



Shaping Europe's digital future – Questions and Answers

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The EU is pursuing a digital [strategy](#) that builds on our successful history of technology, innovation and ingenuity, vested in European values, and projecting them onto the international stage. The [White Paper on Artificial Intelligence](#) (AI) and the [European data strategy](#) presented today show that Europe can set global standards on technological development while putting people first.

Europe as the global leader of the digital transformation

Digital technologies considerably improve our lives, from better access to knowledge and content to how we do business, communicate or buy goods and services. The EU must ensure that the digital transformation works for the benefit of all people, not just a few. Citizens should have the opportunity to flourish, choose freely, engage in society and at the same time feel safe online. Businesses should benefit from a framework that allows them to start up, scale up, pool data, innovate and compete with large companies on fair terms. Society should benefit from social and environmental sustainability, and a secure digital environment that respects privacy, dignity, integrity and other rights in full transparency.

What does the strategy say?

Over the next five years, the Commission will focus on three key objectives to promote technological solutions that will help Europe pursue its own way towards a digital transformation that works for the benefit of people and respects our fundamental values:

- Technology that works for people;
- A fair and competitive economy; and
- An open, democratic and sustainable society.

The EU's digital strategy indicates the path that Europe needs to take to pursue its own way: a digital Europe that reflects the best of Europe. And it defines an ambitious approach towards digital technological development, as well as how technology will be used to meet our climate-neutrality objectives.

The White Paper on Artificial Intelligence and the European data strategy are the first pillars of the new digital strategy of the Commission. They are fully aligned with the need to put people first in developing technology, as well as with the need to defend and promote European values and rights in how we design, make and deploy technology in the real economy and how we improve the services of the public sector towards the citizens.

How will the EU fund the proposals on AI and data?

The required investments will be channelled from the [Digital Europe programme](#) (DEP), [the Connecting Europe Facility 2](#) and [Horizon Europe](#). For Horizon Europe, the Commission proposed to invest €15 billion in the 'Digital, Industry and Space' cluster, with AI as a key activity to be supported. As part of DEP, the European Commission proposed to invest almost €2.5 billion in deploying data platforms and AI applications. Out of these, €2 billion euros could be invested into a European High Impact project on European data spaces, including trustworthy and energy efficient data sharing and cloud infrastructures. The DEP will also support national authorities in making high value data sets available for re-use in different common data spaces.

How can technology support the European Green Deal?

Digital technologies are a critical enabler for the Green Deal, the EU's new growth strategy to become the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050. For example, they can increase energy efficiency by tracking when and where electricity is most needed. Smart heating could help us save the equivalent of 6 million tonnes of oil, and farmers will be able to use fewer pesticides and fertilisers thanks to data and AI. However, for digitalisation to deliver its benefits, the ICT sector needs to undergo its own green transformation. Data centres and telecommunications need to become more energy efficient,

use more renewable sources and should become climate neutral by 2030.

How does Europe work for an open global digital economy and society?

The Commission can leverage regulatory power, stronger economic and technological capabilities, diplomatic strengths and external financial instruments to advance the European approach and shape the global frameworks. This is the case for work done under association agreements and trade agreements. Europe must now lead the standardisation process of the new generation of technology, i.e. on blockchain, high-performance and quantum computing, AI and tools for data sharing and usage. The European Union is and will remain the most open region for trade and investment in the world, but this is not unconditional. Everyone can access the European market as long as they accept and respect our rules. The Commission will continue to address unjustified restrictions for European companies in third countries, such as data localisation requirements, and pursue ambitious goals in terms of markets access, research and development and standardisation programmes.

Europe as a leader in human-centric Artificial Intelligence

Why does the Commission present a White Paper on Artificial Intelligence?

The White Paper on Artificial Intelligence sets out the Commission's proposals to promote the development of AI in Europe whilst ensuring respect of fundamental rights. AI is developing fast, which is why Europe needs to maintain and increase its level of investment. At the same time, AI entails a number of potential risks that need to be addressed. The [White Paper](#) sets out options to maximise the benefits and address the challenges of AI, and invites comments on these options by stakeholders.

What is the Commission's approach on Artificial Intelligence?

In the White Paper, the Commission is taking a balanced approach, based on excellence and trust.

To achieve an ecosystem of excellence, the Commission proposes to streamline research, foster collaboration between Member States and increase investment into AI development and deployment. These actions build on the [Coordinated Plan on AI](#) with Member States of December 2018.

To achieve an ecosystem of trust, the Commission presents options on creating a legal framework that addresses the risks for fundamental rights and safety. This builds on the work of the [High-Level Expert Group on artificial intelligence](#), in particular the [Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI](#), which were tested by companies in late 2019. A legal framework should be principles-based and focus on high-risk AI systems in order to avoid unnecessary burden for companies to innovate.

How will the EU ensure compliance with fundamental rights?

A human-centric approach means ensuring that AI systems are developed and used in a way that respects EU law and fundamental rights. For example, biases in algorithms or training data used for recruitment AI systems could lead to unjust and discriminatory outcomes, which would be illegal under EU non-discrimination laws. It is important to prevent breaches of fundamental rights and if they occur, to ensure that those breaches can be addressed by national authorities. High-risk AI systems need to be certified, tested and controlled, as cars, cosmetics, and toys are. For other AI systems, the Commission proposes voluntary labelling in case defined standards are respected. All AI systems and algorithms are welcome in the European market as long as they comply with EU rules.

What is facial recognition?

Facial recognition can take different forms. It can be used for user authentication i.e. to unlock a smartphone or for verification/ authentication at border crossings to check a person's identity against his/her travel documents (one-to-one matching). Facial recognition could also be used for remote biometric identification, where an image of a person is checked against a database (one-to-many matching). This is the most intrusive form of facial recognition and in principle prohibited in the EU.

Will the EU regulate facial recognition for remote identification?

The gathering and use of biometric data for remote identification purposes carries specific risks for fundamental rights. EU data protection rules already prohibit in principle the processing of biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, except under specific conditions. Specifically, remote biometric identification can only take place for reasons of substantial public interest. It must be based on EU or national law, the use has to be duly justified, proportionate and subject to adequate safeguards. Hence, allowing facial recognition is currently the exception. With the AI White Paper, the Commission wants to launch a broad debate on which circumstances might justify exceptions in the future, if any.

What about victims or damage caused by AI?

There is no need to completely re-write liability rules at EU or national level. The Commission is inviting opinions on how best to ensure that safety remains at a high standard and that potential victims do not face more difficulties to get compensation compared to victims of traditional products and services.

A secure and dynamic single market for data

Why does the EU need a data strategy?

Data is the basis of different waves of innovation. The way that we organise data access and reuse will determine our future innovation capacity. While currently a small number of big tech firms hold a large part of the world's data, huge opportunities lie ahead for Europe. Rapidly increasing amounts of data will be generated in the next years and storage shifts from the cloud to the edge. The EU can build on a strong legal framework in data protection, fundamental rights, safety and cyber-security; its internal market; and a large degree of interconnection in public services.

Citizens, businesses and organisations should be empowered to make better decisions based on insights gleaned from non-personal data. That data should be available to all, whether public or private, start-up or giant.

The [European data strategy](#) presented today aims to enhance the use of data, which will bring enormous benefits to citizens and businesses. It will enable the development of new products and services and will lead to productivity gains and resource efficiency for businesses and better services provided by the public sector. It can for example help develop personalised medicine for patients, improve mobility for commuters or contribute to Europe becoming the first climate neutral continent by 2050.

What is the aim of the data strategy?

The aim of the strategy is to create a genuine single market for data, where personal and non-personal data, including confidential and sensitive data, are secure and where businesses and the public sector have easy access to huge amounts of high quality data to create and innovate. It will be a space where all data-driven products and services fully respect EU rules and values. This will ensure Europe's technological sovereignty in a globalised world and unlock the enormous potential of new technologies like AI.

How does the data strategy relate to the General Data Protection Regulation?

Every day, people generate ever-increasing amounts of data through their daily activities. Its collection and reuse need to respect the rights and interests of the people first, in line with European values and rules. With the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU has laid down a solid basis for a human-centric data economy by ensuring that individuals remain in full control of their data. This has made the EU a source of inspiration for the protection of privacy in many countries worldwide.

At the same time, individuals could benefit from technical tools and standards that make the exercise of their rights, in particular their right to data portability, simple and easy. This would also enable novel data flows, protect consumers and foster competition.

The data strategy presented today will empower people to have a stronger say on who can access the data they generate, including personal IoT data, and how it is used through personal data spaces. This could, for example, be supported by having stricter requirements on interfaces for real-time data access or by guaranteeing the neutrality of personal data spaces.

How can even more data be made available for reuse?

The legislative framework proposed in the data strategy would reinforce essential data governance structures and mechanisms in Member States and at the EU level to make more data available for reuse, with full respect of the data protection legislation.

This would help to prioritise standards and a more harmonised datasets to foster data interoperability within and across sectors; facilitate the access to and reuse of sensitive data such as health or social data for scientific research purposes (including for AI), in compliance with data protection legislation; help people make their data available for the common good for researchers to innovate for the benefit of society.

How will data be used in a way that benefits EU citizens?

Data can give insights that help combat emergencies, such as floods and wildfires, make our cities greener and cleaner, help people live longer and healthier lives. The existing [Open Data Directive](#) already makes vast amounts of data available for reuse for the benefit of society. Business-to-

government data sharing can be a game-changer for providing general welfare in the EU.

The strategy on data intends to make more privately and publicly held data available by opening up public sector datasets of high commercial and societal value, such as environmental data and earth observation data; facilitating the use of publicly held sensitive data for scientific research and for the common good; exploring the creation of EU-wide legislation on the use of private sector data by the public sector for the common good.

How will the European data strategy help businesses?

Access to data is crucial to ensure competition and to create new business opportunities for smaller and larger firms. Companies need common standards and clear rules on how data transfers should take place. This also requires investments in new technologies and infrastructures so that data is the basis of future innovative products, services and improved efficiency.

Businesses should also be free to decide to whom and under what conditions access can be granted to their non-personal data. The Commission already started to address this problem with non-binding guidelines on businesses-to-business data sharing, which aimed to create fair and open markets for IoT-generated data.

Finally, the Commission envisages to propose a 'Data Act' to look at different types of data sharing scenarios and ways to empower individuals so that they become more involved in the data economy.

How can data contribute to the common good?

Data can give insights that help combat emergencies, such as floods and wildfires, make our cities greener and cleaner, and help people live longer and healthier in a secure environment. The existing [Open Data Directive](#) already make vast amounts of data available for reuse for the benefit of society. There are, however, some valuable but highly sensitive datasets gathered by some public institutions, falling outside the scope of that Directive, which could be reused for the common good under some strict conditions. For example, the reuse of publicly held health records or social data could help develop personalised medicine or advance research to find cures for specific diseases. Companies also collect huge amounts of data useful to society. If the public sector could access and reuse certain private sector data, it would be able to improve public services and policies.

What are the next steps?

The Commission will present later this year further measures, such as a Digital Services Act to establish clear rules for all businesses to access the Single Market, to strengthen the responsibility of online platforms and to protect fundamental rights. It will also propose a review of the eIDAS regulation, allowing for a secure electronic identity that puts people in control of the data they share online. Furthermore, the EU will put a strong emphasis on cybersecurity by promoting cooperation through a Joint Cyber Unit that protects critical European infrastructure and strengthens the cybersecurity single market. Finally, Europe will continue to build alliances with global partners, leveraging its regulatory power, capacity building, diplomacy and finance to promote the European digitalisation model internationally.

The White Paper on Artificial Intelligence is open for [public consultation](#) until 19 May 2020. The Commission is also gathering [feedback on the data strategy](#). Based on the input received, the Commission is planning to take further action to support the development of trustworthy AI and a data-agile economy.

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