

Achievements of the von der Leyen Commission

Realising Europe's Digital Decade

April 2024

In the last four years, we have acted to ensure that our society seizes the **opportunities** offered by digital technology, minimises associated **risks** for citizens, and **invests** strategically to build our competitiveness and resilience.

Technology: The EU is today home to **three of the most powerful computers in the world**. This technological leadership goes hand in hand with our climate ambitions. For example, **LUMI's** supercomputer in Northern Finland uses 100% hydropower, and its waste heat is used to heat hundreds of households.

Thanks to the **European Chips Act**, we are turning the EU into a world leader in semiconductors. We are supporting scale-up and innovation and boosting manufacturing. The Act has already triggered investment plans worth over **€100 billion**, contributing to our goal of doubling the EU's **share in the semiconductors global market to 20% by 2030**.

Europe has been investing more than ever in digital. Under the **NextGenerationEU**, the **target of using 20% of funds in digital-related measures has been exceeded**. Thanks to these investments, almost 18 million households in the EU received high-speed Internet, and 247 million users benefit from new or improved public digital services.

AI & data: Even before services like ChatGPT became a mass phenomenon, we anticipated the impact of Artificial Intelligence in our lives. With the **AI Act**, the EU is becoming the **first jurisdiction in the world** to put up risk-based guardrails to ensure that the use of AI remains safe and human centred, while also boosting innovation in trustworthy AI.

The AI revolution will be driven by data. To unleash it, our **Data Acts** open up data sharing by users of all types of connected devices for innovative uses, require contestable and fair data processing services, and establish standards for trusted data intermediaries and data spaces. At the same time, our **Cyber Resilience Act** keeps data safe, by setting high cybersecurity standards for all connected devices sold in the EU.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission set up the **EU Digital COVID certificate** – a secure means of handling sensitive health data, issued 2.2 billion times and connecting 78 countries and territories, it allowed Europeans to travel safely and freely within the EU and is now a WHO standard.

Platforms: The **pandemic** also underscored the need to mitigate harmful content online and exposed our dependencies on digital giants. The **Digital Services Act** imposes greater accountability on the biggest platforms to remove illegal content and tackle risks to children and elections. The **Digital Markets Act** prevents gatekeeper platforms from using their economic power solely in their own interests, to exclude innovative online businesses.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA) empower users online and set a global benchmark

The **DSA** sets out **a new standard for the accountability of online platforms** regarding illegal content, disinformation and other societal risks. It **empowers and protects users** by requiring online platforms to tackle illegal content and to increase accountability and transparency. The core function of the DSA is that **what is illegal offline, should be illegal online**.

The DSA's **general obligations apply to all online platforms since 17 February 2024**. Obligations include **publishing user numbers and transparency reports**; having **clear terms and conditions** of use and enforcing them proportionately; **taking down illegal content**; providing **statements of reasons** and means to seek redress in case of **content moderation**; and a **profiling ban for advertisement directed at minors or based on sensitive personal data**.

Very Large Online Platforms or Search Engines reaching more than 45 million users monthly are subject to more stringent rules. This is already the case for 19 services designated in April 2023, and for three additional platforms these obligations will kick in at the end of April 2024. These stronger provisions include allowing users to opt **out from profiling** for the content they see; publishing **repositories of all ads** on their interface, including who promoted them; **stopping targeted advertisement based on sensitive personal data, and towards children**; and giving researchers **access to data**. Such designated services also need to provide **annual risk assessments** to examine how their services might pose a risk to fundamental rights, civic discourse, and public health, amongst others; and they will need to adopt reasonable and effective **mitigation measures** to the identified systemic risks. The risk assessments and the mitigation plans are subject to **independent audit and oversight**.

The DSA is showing its impact: big platforms are already taking steps to better protect minors, offering choices regarding their recommender systems, and labelling and providing access to ads. The first test case for the DSA was the illegal and harmful content disseminated in the context of Hamas's terrorist attacks on Israel, where **the Commission opened formal proceedings against X**. Since then, the Commission has started **formal proceedings against TikTok** in areas such as protection of minors **and advertising transparency**; **and against AliExpress** in the areas of management and mitigation of risks, content moderation, and the internal complaint handling mechanism.

With the **DMA**, the EU has set a global milestone to **regulate the economic power of digital "gatekeepers"**. These are **some of the largest digital global companies** that take a **particularly important place in the internal market** because of their size and their role as gateways for business users to reach their customers.

The DMA will create an **opportunity for businesses to challenge gatekeepers** by ensuring **fair, open, and contestable digital markets**. The new rules increase legal certainty for businesses and platforms, **empower SMEs and start-ups**, and ensure consumers benefit from quality services and more transparency.

For example, gatekeepers can no longer engage in **self-preferencing** on their platforms. Users can **delete preinstalled software from their devices and can download apps from alternative app stores**; businesses can get free **access to ad data** and can agree **contracts outside of a gatekeeper** platform; and developers can use **alternative payment or identification systems**.

In September 2023, the Commission designated **six gatekeepers under the DMA – Alphabet (Google’s parent company), Amazon, Apple, ByteDance (TikTok’s parent company), Meta and Microsoft** –, accounting together for a total of 22 core platform services. Since March 2024, the six designated gatekeepers need to ensure **full compliance with the obligations of the DMA**, and the Commission has already opened investigations for non-compliance against Alphabet, Apple, and Meta.

Harnessing the opportunities of Artificial Intelligence through the world’s first regulatory framework

The potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for our societies are manifold, **from improved medical care to better education**. Harnessing these opportunities was a key Commission objective – long before services such as ChatGPT became a mass phenomenon.

The Commission put forward the **Artificial Intelligence Act** designed to ensure that AI systems used in the EU are safe, transparent, ethical, unbiased and under human control. The Act was agreed upon by co-legislators in December 2023. **Innovation-friendly and human-centric**, it regulates AI where necessary to **address risks to health, safety and fundamental rights** and ensures a level playing field for innovation, **without additional burden for most use cases**.

With our innovation-friendly AI Act, the EU is contributing **to the development of global guardrails for trustworthy AI**. In 2023, the Commission supported the agreement by G7 leaders on International Guiding Principles and a voluntary Code of Conduct for Advanced AI systems.

We have set a goal of **investing more than €1 billion per year in AI research and innovation**, with the objective to attract more investment in AI per year over this decade. That goal was largely surpassed in 2022, when **more than €3 billion of EU funding were mobilised**.

To develop AI models, **access to supercomputers** is crucial: this reduces training time for algorithms from months or years, to just weeks. The EU currently has **three world-class supercomputers** (based in Finland, Italy, and Spain) and we are granting access for **European AI start-ups, SMEs and the broader AI community**.

Giving Europeans a safe and secure digital identity

The **Digital Identity Wallet** will allow all Europeans to have a **secure digital identity that protects personal data** and works in all Member States from the end of 2026. The wallet will offer a **user-friendly public alternative to online identification, fully respect the choice of the user to share or not personal data and offer the highest degree of security**. Very Large Online Platforms designated under the DSA will need to accept it to authenticate users.

Tapping the economic potential of data in a secure way

Data is the building block for many new products and services. **Access to an ever-growing quantity of data and the ability to use it are essential** for economic growth, competitiveness, innovation, and job creation.

The **Data Governance Act**, in full application since September 2023, lays down requirements to increase trust in data intermediaries and strengthens data-sharing mechanisms. It enables the creation of **common European data spaces in key sectors**, including health and mobility, that facilitate the pooling and sharing of data in a controlled and secure way.

The **Data Act**, which will apply from September 2025 on, creates the **processes and structures to facilitate data sharing** by companies, individuals, and the public sector. It will **boost the EU's data economy by unlocking industrial data** and foster a **competitive and reliable European cloud market** through easier switching and fair contract terms. The new rules could **contribute an additional €270 billion to our GDP by 2028** thanks to the tackling of legal, economic and technical challenges that currently lead to data under-utilisation.

Increasing our independence in semiconductors with the European Chips Act

Shortages of semiconductors have highlighted Europe's dependency on a limited number of non-EU suppliers. The **European Chips Act**, which entered into force in September 2023, **strengthens Europe's competitiveness and resilience** by boosting manufacturing, stimulating the European design ecosystem, and supporting scale-up and innovation across the value chain. Through the Chips Act, the **European Union aims to double its share in the semiconductors global market to 20% by 2030**.

It has already triggered public and private investment plans worth over **€100 billion**, including:

- **Intel** announced a mega fab site in Magdeburg, **Germany**, with an investment of €30 billion. The fab will produce the most advanced chip technologies below two nanometers.
- **Intel** also announced further €12 billion to expand their fabs in **Ireland**.
- **Infineon** will invest €5 billion in Dresden, **Germany**, to expand production of analog, mixed signal, and power circuits.

Additionally, under State aid rules, the Commission has already approved French and Italian measures supporting the **construction of first-of-a-kind microchips manufacturing facilities** in Crolles and Catania. The approved aid amounts to almost €3.2 billion, and the overall investment is **worth more than €8 billion**. More such projects are in the pipeline.

The Commission also approved an **Important Project of Common European Interest** to support research, innovation and the first industrial deployment of microelectronics and communication technologies throughout the value chain. The **€8.1 billion in public support** provided by Member States is expected to unlock an **additional €13.7 billion in private investment**.

Improving Europeans' digital skills and the access of new technologies by business to realise our Digital Decade

Under the **Digital Decade Policy Programme**, we track performance in four areas: citizens' **digital skills; take-up of new technologies by businesses** like AI, data and cloud; **advancing the EU's connectivity, computing and data infrastructures**; and making **public services and administration** available online.

Concrete targets to be achieved by 2030 include: 80% of those aged 16-74 have at least basic digital skills, providing gigabit network to all end users, doubling the number of EU unicorn companies, and ensuring that 100% of Union citizens have access to their electronic health records.

The Commission has also put in place initiatives to support the increase of information and communication technology (ICT) graduates and to provide new skills to individuals employed in digital areas, such as the Cybersecurity Skills Academy and the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform.

Furthermore, there are currently **over 200 European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs)**, covering all EU regions. EDIHs are one-stop shops supporting companies and public sector organisations to respond to digital challenges and become more competitive. Meanwhile, regarding connectivity infrastructure, 81% of the EU population have access to 5G, and 56% of all households are covered by fibre cables.

Bolstering our cybersecurity and resilience to cyber threats

Cyber-attacks targeting critical infrastructure and aiming to exploit vulnerabilities are proliferating in number and growing in complexity.

The **NIS2 Directive** expands cybersecurity rules to cover new sectors, such as telecoms providers, postal services, public administration, and healthcare. It improves the resilience and incident response capacities of public and private entities, and the EU as a whole.

The **Cyber Resilience Act**, agreed in December 2023, improves the level of cybersecurity of digital products. It introduces cybersecurity requirements for all hardware and software available in the European market, from baby monitors, smart watches, and computer games to firewalls and routers.

The **EU Cyber Solidarity Act**, agreed politically by co-legislators in March 2024, will improve the response to cyber threats across the EU. It includes measures to fortify cooperation within the EU, enhance threat detection and awareness, bolster the preparedness of critical entities, and reinforce crisis management and response capabilities.