



Flemish Parliament

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Resolution adopted by the Flemish Parliament

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on initiating a political dialogue with the
European Commission about the Flemish
perspective on the European digitalisation
agenda

The Flemish Parliament,

- having regard to:

- 1° the exchange of views of 20 April 2021 in the Committee on Foreign Policy, European Affairs, International Cooperation and Tourism of the Flemish Parliament on digitalisation in the Government of Flanders' Europe policy (*Parl. Doc. Fl.Parl. 2020-21, no. 757/1*);
- 2° the exchange of views of 27 April 2021 in the Flemish Parliament's Committee on Foreign Policy on the digitalisation project of Europe (*Parl. Doc. Fl.Parl. 2020-21, no. 771/1*);
- 3° the exchange of views of 4 May 2021 in the Flemish Parliament's Committee on Foreign Policy on the EU approach to digitalisation and on the large share of digitalisation in the Flemish contribution to the Belgian recovery plan (*Parl. Doc. Fl.Parl. 2020-21, no. 797/1*);
- 4° the Digital Recovery Plan of the Government of Flanders;
- 5° the Resilience and Recovery Plan of the Government of Flanders;

- whereas:

- 1° the European Union must become an absolute frontrunner and global leader in the area of digitalisation, and the European Commission harbours great ambitions in this respect;
- 2° a single body of legislation needs to be put in place in the area of data within Europe, to prevent any obstacles from arising that stand in the way of the free exchange and the broad-based use of data, especially in key areas of the economy such as industry, agriculture, health and mobility. This body of regulation should also enable start-ups and SMEs to develop innovative, data-driven products and services;
- 3° particular attention and additional emphases are required in the interest of good data housekeeping and the interchangeability of data, cybersecurity and 'digital for green', the so-called skills gap, and basic digital skills as part of the European ambitions of the 2030 Digital Compass to accelerate the digital transformation;
- 4° due focus needs to be given to the proper assistance to businesses and other users of digital technologies in respect of the integration of the new legislation on the establishment of digital rights;
- 5° the Commission plays a key role in the elimination of so-called digital impediments and in the conclusion of agreements, with the inclusion of provisions aimed at promoting cross-border data flows, as well as playing an active part in the WTO proceedings (WTO: World Trade Organisation) aimed at putting in place an agreement on e-commerce;
- 6° it is crucial that a service obligation be established for the large, universally accessible social platforms, as part of the proposal for a European digital services regulation. As a rule, all citizens should be able to post and receive messages on these platforms. Any exceptions thereto should be clearly defined and duly motivated;
- 7° the proposal for a European digital markets regulation aims for clearly defined, uniform rules for online intermediaries operating in the EU, but just concerns exist regarding the freedom of expression and greater clarity is expected on the scope of application, that any undesired ramifications for SMEs need to be examined and the interoperability obligations could go further;
- 8° as part of the proposal for a European AI regulation establishing uniform rules for AI on the European market, sufficiently clear ethical rules should be used, with a people-centred focus and with due regard for limiting the administrative burden for SMEs;

9° a European trade policy is needed, which is aimed at reinforcing the European digital economy (globally) and at embracing the opportunities of digital trading. The EU needs to lead the way in ensuring a competitive global data economy in order to be able to close the gap with the United States and China;

- calls on the European Commission:

- 1° to foster a common market of the Internet of Things, to prevent new national impediments from being put in place and to counteract lock-in effects;
- 2° to redress the disruptions as a result of the digital transition, which are particularly impacting the number of available jobs and the nature of jobs, in amongst other things by fostering the development of the new skills employees will require so as to ensure employment in sustainable jobs. In these endeavours, the employers too have a role to play, as they need to raise the skill sets of their employees by way of such things as workplace learning;
- 3° to have the EU act as a lever for cross-border cooperation and smart specialisation in this area. Mutual cooperation is necessary, especially in the field of breakthrough technologies that are able to generate a systemic transformation of the industrial fabric. By the same token, the link between the authorities and universities, knowledge institutions and businesses needs to be fostered.
- 4° European research projects should be bundled more and resources for research should be combined (pooling) and concentrated. Moreover, further investments are needed in research infrastructure and private research. The European Research Area and European clusters (specialisation) where knowledge may be shared, need to be fostered and developed. The European Research Area also needs to support researcher mobility. More top researchers from third countries should be attracted;
- 5° ensure the European Union develops to become a promoter of 'low regulation' areas where experimentation with new technologies may be conducted on a realistic scale. Union law needs to create space so that these 'living laboratories' can thrive;
- 6° aspire, together with Flanders, to become the frontrunners in new manufacturing technologies and concepts. This will facilitate a productivity leap, especially by allowing industrial activities to arise, whereby new products delivering new functionalities are developed. At the same time, there is more viable work, generating sustainable jobs;
- 7° an active policy to support and facilitate new technology so that Europe becomes a leader that spearheads these developments, i.e. by putting in place a broad and flexible legal framework in which these technologies are able to flourish. It is essential that we raise the Europe-wide mobility of expertise and create a framework that delivers legal certainty to ensure a sound investment climate.
- 8° foster the production of microchips on a European level;
- 9° pay particular attention to the digital inclusion of groups in society, with particular reference to elderly people who do not or insufficiently take part in the digitalisation process;
- 10° with a view to the 2030 Digital Compass in the area of digital skills:
 - a) to raise the digital skills of citizens and employees in the EU, with specific attention for the numerous employees who are not ICT experts, but who will need to be able to use and help design advanced digital technology in their specific discipline;

- b) to devote more attention to the skills required to work with, process and interpret data, and to deploy the appropriate systems for these purposes. All the more so as the threshold for access to data processing capacity remains too high for non-users;
 - c) also to heed advanced digital skills which are every bit as necessary, such as knowledge about data, rendering data transparent, creating data models that generate the relevant analyses, interpreting and converting data into conclusions, putting forward policy proposals and finally tweaking projects;
- 11° with a view to the 2030 Digital Compass in the area of infrastructure:
- a) to involve European businesses and research centres as widely as possible in raising the understanding of digital technology in Europe;
 - b) to set up a scheme with clearly defined roadmap, coordinated at European level with a view to building a European quantum computer by 2030, so that knowledge is shared as widely as possible and parallel pathways are avoided;
 - c) to continue to focus on the fast roll-out of an adequate, secure and stable 5G network and, in order to create a sufficiently large consensus, to set up the necessary proactive positive communications surrounding 5G - and even 6G. In addition, more scientific research into the health and safety aspects should be undertaken, involving low-threshold communications on the results thereof aimed at citizens and SMEs;
 - d) to work towards a new 'privacy shield', and sufficient European-owned storage space and cloud centres;
 - e) to foster the creation of alternatives for foreign cloud platform services of businesses with headquarters in the US, by supporting scalable data storage and analysis platforms. In concrete terms, this may include the GAIA-X project, which is seeking to build a secure and reliable European data infrastructure;
 - f) to continue to invest in Dutch language and speech technology, to enable cloud computing, big data and AI also to be used to optimum effect in Dutch and by all Dutch speakers;
- 12° with a view to the 2030 Digital Compass in the area of the digital transformation of businesses:
- a) to devote more attention to the breakthrough and growth opportunities for start-up businesses and not to lose sight of the complexity of digitalisation for small business owners and small businesses;
 - b) to counteract the creation of monopolistic structures, to lower the threshold of European innovation subsidies for SMEs to this end and to enhance accessibility not just for SMEs but equally for social and cultural enterprises;
 - c) to devote appropriate attention to the protection of the personal data and the privacy of the citizens, and to avoiding disguised trade barriers or data location requirements;
- 13° with a view to the 2030 Digital Compass in the area of the digitalisation of public services:
- a) also to consider, in making available e.g. medical data, the access to these (anonymised) data for innovation and interoperability at a European level, and to make sure no health data silos arise along the national borders. In doing so, the applicable European rules governing the protection of personal data (General Data Protection Regulation) shall be observed;
 - b) to provide appropriate support and assistance, notably in the areas of digitalisation, data and e-government. This also implies drafting flexible regulations that enable greater experimentation with digital service delivery and new regulations that are as digitally-friendly as possible;

- c) in order to secure data sovereignty, also endorse digital partnerships for technological development, as well as the further development of our own capacities and the reduction our own strategic weaknesses, and to refrain from supporting protectionism in any shape or form;
 - d) to foster the knowledge of and insight into standards and semantic data technology, and the significance of data-driven decision-making for government;
 - e) to seek to align the current reliability levels under eIDAS (electronic IDentification Authentication and trust Services), so as to ensure online access to public services is not impeded on the internal market;
 - f) to develop a statutory framework which gives public services access, for clearly defined purposes, to certain data held by platform companies such as Uber and Airbnb. Said framework should be devised and coordinated at European level;
- 14° to establish rules for digital trade which step up EU businesses' competitiveness and facilitate the free cross-border transfer of data flows, in observance of the EU's data protection rules;
- 15° to contribute to the development of international rules and standards to improve digital trade. This requires an approach that enhances the tariff and non-tariff barriers which SMEs face in endeavouring to do business at an international level. In addition, the European Commission can also contribute to investments in ICT infrastructure and connectivity, and in research and development (R&D) and innovation;
- calls on the European Commission to examine the present resolution in the context of the political dialogue and to indicate how it will take this into account;
 - calls on the speaker of the Flemish Parliament to forward this resolution to the European Commission.

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