Europe's Digital Decade – Questions and Answers

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What is the Commission's Digital Compass?

The Commission has presented a Communication "2030 Digital Compass: the European Way for the Digital Decade". It sets out:

- A **vision for 2030** for a successful digital transformation based on the empowerment of citizens and technological leadership, resulting in a more resilient and prosperous society;
- **Clear and concrete objectives along four cardinal points** to map the EU's destination for 2030: a digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals, secure and performant sustainable digital infrastructures, digital transformation of businesses and digitalisation of public services;
- A framework **identifying digital principles** empowering people in the digital world;
- An outline for a **Digital Compass** to ensure that the EU will reach these goals. The Compass will propose a robust governance structure, a framework to facilitate and accelerate the launch of multi-country projects to address gaps in EU critical capacities, and a multi-stakeholder forum to engage with the wider public;
- Actions to project the European way for digital transformation on the global stage.

How is this different to the digital strategy published one year ago?

This Communication builds on the Strategy on [Shaping Europe's Digital Future](#) that remains the overarching framework. But it also takes into account the enormous changes brought by the coronavirus pandemic, which has massively accelerated the use of digital tools, demonstrating their opportunities while exposing the vulnerability of our society to new digital inequalities.

The Commission proposes not only ambitious goals but also a robust governance mechanism, clear milestones, and practical tools to facilitate their implementation, notably with the perspective of a framework for multi-country projects. The Communication includes a monitoring system measuring the progress of the EU against the key targets for 2030, to ensure that we follow the trajectory towards our common objectives.

What are the targets of the Digital Compass for 2030?

Each of the four cardinal points is spelt out in clear objectives that should be achieved by 2030:

- **A digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals:**
  - At least 80% of all adults should have basic digital skills
  - There should be 20 million employed ICT specialists in the EU with convergence between women and men, compared to 7.8 million in 2019
- **Secure and performant sustainable digital infrastructures:**
  - All European households should have gigabit connectivity compared to 59% in 2020 and all populated areas will be covered by 5G, up from 14% in 2021
  - The production of cutting-edge and sustainable semiconductors in Europe including processors should represent at least 20% of world production in value, doubling from 10% in 2020
  - 10,000 climate neutral highly secure edge nodes (that will allow data processing [at the edge of the network](#)) should be deployed in the EU and distributed in a way that guarantees access to data with low latency
  - Europe should have its first [quantum](#) accelerated computer at the cutting edge
- **Digital transformation of businesses:**
  - Three out of four companies should use cloud computing services, big data and Artificial

Intelligence
- More than 90% of European SMEs should reach at least a basic level of digital intensity, compared to 61% in 2019
- There should be about 250 unicorns (start-ups with $1bn in value) in the EU, a 100% increase compared to 2021

- **Digitalisation public services:**
  - All key public services should be available online
  - All citizens will have access to their e-medical records
  - 80% citizens should use a digital ID solution

Will the targets be binding for Member States?

Targets are designed to foster a clear political commitment and focus of EU institutions and Member States towards common objectives, as a basis for work on implementing, monitoring and follow-up efforts to achieve the common targets by 2030.

What is in there for businesses?

Clear goals, concrete targets and an efficient resources pooling mechanism for multi-country projects will give clear signals to businesses, helping them to reap the benefit of digitalisation, allowing entrepreneurs to innovate, set up and grow their business, attract investments, and create new jobs. By 2030, more than just enablers, digital technologies will be embraced at the level of new products, new manufacturing processes and new business models.

What are multi-country projects?

As a part of the Digital Compass, multi-country projects are large projects that will mobilise investments from the EU budget, Member States and the private sector towards key areas of digital investment in the EU, building on the Recovery and Resilience Facility and other EU funding.

Reinforced capacities in areas such as connectivity, microelectronics, data and cloud are needed to realise the European vision for the Digital Decade. Coordinated action and pooling resources towards a number of key large projects will help to achieve an impact that no Member State could achieve on its own. This can help reduce the digital divides within and between Member States and support an interconnected, interoperable and secure Digital Single Market.

The Commission is assessing options, such as a specific instrument for multi-country projects, as part of the Digital Compass.

What projects will the EU fund and how?

NextGenerationEU will enable greater collective investments in our digital transformation. In particular, to invest in the digital transformation, there is a 20% minimum expenditure target for each national plan to be financed with the Recovery and Resilience Facility, adding to the digital component of the 2021-2027 European budget. This will enable the establishment of a very solid basis for the goals set out in this Communication. This Communication also highlights the increasing possibilities to make investments in areas such as digital connectivity with the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument.

How will citizens be involved?

The Communication includes an agenda to empower people so that they reap the benefits of the digital transformation, in particular involving citizens and stakeholders more closely in the design and implementation of digital policies during the monitoring of the EU's and Member States' trajectories in a stakeholder forum.

The adoption of the Communication will be followed by targeted consultation on the targets and compass and by an open consultation on digital principles.

Finally, the Commission intends to carry out an annual Eurobarometer exercise specifically dedicated to monitoring the perception of Europeans regarding the respect of their rights, values and aspirations online.

How will the digital transformation support the EU's ambitions for the green transition?

Digital technology can help cut global emissions. It will also significantly reduce society's environmental footprint, for example by optimising energy usage in many sectors including agriculture, transport, manufacturing or city planning and services. The ICT sector also faces its own green challenge. The proposed actions will lead to more energy-efficient digital infrastructures in

order to limit their footprint on natural resources and on CO_2 emissions (e.g. target on energy efficient microprocessors).

How will progress be assessed and reviewed?

The Commission proposes to publish a new Annual European Digital Decade Report to the European Parliament and the Council. This report will include 'traffic lights' on the EU's and Member States' progress towards the 2030 digital ambition based on an enhanced Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), the corresponding cardinal points, targets and principles, as well as a more general state of compliance with these objectives.

The report will identify possible divergences from the common 2030 EU goals and include proposals to address these deficiencies in close cooperation and coordination with Member States by joint commitments and measures. It will be a source of information also for the European Semester exercise, in particular when assessing the actions to foster jobs and growth.

How will citizens benefit from this Communication?

The COVID pandemic underlined our dependence on digital tools for work, schooling, shopping and socialising. But not everyone has been able to benefit to the same extent. On top of the extensive funding available under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Communication signals the way to invest in skills, support businesses and improve the way citizens are served by their governments, all using digital technologies.

How will you define and protect fundamental rights online?

The Commission proposes to include a set of digital principles and rights in an inter-institutional solemn declaration. It will build on and complement the European Pillar of Social Rights to guide the EU and Member States in designing digital rules and regulations that deliver the benefits of digitalisation for all citizens. This declaration would emphasise the fundamental rights of citizens, such as freedom of expression, protection of personal data and privacy or access to diverse, trustworthy and transparent information. Furthermore, a comprehensive set of digital principles would also inform users and guide policy makers and digital operators. This set of digital principles would for example include universal access to internet services, to digital health services as well as ethical principles for human-centric algorithms.

The adoption of today's Communication will be followed by an open consultation on digital principles. Following this consultation period, the Commission will adopt a formal proposal that will be used for discussion and negotiation with the European Parliament and the Council, with the objective of agreeing on a joint inter-institutional declaration.

The Commission already publishes the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) – why should there be a new governance mechanism?

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) summarises a broad range of relevant indicators on Europe's digital performance and tracks the evolution of EU Member States. DESI is, however, a monitoring tool and neither sets targets nor provides for their governance, nor enforcement. Common digital targets at EU level can be used to quantify the level of Member States' progress towards the policy objectives and provide for short- and medium-term signals with regard to such progress. Progress towards the common digital targets would be assessed and measured against quantitative indicators for Member States in conjunction with the DESI.

Which concrete actions are foreseen in the context of global cooperation?

Digital partnerships will promote alignment or convergence with EU regulatory norms and standards, promote research cooperation, and invest in digital connectivity and emerging technologies. Partnerships will see increased investments in Team Europe Initiatives that combine the resources of the EU, its Member States and leadings companies together with like-minded partners and International Financial Institutions. The EU intends to take a leading position in bringing together its democratic partners around a common vision of secure, open and responsible approach to the global digital transformation.

What are the next steps?

The adoption of the Communication will be followed by structured consultation on the targets and compass and by an open consultation on digital principles. Building on this wide consultation, the Commission aims to achieve decisive progress with the other institutions on a Declaration of Digital Principles by the end of 2021 and propose a Digital Policy Programme operationalising the Digital Compass in the third quarter of 2021. Finally, the Commission intends to carry out an annual Eurobarometer exercise specifically dedicated to monitoring the perception of Europeans regarding the respect of their rights, values and aspirations online.

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