



Brussels, 13 March 2024  
(OR. en)

7619/24

LIMITE

TELECOM 116  
DIGIT 75  
CYBER 85  
COMPET 310  
RECH 120  
PI 32  
MI 294  
EDUC 87  
JAI 450  
ENFOPOL 120  
COSI 34

**NOTE**

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on Future of EU Digital Policy - First compromise proposal

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. On 19 February 2024, the Presidency published the first draft of the Council conclusions on Future of EU Digital Policy (document 6782/24). The aim of these Council conclusions is to identify, based on a stocktaking exercise, the main priorities for the future of our European digital policy Member States would like to see addressed in the upcoming legislative cycle.
2. On 27 February 2024, a first exchange of views was held during the Working Party Telecommunications and Information Society. Delegations were invited to submit their written contributions by 5 March 2024.



3. On the basis of the discussions held during Working Party, as well as on the written comments received from the delegations, the Presidency drafted the first compromise proposal of the draft Council conclusions on Future of EU Digital Policy, found in the annex of this document.
4. The additions in the text compared to the initial draft are underlined and **bold**. Deletions are marked with ~~striketrough~~.
5. The Presidency intends to discuss this document at the Telecommunications and Information Society **Working Party of 19 March 2024**.
6. Delegations will be invited to provide **written comments** on this first compromise proposal by **Friday 22 March 2024**. A template for the written comments will be circulated by e-mail.

## II. MAIN CHANGES

7. In the **introduction** (point 7), a reference has been made to investments at the national level both from public and private actors. In addition, the text gives prominence to the need for certainty and predictability in the procedures to obtain EU funding.
8. In the section “**Digital rules and governance**” there are now explicit references to the need for reducing the administrative burden both in the implementation and enforcement of existing legislative acts (point 9a) and when reflecting on new legislative initiatives (point 8). Emphasis has been put on the need for synergies, avoiding duplication and adopting a coordinated approach in managing the existing governance structures (point 9). A new point has been included to ensure the link with the upcoming Council conclusions on the future of cybersecurity, stressing the need for coherence between digital and cybersecurity policy (point 9b).



9. In the section “**Digital and cutting-edge technologies**”, given the objectives of the Member States to prioritise on the implementation of existing legislative acts, point 15 was not deemed necessary and references to some important elements were included in other points. Point 17 now features an explicit reference to the European Economic Security Strategy.
10. In the section “**Societal effects of digitalisation**”, a reference to the positive impact of digitalisation as well as a more comprehensive list of identified risks are explicitly included (point 18). The ePrivacy Directive (point 19) and the European Digital Identity Wallet (point 21) are now explicitly cited. Moreover, an emphasis is made on the need to further reflect on additive designs in addition to online tracking (point 20). The new point 21a introduces a call for reflection on mechanisms to monitor the societal and economic risks that can derive from digitalisation.
11. The “**Data strategy**” section includes references to the objectives of the Data Governance Act and the Data Act and refers to the call for developing data spaces within the EU and across sectors, with a specific reference to the involvement of the European Data Innovation Board (point 22). In point 23, some changes have been made to first focus on the actions related to cloud and edges services within the EU followed by specific references to the development of EU cloud and edge services.
12. The “**Digital infrastructure**” section creates consistency with the objectives set out in the Gigabit Infrastructure Act and explicitly refers to the recently published Commission White Paper on digital infrastructure needs and the Recommendation on submarine cable infrastructures. In addition, as pointed out by several Member States, the need for considering the future report on the functioning of the European Electronic Communications Code as a basis for potential action in the realm of electronic communications has been outlined (point 25).



13. The title of the section “Sustainable digital transformation” has been changed to “**Green and digital transition**” to reflect both the potential of the ICT sector in reducing the environmental footprint (point 29) and the commitment to minimise the impact of the ICT sector itself on the environment (point 30).
14. The “**Digital skills**” section now refers to the importance of skills development during all stages of life and to micro-credentials, in line with the existing EU initiative (points 34 and 35).
15. In “**Digital government**” section, a reference has been added to the promotion of knowledge exchanges (point 38).
16. A new specific section dedicated to the **international dimension of EU digital policy** has been included (points 39a to 39d), insisting especially on the need for a coordinated and proactive approach at EU level. The consistency with the Council conclusions on Digital Diplomacy has also been taken into account.

### III. DISCUSSION

17. The Presidency invites the delegations to **discuss the proposed changes** to the draft Council Conclusions during the Attachés meeting of the Telecommunications and Information Society **Working Party on 19 March**.



**FUTURE OF EU DIGITAL POLICY**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

- The Council conclusions of 7 June 2019 on the future of a highly digitized Europe beyond 2020 entitled "Boosting digital and economic competitiveness across the Union and digital cohesion",
- The Commission Communication of 18 ~~19~~ February 2020 on A European strategy for data,
- The Council conclusions of 5 June 2020 on Shaping Europe's digital future,
- ~~– The Declaration of 8 December 2020 on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government,~~
- The Council conclusions of 11 December 2020 on Digitalisation for the Benefit of the Environment ~~on 11 December 2020,~~
- ~~– The Ministerial Declaration of 19 March 2021 on A Green and Digital Transformation of the EU,~~
- The Commission Communication of 21 April 2021 on Fostering a European approach to Artificial Intelligence, and its Annex entitled "Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence 2021 Revision",
- The Commission Communication of 2 February 2022 on An EU Strategy on Standardisation Setting global standards in support of a resilient, green and digital EU single market,
- **The Commission Communication of 11 May 2022 on A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+),**
- ~~– The Declaration of June 2022 'Toulouse Call for a Green and Digital Transition in the EU',~~
- The Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 establishing the Digital Decade Policy Programme **2030** (hereafter 'Digital Decade **Policy** Programme') **and the Commission Communication of 27 September 2023 on the State of the Digital Decade 2023,**



- The European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade of 23 January 2023,
- **The Council conclusions of 13 March 2023 on competitiveness, single market and the economy,**
- The Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 on a European Year of Skills,
- The Commission Communication of 15 June 2023 on the implementing of the 5G Cybersecurity toolbox,
- The Joint Communication of 20 June 2023 on a European Economic Security Strategy,
- The Council conclusions **of 18 July 2022 and** of 26 June 2023 on EU Digital Diplomacy,
- The Commission Communication of 11 July 2023 on An EU initiative on Web 4.0 and virtual worlds: a head start in the next technological transformation,
- The Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2023 on critical technology areas for the EU's economic security for further risk assessment with Member States,
- **The Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training,**
- **The Commission AI innovation package of 24 January 2024 to support Artificial Intelligence startups and SMEs,**
- **The White Paper of 21 February 2024 on How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?,**
- **The Commission Recommendation of 26 February 2024 on Secure and Resilient Submarine Cable Infrastructures,**
- **[The Council conclusions on the future of cybersecurity]**

The Council of the European Union

1. UNDERLINES that the digital transformation offers significant opportunities for a better quality of life, economic growth and sustainability and is essential to contribute to an innovative, resource-efficient and fair economy and society in the Union.



2. STRESSES that a successful digital transformation of our societies can only be founded on mutual trust between among all players, including Member States, citizens and businesses companies, and among citizens and UNDERLINES the importance of pursuing our European approach to digitalisation based on principles such as transparency and accountability. the EU's commitment taken in the Digital Decade Policy Programme to ensure a secure, safe, inclusive and sustainable digital transformation, based on technological leadership, **competitiveness** and on a human-centric approach, creating a safe space where the EU values, including rule of law and inclusiveness, are promoted and the fundamental and digital rights are protected respected.
3. ~~RECALLS the EU's commitment taken in the Digital Decade Programme to ensure a digital transformation based on technological leadership and on a human-centric approach, creating a safe space where the EU values, including rule of law and inclusiveness, are promoted and the fundamental and digital rights are protected.~~
4. HIGHLIGHTS the EU's ambition to play a leading global role globally in the digital transformation and digital governance that promotes democratic values, sustainable digitalisation and puts people and their universal human rights at the centre, in line with the EU Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles.
5. ~~WELCOMES the Commission's efforts to build strong international digital partnerships and alliances that reflect and promote European values and support a resilient, green and competitive digital market and that promote the EU approach to digital governance, enhance EU economic security and competitiveness, as well as the Commission's efforts to strengthen cooperation with likeminded partners in relevant multilateral and multistakeholder fora. HIGHLIGHTS the importance to ensure that this work in the international fora is developed and conducted by Member States, the European External Action Service and the European Commission, in close cooperation. WELCOMES the aim to increase European leadership in the development of global interoperable standards to drive greater impact from European research and innovation activities and using standardisation as an international scaling platform for European values and innovations.~~



6. REAFFIRMS that ~~digital sovereignty~~ **open strategic autonomy and resilience** is essential for the Union to chart its own path in the digital transformation, ~~to enhance the Union's open strategic autonomy and resilience~~, to strengthen its economy **and industry**, and to promote a sustainable technological development across the Union. RECALLS that **this digital sovereignty must** **should** be viewed in light of **line with** the Union's commitment to a fair, open and ~~values~~ **rules**-based global digital market.
7. EMPHASISES that the digital transformation needs **ambitious**, combined and coordinated investments at EU level **in addition to investments from public and private actors at national level**. These investments, in particular from the Digital Europe Programme **(DIGITAL)** and the Connecting Europe Facility **(CEF Digital)**, are essential to foster innovation, digital skills, infrastructure and the development and uptake of digital technologies across the EU. **UNDERScores the importance of ensuring that procedures in the EU funding programmes are streamlined with a view to improving certainty and predictability and to fostering a level playing field for all the actors involved, including SMEs and start-ups**. CALLS UPON the Commission to promote synergies between ~~digital~~ research **and innovation** endeavours under Horizon Europe and practical deployment initiatives within ~~the Digital Europe Programme~~ **DIGITAL and CEF Digital**, as these programmes are instrumental to achieve the goals of the Union's Digital **Policy** Decade Programme.

### Digital rules and governance

8. NOTICES the significant number of EU legislative acts that have been adopted ~~in the digital field~~ in recent years **to strengthen the Digital Single Market** and STRESSES the need to prioritise in the coming years their effective and efficient implementation. UNDERLINES the need to ~~carefully~~ **thoroughly** assess any new legislative act **initiative, in particular with a view to ensure a balance between innovation and regulatory burden by guaranteeing a coherent regulatory framework, minimising administrative burden and** ~~to preventing~~ the risk of hampering the establishment of an agile and innovation-friendly European ecosystem.



9. ACKNOWLEDGES the setting up of several EU boards, **in order** to ensure the coordination of the national competent authorities, as well as **the** EU enforcement role such as in the Digital Services Act, the Digital Market Act, the Data Governance Act, the Data Act and the Artificial Intelligence Act. UNDERSCORES the need for the Commission and the Member States to, ~~explore~~ **foster** synergies, **avoid duplication** and adopt a ~~holistic~~ **coordinated** approach **to the existing governance structures** ~~in enforcing those acts, with a view to ensuring convergence, coherence and coordination and~~ **in order** to avoiding the fragmentation of the EU's ~~digital ecosystem~~ **Single Market** as well as to ensuring legal clarity **certainty** and security and to reducing the administrative burden, in particular for SMEs.
- 9a. **CALLS UPON the Commission to reflect on tools and solutions to ensure consistency in the application of existing legislative acts and to explore ways to reduce administrative burden, in particular for SMEs.**
- 9b. **ACKNOWLEDGES that, in light of the growing importance of digital technologies, including Internet of Things, the current legal framework entails, to address cybersecurity vulnerabilities in digital products and processes, important cybersecurity elements such as security and resilience by design. Therefore, UNDERLINES the need to ensure the inherent coherence between the digital and cybersecurity EU policy.**
10. UNDERLINES the importance of an effective and efficient implementation and enforcement of the Artificial Intelligence Act to develop and promote trustworthy artificial intelligence (hereafter 'AI'). EMPHASISES in this regard that a close cooperation between the AI Office, the AI Board, **the AI Scientific Panel** and the advisory forum is key and INVITES the Commission to also reflect upon the future role of the European Centre for Algorithmic Transparency **and leveraging its expertise** beyond the Digital Services Act.



11. EMPHASISES the importance of harmonised standards and certifications ~~requirements~~, in particular in the context of AI, cybersecurity, digital identity, data sharing mechanisms and services and common European data spaces in order to further ~~promote~~ **enable** and stimulate the adoption of digital technologies aligned with European legislative requirements. ENCOURAGES the Commission to issue standardisation requests in a timely, open and coherent manner, involving Member States, **European standardisation organisations** and stakeholders appropriately, facilitating Member States' and businesses' compliance to the largest extent possible.

### Digital and cutting-edge technologies

12. RECOGNISES the importance of a common **and strategic** European approach to innovative digital technologies such as ~~virtual worlds~~, advanced semiconductors, ~~generative~~ AI, quantum technologies, **6G technology**, blockchain infrastructure, digital twins **and virtual worlds**, and to ~~any~~ future technologies, as enablers for **the** technological ~~sovereignty~~ **development** and competitiveness of the EU at a global level, as well as for **sustainable** ~~economic~~ development, ~~social and environmental benefits~~. ENCOURAGES the promotion of dynamic ecosystems around key digital technologies supporting their development, deployment and uptake among EU businesses **public and private sectors**, based on openness and a level playing field, particularly for SMEs and start-ups and scale-ups.
13. UNDERLINES the importance of supporting and enabling a **resilient**, greener, ~~digital~~, more **safe and** secure, ~~resilient~~, and ~~sovereign~~ European ecosystem in semiconductors and microelectronics and HIGHLIGHTS, in this regard, the swift start of the implementation of the **European Chips Act** ~~Chips for Europe Initiative~~.
14. STRESSES the economic and strategic potential of quantum technologies for the scientific, **technological** and industrial competitiveness of the EU and CALLS on the Commission and the Member States to continue **and coordinate** efforts to create synergies between research and development activities, support joint initiatives and encourage further investments ~~for~~ **in** EU quantum companies from the public, ~~academic~~ and private sectors.



15. ~~ACKNOWLEDGES that the current legal framework introduces important elements such as compliance by design, interoperability and regulatory sandboxes which constitute key tools for the development of digital technologies and should be further used in future legislative initiatives, as well as in the enforcement of existing legislation. UNDERLINES the importance of pursuing a balance between innovation and regulation through guidance and tools which may accompany businesses, governments and consumers when navigating through the continuously evolving digital landscape.~~
16. RECOGNISES the importance of European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (hereafter 'EDICs') for developing strategic multi-country projects that pool resources to achieve large-scale projects that ~~no~~ a single Member State entity ~~cannot~~ undertake on its own. EDICs and other implementing mechanisms for multi-country projects are essential for serving ~~businesses and~~ citizens and businesses, and their further development should be supported.
17. RECALLS that the European Economic Security Strategy and ~~approach to economic security is based on promoting the Union's competitiveness by bolstering its single market, innovation, technological and industrial capacities; protecting the Union's economic security through a range of existing and new instruments; partnering with like-minded international partners who share EU concerns with a view to strengthening international rules, institutions and economic security through diversified and improved trade agreements, and investing in sustainable development.~~ EMPHASISES the importance for the Union's competitiveness of ensuring the security of critical emerging technologies resulting from significant research, development, and investments made in the Union, and of protecting against the risks of technology leakage, while preserving maximum levels of economic openness and dynamism.



## **Democratic and Societal effects of digitalisation**

18. ~~ACKNOWLEDGES the existence of a delicate balance between on the one hand~~ **need to** fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and capital market development and **to maximise the benefits of digitalisation for all, while at the same time** ~~on the other hand~~ establishing safeguards regarding risks and challenges related to digital technologies **and services**, including **discrimination**, disinformation, illegal content online, **online violence**, fake profiles, identity theft, **security breaches and** data protection issues ~~and security breaches~~. STRESSES **in this regard** the importance of the new rules framing obligations for online platforms and online search engines, notably through the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA). ~~ENCOURAGES the Commission to further pursue and enhance the implementation of these landmark rules and their enforcement and to further address issues linked notably to recommender systems and dark patterns, in order to ensure on the one hand that societal risks stemming from such systems are tackled, in particular for the protection of children, and on the other hand that existing obligations are not circumvented.~~
19. ~~HIGHLIGHTS~~ **EXPRESSES ITS CONCERN** that in return for access to digital services, users often provide vast amounts of data without fully understanding how their data is used and the implications thereof. ENCOURAGES the Commission to **further reflect on the societal risks stemming from digital services and to** consider measures to address issues related to **addictive designs and** excessive online tracking ~~and data harvesting~~ following **resulting** from the use of tracking technologies by providers of digital services, ~~and, in this regard,~~ **RECALLS the need** for special attention on the well-being of children, ~~and youth,~~ limiting their **protecting them from** exposure to certain types of content, **and** safeguarding their data, ~~and protecting their privacy as essential elements of their online safety~~ **while empowering them to make informed choices and respecting their right to privacy.**



20. INVITES the Commission to examine the functioning of, and potential gaps in the EU's current legal framework, such as the General Data Protection Regulation and the Digital Services Act, in relation to the Directive on privacy of and electronic communications, taking into account technological development and the evolution of digital services and their business models, the growth of the data economy as well as the broader EU legislative landscape of relevance for the digital context, such as the General Data Protection Regulation and the DSA.
21. CALLS for ENCOURAGES the development of concrete tools use-cases to support users, online platforms and public and private sector services and national authorities in the verification of digital identity use of the European Digital Identity Wallet and trust services based on the European Digital Identity Framework, such as a system of verified and non-verified users. CALLS upon the Commission to offer guidance, establish safeguards and develop harmonised policies and tools in close cooperation with Member States to ensure secure, user-friendly and interoperable digital identity solutions and trust services, including for age and identity verification.
- 21a. INVITES the Commission and the Member States to reflect, in the framework of the review of the EU's Digital Decade Policy Programme, on mechanisms to monitor the societal and economic risks stemming from digitalisation such as inequality, poverty and social exclusion.

#### Data strategy

22. EMPHASISES the significant steps made towards the development of a robust EU data governance which improves the free flow of, fair access to, and use of data in a secured, interoperable and trusted manner within the Union, across sectors and, where applicable and subject to appropriate safeguards, with third countries. RECOGNISES the importance of the data economy, as a key enabler for Europe to prosper in the digital age and HIGHLIGHTS the importance to of continueing the development of sectorial data spaces within and across sectors, based upon experience from existing data spaces and consultation with the European Data Innovation Board, which are a key element to facilitate data sharing.



23. ~~UNDERLINES that cloud infrastructure and services are an essential aspect of the European digital sovereignty and competitiveness and thus important for the EU to fully benefit from the data economy.~~ ACKNOWLEDGES the important steps made towards the development of interoperable, trusted, safe and secure **European** cloud and edge services and ~~CALLS~~ upon the Commission to continue its efforts, building on the implementation of the Data Act, and ~~further assess the way to promote interoperability and portability and to ensure a fair, non-discriminatory and balanced broad access to cloud and edge solutions among for businesses, and in particular SMEs.~~ UNDERLINES the importance of ensuring an open, secure and competitive European cloud and edge market to the benefit of European businesses and users and that cloud and edge infrastructure and services are an essential aspect of the European digital sovereignty and competitiveness and thus important for the EU to fully benefit from the data economy. ACKNOWLEDGES the important steps towards the development of interoperable, trusted, safe and secure European cloud and edge services and ~~CALLS~~ upon the Commission to continue its efforts and further assess the way to promote interoperability and portability and to ensure a fair and balanced access to cloud solutions among business and SMEs. INVITES the Commission to continue its work on stimulating targeted investments in European cloud and edge services and the development of new these next generation EU cloud services.

### Digital infrastructure

24. EXPRESSES the importance of attaining the Digital Decade Policy Programme connectivity targets and supporting an innovative and competitive digital infrastructure ecosystem, i.e. to ensure all EU households have access to Gigabit speeds and a wireless highspeed network with performances at least equivalent to that of 5G technology ~~or equivalent mobile technology~~ by 2030. In that regard, CALLS on the Commission and the Member States to stimulate and facilitate ~~secure and resilient joint~~ the roll-out of secure and resilient 5G, and edge, fibre networks, as well as to facilitate infrastructure sharing to lower the costs of deployment of very high-capacity networks and speed up their deployment across the Union and uniformising procedures. UNDERLINES the importance of leveraging the single market to facilitate the investments needed to ensure such joint roll-out.



25. ~~AGREES with~~ **WELCOMES the objectives of** the Commission's ~~continued efforts~~ to ensure ~~sovereign~~, secure and resilient digital networks and infrastructures across the Union and globally, including with regard to 5G **and fibre** networks ~~and as well as~~ submarine cables, ~~and~~ **WELCOMES in this regard the Commission White Paper on How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs? and the Recommendation on Secure and Resilient Submarine Cable Infrastructures.** ENCOURAGES the Commission and the Member States to ~~thoroughly analyse the hurdles within~~ **carefully assess the current** regulatory landscape, to ensure a **safe**, robust ~~and~~ future-**proof framework for** of Europe's digital infrastructures **and networks across the EU** that can foster innovation, ~~including taking into account~~ through the growing convergence between telecommunications and cloud services, ~~anticipating the review of the Electronic Communications Code, and to ensure level playing field and competition in electronic communications markets and competitiveness~~ to the benefit of end-users. INVITES the Commission to ~~re-define~~ **develop** a long-term vision on digital networks and ~~prepare,~~ **on the basis of the Commission report on the functioning of the Electronic Communications Code expected by 21 December 2025,** prepare the ground for possible policy and regulatory actions to **strengthen** complete the single market for electronic communications services, ~~as well as to look into the security and resilience of submarine cables.~~
26. ENCOURAGES the Commission and the Member States to **continue and strengthen efforts to** establish an attractive policy framework for 6G research, ~~and~~ development ~~and deployment~~ **as well as for 6G deployment following a standardisation roadmap for 6G,** based on the appropriate assessment of coverage and capacity requirements for 6G use cases and the early ~~identification~~ **recognition** of spectrum needs **and its environmental impact.**



27. ACKNOWLEDGES the Commission's efforts via the European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking to coordinate European investment in major supercomputing infrastructures and accompanying software solutions, which will be fundamental to secure European leadership in a huge range of scientific and industrial applications, and WELCOMES the broadening of the Joint Undertaking's mission so that it also invests in AI-oriented supercomputers, in the creation of AI factories, whose resources should be made available to **a large number of public and private users, in particular** European AI start-ups to train their large AI models and generative AI systems.
28. ~~ACKNOWLEDGES that the current legal framework introduces important elements such as security and resilience by design, in light of the growing importance of digital connectivity, including Internet of Things. ENCOURAGES identifying and addressing the security weaknesses of all digital products and processes.~~

#### **Sustainable Green and digital transitionformation**

29. STRONGLY UNDERLINES that the digital transformation should go hand in hand with the green transition. **HIGHLIGHTS that** ~~the development~~ **and increasingly widespread use** of digital technologies such as ~~generative AI, cloud~~ **and edge** computing, **virtual worlds**, blockchain, ~~and high-performance computing, as well as the increased amount of data and data centres~~ **quantum technologies and the Internet of Things can offer opportunities to foster a competitive European circular economy, to reduce the environmental footprint and to accelerate the green transition.** However, ACKNOWLEDGES **that these digital technologies and the increased amount of data and data centres** requires large amounts of resources including energy, **water** and critical raw materials, therefore exerting pressure on the environment **and climate**.



30. ENCOURAGES to ~~urgently~~ reduce the environmental footprint of the ICT sector and to support its transition to climate neutrality by 2050. UNDERLINES the need to promote awareness, and including through transparency requirements and digital sobriety, as well as to develop solutions for businesses, public sectors and consumers, such as sustainability by design, to reduce their digital footprint and e-waste in order to avoid inefficient consumption and in line with the principle to reduce, reuse and recycle.
31. STRESSES the importance for the Commission and the Member States to support the deployment of ~~to deploy and~~ combined digital and green solutions for future innovation and growth in all industries and public organisations ~~that have measurably net positive environmental impact~~. In that regard, EMBRACES the potential of the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, in particular the digital product passport, to improve communication of information on the environmental impact of products. In addition, WELCOMES the EU action plan on digitalising the energy systems that will improve communication of information on the energy and environmental impact of data centres, notably through the development of an environmental labelling scheme for data centres.
32. CALLS for developing evidence-based assessment methodologies for measuring the digital environmental footprint as well as the ~~digital enablement~~ positive handprint effect of digital technologies based on high-quality, comparable, reliable and standardised data, and ENCOURAGES the Commission, Member States and stakeholders to use these methodologies to explore and harness the ~~enormous~~ potential positive net environmental impact of digitalisation to assist the EU in achieving its goal of transitioning to climate neutrality by 2050 and the energy efficiency targets for ~~2040~~ 2030.
33. RECALLS the review of the EU's Digital Decade Programme and INVITES the Commission and Member States to reflect on adding a target related to a greener digital transition with the aim to incentivise the deployment of innovative technologies to the benefit of climate action.



## Digital skills

34. STRESSES the need to increase efforts to bridge the digital divide, including the gender digital divide, by developing digital awareness, knowledge, and skills and competences of all citizens, with a particular attention to vulnerable groups people, during all stages of life. UNDERLINES the role of the Digital Decade Policy Programme in ensuring that the digital transformation responds to the needs of the European society and labour market, including through regional and local networks. INVITES all institutions to support these efforts to bridge the digital divide and to support the development and uptake of solutions to better equip and accompany European citizens, public and private sectors through the digital transformation.
35. STRESSES the need for an enhanced focus on ways to attract and retain talent in the EU in order to reinforce the competitiveness of the European Union and its positioning as a global digital player. CALLS on the Commission to develop a multifaceted strategy to support Member States in attaining the digital skills objectives of the Digital Decade Policy Programme, notably through academic and industrial partnerships, lowering barriers to attract and employ digital talent as well as ~~adopting European recognition schemes for the adoption of auto-certification or micro-diplomas~~ recognising micro-credentials in the labour market in line with the EU Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials.
36. EMPHASISES the need to promote ~~regular~~ formal and non- ~~regular~~ formal education in ICT and Scientific Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics ('STEAM') areas to further develop digital skills and competences, with a particular ~~attention~~ focus on to women and girls, since the severe and persistent gender gap in the digital sector undermines how digital solutions are designed and deployed, with proven negative consequences for social inclusion, gender equality and ~~welfare overall~~ economic growth.



## Digital governments

37. UNDERLINES the need for digital governments, driven forward by the human-centric, data-driven and AI-enabled transformation of the public sector, while embedding **core principles for good governance such as** interoperability, inclusiveness, **transparency** and sustainability ~~as their core principles~~.
38. INVITES the Commission to continue its support for the development of interoperable public digital services and the cross-border interconnection of public administrations' ~~cloud~~ infrastructures, **including cloud and edge infrastructures**, to achieve their increased resilience, efficiency and sustainability, and to further reflect, **together with Member States**, on their technical, legal, **semantic** and operational barriers **and on how to overcome them. In this regard, CALLS on the Commission to promote knowledge exchange and to support joint initiatives between Member States.**
39. EMPHASISES the need to consider digital and interoperability implications of policies from the outset, in order to **address potential issues ahead of time**, to ensure the smooth implementation of legislation and **to** reduce the **regulatory** reporting burden **as well as compliance costs on businesses**. In this regard, ~~INVITES~~ **CALLS UPON** the Commission to put digital-ready policymaking in practice through guidelines, tools and trainings **with the aim to bridge the gap between policy design and implementation.**

## International dimension of EU digital policy

- 39a. CONSIDERS that digital matters, which are important enablers for in the EU's competitiveness and security, gain significant international weight in the constantly changing geopolitical landscape.**
- 39b. WELCOMES the development and strengthening of international and regional digital partnerships, as well as cooperation in and with relevant multilateral and multistakeholder fora, in order to promote EU strategic interests as well as to protect universal human rights and fundamental values.**



**39c. CALLS UPON the Commission, the High Representative and the Member States to ensure a proactive and coordinated approach to develop a stronger, more strategic, coherent and effective EU policy and action in global digital affairs and to confirm EU engagement and leadership at international level. In this context, WELCOMES the work done to develop a coherent EU Digital Diplomacy by Member States, the High Representative and the Commission and CALLS for a further strengthening of the Team Europe approach.**

**39d. EMPHASISES the need to develop an EU strategy on the multistakeholder digital governance, including the governance of the Internet to set out a common position to uphold in international fora, including on issues such as internet standards and protocols. WELCOMES the aim to increase European leadership in the development of global standards to drive greater impact from European research and innovation activities and using standardisation as an international scaling platform for European values and innovations.**