, secure and stable internet access everywhere in the EU, including for roaming, with a priority to bring internet connection to 'white zones/dead zones', rural areas and remote and peripheral regions in order to address the digital divide between and within Member States and make sure that no one gets left behind; (ECP1 recommendation number 17, 47 and Dutch NCP 1)
3. Advance the deployment of digital and electrical infrastructure both in public and private spaces to enable use of electric and autonomous vehicles; (WG debate)²
4. Taking measures to ensure there is fair and open competition and prevent monopolies, vendor lock-in, data concentration and dependence on third countries in relation to infrastructure and services, improving markets from the perspective of consumers; (ECP1 recommendation number 17)
5. Making children, families, elder people as well as vulnerable groups, a priority when it comes to access to internet and hardware, particularly in view of access to education, public services, and health; (ECP1 recommendation number 17 and WG debate)
6. Improving digital access to and accessibility of essential public and private services for citizens and businesses, for example when it comes to administrative procedures, and ensure inclusive access and support such as through help desks in relation to these services; (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)

¹ Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 17, 40, 47; National Citizens Panels (NCP) The Netherlands 1

² See link to ECP 3, Rec 38 in relation to infrastructure for electrical vehicles

7. Harmonising high quality digital standards and improving secure mobility of data to facilitate cross-border interoperability; (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)
8. Considering environmental impacts of digital infrastructure and digitalisation in order to make digital transformation sustainable and strive for a green digital society. (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform).

2. [Proposal: Digital literacy and skills that empower people](#)³

Objective: We propose that the EU ensures that all European citizens can benefit from digitalisation, by empowering them with the necessary digital skills and opportunities, through:

Measures:

1. Ensuring access to formal and non-formal digital literacy and skills training and education, including in school curricula, during all stages of life by building on existing initiatives at European level, with special focus on the inclusion of vulnerable groups and elderly, enhancing digital skills of children in a manner that is compatible with their healthy development and tackling digital inequalities, including the digital gender gap; (ECP1 recommendation number 8, Italian NCP 5.2, WG debate)
2. Ensuring a healthy use of the internet by encouraging Member States to implement digital skills training for all age-groups with standard programmes and curricula set at European level concerning e.g. the risks and opportunities of the internet, online rights of users and the netiquette; (ECP1 recommendation number 47, WG debate)
3. Taking all the necessary measures to ensure that the digitalisation of society does not leave out older people and that technology is accessible to them by fostering programs and initiatives, for instance in the form of classes tailored to their needs. At the same time it should be ensured that essential services can also be accessed in person and by non-digital means; (ECP1 recommendation number 34 and 47)
4. The introduction of an EU certification relating to digital skills in schools that will prepare young people for the future job market; (ECP1 recommendation number 8)
5. Develop training initiatives coordinated at EU level to retrain and upskill workers to remain competitive in the job market, taking especially also account of competences and skills needed in small and medium sized enterprises and to train digital experts; (ECP1 recommendation number 8 and WG debate)
6. Awareness raising about existing digital platforms that connect people to employers and help in finding jobs in the EU, such as EURES; (ECP1 recommendation number 8)
7. Increasing investments and efforts to boost digitalisation of education, including higher education. (WG debate, Multilingual Digital Platform)

³ Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 8, 34, 47, National Citizens Panels (NCP) Italy 5.2

3. [Proposal: Safe and trustworthy digital society – cyber security and disinformation](#)⁴

Objective: We propose that in order to have a safe, resilient and trustworthy digital society the EU should ensure effective and swift implementation of existing legislation and have more powers to enhance cyber security, deal with illegal content and cyber criminality, counter and recover from cyber threats from non-state actors and authoritarian states, and address disinformation through:

Measures:

1. Strengthening capacities of Europol/European Cybercrime Center in terms of financial and human resources, allowing for a more proactive approach in combatting cybercrime and building up joint European cyber defense capabilities against large scale attacks, including through better cooperation; (ECP1 recommendation number 39, Lithuanian NCP 2.6, Dutch NCP 1, WG debate)
2. Taking necessary measures to be prepared for and to recover swiftly from any large scale attacks and black-outs, by for example ensuring the existence of resilient infrastructure and alternative communication channels; (WG debate)
3. Ensuring similar sanctions and quick and effective enforcement in Member States in case of cybercrime through better coordination of local, regional and national cybersecurity centres and authorities; (ECP1 recommendation number 39)
4. Enhancing digital literacy and critical thinking as a way to counter disinformation, online threats and hate speech, as well as dark patterns and preferential pricing; (WG debate)
5. Countering disinformation by legislation and guidelines for online platforms and social media companies to address disinformation vulnerabilities and implementing transparency measures, including for example AI based algorithms that can highlight the trustworthiness of information on social media and new media, providing the user with sources of fact-checked information. When using algorithms, human beings should remain in ultimate control of decision making processes; (ECP1 recommendation number 46 and WG debate)
6. Supporting digital platforms that provide for media pluralism and provide resources and initiatives to assess the trustworthiness and impartiality of information from traditional media (e.g. television, printed press, radio) and other media in full respect of the principle of media freedom and provide citizens with information about the quality of the news. (ECP1 recommendation number 46)

4. [Proposal: Safe and trustworthy digital society – data protection](#)⁵

Objective: We promote data sovereignty of individuals, better awareness and more efficient implementation and enforcement of existing data protection rules (GDPR) to enhance personal control of own data and limit misuse of data through:

Measures:

1. Better explaining data protection rules (GDPR), increasing transparency and improving communication by creating guidance on informed consent texts that use simple and clear

⁴ Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 39, 46, National Citizens Panels (NCP) Lithuania 2.6, The Netherlands 1

⁵ Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 42, 43, 44, 45, National Citizens Panels (NCP) The Netherlands 2

language understandable by everyone, including more visual ways to provide consent to data use, accompanied by an information campaign and ensuring needed skills for those processing data and advising those who need assistance; (ECP1 recommendation number 42, 45 and Dutch NCP 2)

2. Ensuring that the existing prohibition of default consent on re-use or reselling of data is applied; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
3. Ensuring that requests of users for permanent data deletion are followed up on in a specific timeframe; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
4. Providing clear and as short as possible information to users on how and by whom data will be used; (ECP1 recommendation number 42)
5. Ensuring compliance of non-European companies with European data protection rules; (ECP1 recommendation number 42 and 43)
6. Encouraging a certification system at EU level that reflects compliance with GDPR in an accessible, clear and simple way, and visible on websites and platforms and should be issued by an independent certifier at European level. It should not create disproportionate burdens for small and medium sized companies; (ECP1 recommendation number 44, WG debate)
7. Ensure that citizens are efficiently and swiftly helped when encountering issues with opt outs or revoking consent. To this end intrusive behavior needs to be better defined and guidelines and mechanisms for opt out and revoking data and to identify and sanction fraudsters should be developed at European level; (ECP1 recommendation number 43, and WG debate)
8. Providing for sanctions including a fine proportional to the companies' turnover and limitations of companies' operations, such as imposing temporary or definitive bans on unwanted data processing and supporting its enforcement by the European Data Protection Supervisor and national agencies. (ECP1 recommendation number 42, 43, and WG debate)

5. [Proposal: Digital innovation to strengthen the social and sustainable economy](#)⁶

Objective: We propose that the EU promotes digitalisation measures which strengthen the economy and the single market in a fair and sustainable way, increase European competitiveness in technology and innovation, enhance the digital single market for companies of all sizes and make Europe a world leader in digital transformation and in human centric digitalisation, through:

Measures:

1. The introduction or reinforcement of legislation that regulates (human-centric) 'smart working', taking into account the impact on workers' physical and mental health for example by ensuring a right to disconnect. A 'human centric' approach should incorporate the 'human in control' principle; (ECP1 recommendation number 7 and WG debate)⁷
2. EU legislation that incentivises companies to be socially responsible and to keep high quality 'smart working' jobs within Europe and thus avoiding the relocation of such jobs to lower cost countries. Incentives may be financial and/or reputational and should take into account internationally recognised environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria. To this end, the EU should set up a working group composed of experts from all relevant stakeholders to examine and strengthen this legislation; (ECP1 recommendation number 7)

⁶ Citizens' recommendations on which the proposal is mainly based: European Citizens' Panel 1 (ECP1): 7, 16, 17, National Citizens Panels (NCP) Germany and Italy 1.3

⁷ See link with Working Group on Stronger Economy

3. Ensuring human oversight of decision-making processes involving artificial intelligence in the work place and transparency of algorithms used; giving consideration to negative impacts of illimited digital surveillance in the workplace; informing and consulting workers prior to the introduction of digital technologies that impact working conditions; ensuring that new forms of work, such as platform work, respect worker rights and provide appropriate working conditions; (WG debate)
4. Taking initiatives to help support remote working, such as office spaces with access to a reliable, fast internet connection and digital training and providing resources for ergonomic equipment for home offices; (ECP1 recommendation number 17 and WG debate)
5. Introducing a publicly accessible digital score board, creating a ranking system that indicates and compares the current level of digitalisation of EU businesses; (German NCP)
6. Achieving a strong and competitive digital economy and spread the benefits of digital transformation equitably across Europe by focusing on technology and innovation as drivers of growth, by driving world class transformative research and making room for innovation ecosystems throughout all regions by improving the operating environment of SMEs and start-ups and fair access to funding and by doing away with legal or other burdens hindering cross boarder activities. (Italian NCP 1.3, WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
7. Building a data infrastructure based on European values; implement the 'digital first' and 'once only' principle and facilitate digital and secure access to data for innovation and business; encouraging the digitalisation of public services. (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
8. Fully utilize the potential of trustworthy and responsible use of artificial intelligence, use the potential of blockchain technology and cloud services, setting safeguards and standards that ensure transparency, interoperability, generate trust, enhance ease of use and avoiding any discriminatory or biased algorithms; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
9. Promoting open source software and its use in education and training and free access to publicly funded research and software; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
10. Introducing a European common digital identity to facilitate cross-border digital transactions and services, with a framework of European standards and guidelines providing the necessary safeguards; (WG debate and Multilingual Digital Platform)
11. Assess the feasibility of digitalisation of product information for consumption and nutrition products through a standardised European app which would allow for more user-friendly access and would provide additional information on products and production chain. (ECP1 recommendation number 16)