



Council of the European Union  
General Secretariat

**Brussels, 28 July 2025**

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## **CONTRIBUTION**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on European Competitiveness in the digital decade (ST 11033/25) - IE comments

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Delegations will find in the annex the IE comments on the Draft Council Conclusions on European Competitiveness in the digital decade (ST 11033/25) .

**Draft Council Conclusions on European Competitiveness in the digital decade**

Deadline: *25 July 2025*

**Guidelines to be followed**

*Please kindly provide your contributions in the table below.*

**Drafting suggestions:** you may use 'track changes' or formatting (for example bold-underline for additions and ~~strike through~~ for deletions, where necessary, in a different colour).

**Name of document:** please add the **two initials** of your delegation's country followed by a space (to the MS Word document name), followed by any optional text, for example, for Austria: **AT comments on ... .docx**

Thank you for your cooperation!

Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
<u>General comments</u>		
<u>ANNEX</u>		
DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS		
EUROPEAN COMPETITIVENESS IN THE DIGITAL DECADE		

**Draft Council Conclusions on European Competitiveness in the digital decade**

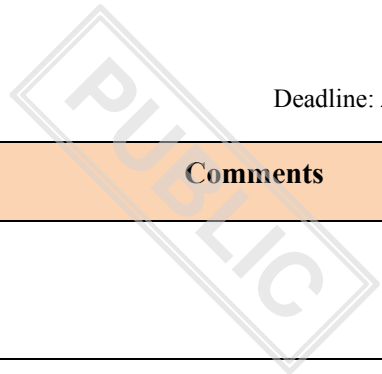
Deadline: *25 July 2025*

Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,		
RECALLING		
– The Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 establishing the Digital Decade Policy Programme,		
– The European Economic Security Strategy of 20 June 2023,		
– The European Council Conclusions of 18 April 2024,		
– The Council Conclusions of 24 May 2024 on a competitive European industry driving our green, digital and resilient future,		

**Draft Council Conclusions on European Competitiveness in the digital decade**

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– The Niinistö Report “Safer together: A path towards a fully prepared Union”, 20 March 2024,		
– The Letta Report “Much more than a market: Speed, Security, Solidarity”, 17 April 2024,		<p><u>IE welcomes the recognition of the Letta and Draghi reports as directly linking the Digital Decade Policy Programme to the EU’s competitiveness.</u></p>
– The Draghi Report “The future of European competitiveness”, 9 September 2024,		
– The Competitiveness Compass adopted by the Commission on 29 January 2025		
– The Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative on an International Digital Strategy of 4 June 2025.		
– The 2025 State of the Digital Decade adopted by the Commission on 16 June 2025		



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**Draft Council Conclusions on European Competitiveness in the digital decade**

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– [The Communication from the Commission of [XX] 2025 on a Apply AI Strategy		
– The Communication from the Commission of [XX] 2025 on a Data Union]		
BUILDING ON		
– The Council Conclusions of 21 May 2024 on “The Future of EU Digital Policy”,		
– The Council Conclusions of 6 December 2024 on the Commission White Paper “How to master Europe’s digital infrastructure needs”,		
– The Council Conclusions of 6 June 2025 on reliable and resilient connectivity,		

**Draft Council Conclusions on European Competitiveness in the digital decade**

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– [The Council Conclusions of [20 October] 2025 on Advancing an International Digital Strategy.]		
<b>Strengthening European Competitiveness with the Digital Decade as a strategic compass for a sovereign digital transformation</b>		
1. STRESSES that strengthening the EU’s digital competitiveness is a core strategic objective, critical to fostering innovation, productivity, welfare and sustainable growth across the EU.		
2. NOTES with concern that the 2025 <i>State of the Digital Decade</i> report and country assessments indicate that the EU is not on track to meet its 2030 targets, particularly in areas vital to digital competitiveness such as AI	<u>NOTES with concern that the 2025 <i>State of the Digital Decade</i> report and country assessments indicate that the EU is not on track to meet its 2030 targets, particularly in areas vital to digital competitiveness such as AI uptake and SME</u>	<u>IE considers that SME digitalisation and AI are not the sole reasons for the lagging of the Digital Decade. The trends identified in the 2025 State of the Digital Decade are still very</u>

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Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
<p>uptake and SME digitalisation. STRESSES the need for accelerated efforts at both EU and national level to address this shortfall.</p>	<p><u>digitalisation, <b>R&amp;D investment and digital innovation, domestic semiconductor manufacturing as well as shortages of ICT specialists.</b></u></p>	<p><u>much demonstrating the EU's weakness in digital innovation, particularly the limited scale of investment in R&amp;D and the insufficient focus on breakthrough innovation. The report notes that the EU still lacks a significant domestic semiconductor manufacturing capacity, as well as persistent shortages of ICT specialists slowing progress in the achievement of Digital Decade targets. These should be reflected here.</u></p>
<p>3. REITERATES that the Digital Decade Policy Programme (DDPP) serves as the EU's strategic compass for navigating the digital transformation and building long-term digital competitiveness and sovereignty.</p>	<p><u>REITERATES that the Digital Decade Policy Programme (DDPP) serves as the EU's strategic compass for navigating the digital transformation and building long-term digital competitiveness and sovereignty <b>in an open manner.</b></u></p>	<p><u>IE considers that maintaining and building our European digital competitiveness in an open manner is critical. It means maintaining access to open markets, strengthening interoperability and international collaboration, while building independence and resilience in critical digital technology sectors such as the semiconductor industry.</u></p>

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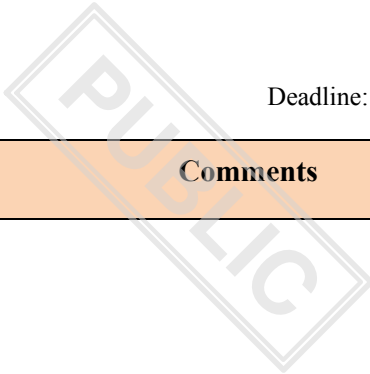
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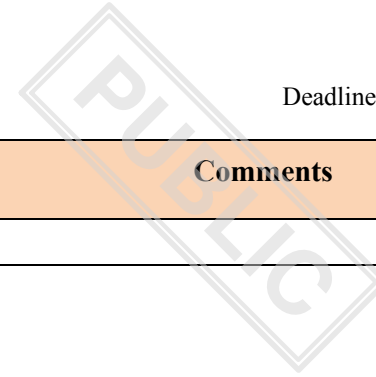
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<p>4. UNDERLINES the importance of maintaining the DDPP’s ambition and coherence, while updating it in a targeted and evidence-based manner to ensure its continued relevance.</p>		
	<p><u>4a. INVITES the Commission to underline the investments that will support the DDPP’s ambition by linking the 2026 review of the DDPP with the discussion on the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF).</u></p>	<p><u>IE believes that EU financial instruments are critical to support in achieving the Digital Decade targets and would welcome a reference to this in the council conclusion. This could include a specific budget line to support the delivery of the Digital Decade Targets in the MFF. This could also include further leveraging European programmes and funding instruments (including Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, Erasmus plus) as well as large scale projects such as the Digital Decade multi-country projects or Important Projects of Common European Interest. Such investments are key to increasing the EU’s digital competitiveness by supporting the delivery of the Digital decade targets.</u></p>

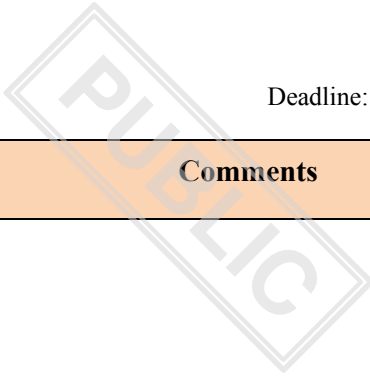


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<p>5. Looking ahead to the upcoming 2026 review of the DDPP, RECOMMENDS that the Commission seizes this opportunity to reinforce, in cooperation with Member States, the EU's digital competitiveness, sovereignty and economic security.</p>		
<p><b>Digitalisation and AI as key drivers for competitiveness</b></p>		
<p>6. EMPHASISES the central role that the development and uptake of digital technologies play in enhancing the EU's competitiveness and sovereignty, and STRESSES the urgent need to strengthen the EU's capacity to develop, adopt and govern such technologies and their underlying infrastructure.</p>		



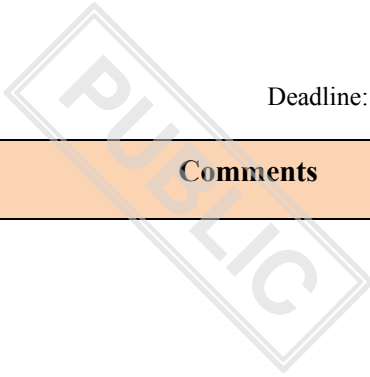
Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
7. RECOGNISES the importance of building on the EU’s competitive strengths and the digital single market as the foundation for accelerating digital development and uptake.		
8. WELCOMES the Commission’s AI Continent Action Plan as a major roadmap for the EU’s AI leadership and REITERATES the commitment of the Commission and the Member States to jointly foster the European AI innovation ecosystem and ensure a regulatory framework that supports innovation.		
<b>Effective, simplified and coordinated digital regulation</b>		
9. EMPHASISES the importance of ensuring that digital regulation is simple, clear, proportionate and predictable, in order to reduce	<u>EMPHASISES the importance of ensuring that digital regulation is simple, clear, proportionate and predictable, in order to reduce unnecessary</u>	<u>IE supports the inclusion of “ensuring the protection of consumers and citizens across the single market” to underline that regulatory</u>



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Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
unnecessary complexity and compliance costs for businesses, in particular SMEs, while ensuring the protection of consumers and citizens across the single market and beyond.	<u>complexity and compliance costs for businesses and give certainty to consumers and businesses, in particular SMEs, while ensuring the protection of consumers and citizens across the single market and beyond.</u>	<u>certainty is required to give certainty to consumers, businesses and SMEs.</u>
10. [WELCOMES / LOOKS FORWARD TO <i>(depends on the timing)</i> ] the Digital Package by the Commission, and its ambition to reduce regulatory burdens and ensure fitness of the EU's digital acquis. COMMITS to allocate its full attention to the Commission's digital simplification proposals in view of delivering swiftly on the shared objective of simplifying regulation for a competitive single market.		
11. URGES the systematic use of stress-tests of the acquis with a strong focus on competitiveness, simplification and enforcement feasibility. In this context, STRESSES the importance of the Commission's consistent use		

Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
<p>of Digital Statements, in order to clearly communicate digital implications and support more efficient implementation of new EU legislation.</p>		
<p>12. EMPHASISES that delivering on the EU's digital ambitions requires the full and coherent implementation and application of newly adopted rules, including through enhanced cooperation and the exchange of best practices among Member States; CALLS FOR more structured and proactive dialogue between relevant enforcement authorities and EU institutions, including through joint guidance and better alignment of definitions and regulatory frameworks, as well as efforts to explore shared supervision models and interoperable national infrastructures where relevant.</p>	<p><u>EMPHASISES that delivering on the EU's digital ambitions requires the full and coherent implementation and <b>consistent</b> application of newly adopted rules, including through enhanced cooperation and the exchange of best practices among Member States; CALLS FOR more structured and proactive dialogue between relevant enforcement authorities and EU institutions, including through <b>formal cooperation mechanism that support consistency and predictability of implementation with joint guidance and better alignment of definitions and regulatory frameworks, as well as efforts to explore shared supervision models and interoperable national infrastructures where relevant.</b></u></p>	<p><u>IE considers that the impact of regulation on EU Single Market means that the consistency of implementation across EU member states is critical but challenging due to differing interpretations and national approaches. IE finds that, while guidelines are very helpful, they do not ensure consistency – and formal cooperation mechanisms are important for that (such as for GDPR, DSA). This to ensure effective, transparent, predictable and consistent implementation.</u></p>



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<p>13. STRESSES that well-designed digital tools can play a key role in strengthening the EU’s competitiveness by reducing administrative burdens and improving the user experience for businesses and public administrations alike. STRESSES that such tools should be developed through a use-case driven approach where there is clear need and added value – particularly for SMEs – and implemented in a way that respects national digital infrastructures, existing well-functioning solutions and best practices. INVITES the Commission to set concrete, measurable objectives for administrative burden reduction through digitalisation, in particular in the context of the DDPP review.</p>	<p><del>INVITES the Commission to <b>set suggest</b> concrete, measurable objectives for <b>digital administrative burden reduction that also ensure the protection of consumers and citizens through digitalisation.</b></del></p>	<p><del>IE would welcome a discussion on the “<b>concrete measurable objectives</b>” envisaged “for administrative burden reduction through digitalisation”.</del></p> <p><del>IE believes that these measures should still ensure the protection of consumers and citizens, consideration should be given to reflecting this in the text.</del></p>

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<p>14. ENCOURAGES Member States to implement the EU Digital Identity Wallets, ensuring citizens and residents can access services in a safe, reliable, and privacy-preserving manner. UNDERLINES the importance of applying a “wallet-by-default” principle in upcoming as well as existing EU legislation, with a view to streamline digital solutions, avoid fragmentation and fully realise the Wallets’ potential across borders. In this context, CALLS FOR a mainstreamed use of the upcoming European Business Wallet, as well as the Digital Product Passport and eInvoicing, recognising their potential to simplify and digitalise business-to-government and business-to-business interactions.</p>		
<p>15. Furthermore, UNDERLINES the need for simpler assessment of progress towards the EU digital targets and objectives, and for a more</p>	<p><u>Furthermore, UNDERLINES the need for simpler <b>and more transparent</b> assessment of progress towards the EU digital targets and</u></p>	<p><u>IE supports a more transparent process in how surveys to assess the country are carried out.</u></p>

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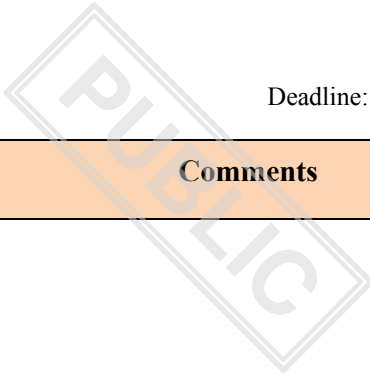
Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
<p>strategic and targeted reporting cycle to ensure a stronger focus on the added value of policy, while considering resource constraints in both the Commission and Member States. In particular, INVITES the Commission to reconsider the annual publication of full country reports, given that policy effects often take time to materialise and may depend on broader synergies. This should not be at the cost of consistent monitoring of the progress.</p>	<p><del>objectives, <b>with a common agreed methodology,</b> and for a more strategic and targeted reporting cycle to ensure a stronger focus on the added value of policy, while considering resource constraints in both the Commission and Member States.</del></p>	<p><del>Often the figures gathered are different from what national regulators are reporting which can make year on year comparisons difficult. A common agreed methodology will be necessary to ensure accurate assessment and enable easier comparison across various KPIs.</del></p>
<p>16. RECALLS that the Digital Decade Board is intended to serve not only as a forum for coordination, but also for providing early input and political guidance on Union-level digital policy<sup>1</sup>. INVITES the Commission and Member States to further develop this strategic role by strengthening the Board’s capacity to</p>		

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Commission Decision C(2022) 7141

Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
<p>support coherent implementation, foster coordination with other governance bodies established under the digital acquis, facilitate mutual learning and best practice exchange, and enable joint analysis and stress-testing of regulation.</p>		
<p><b>Fostering innovation and uptake of digital technologies</b></p>		
<p>17. ACKNOWLEDGES that long-term European competitiveness depends on a dynamic, innovation-driven digital economy, and STRESSES the importance of improving framework conditions for the development, testing, scaling and uptake of sustainable digital technologies across all sectors. UNDERLINES that this requires a forward-leaning approach rooted in research excellence, regulatory agility,</p>	<p><u>STRESSES the importance of improving framework conditions for the development, testing, scaling and uptake of sustainable digital technologies across all sectors, in line with the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy, which aims to position Europe as the best placed in the world to start and scale global technology-driven companies.</u> (...)</p>	<p>IE welcomes the acknowledgement of the importance of innovation in securing the EU’s long-term competitiveness and the specific focus placed on research excellence in the pursuit of the above goal.  IE encourages the Council to consider building on and linking the DPP to the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy, which aims to position Europe as the best place in the world to start and scale</p>



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Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
<p>access to capital and the removal of unnecessary barriers to experimentation and growth. HIGHLIGHTS the need to effectively bolster the “research-to-market” pathway in full and to have this ambition reflected in the DDPP, including in its monitoring mechanism.</p>	<p><u>HIGHLIGHTS the need to effectively bolster the set of actions adopted in the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy, including the “research-to-market” pathway in full and to have this ambition reflected in the DDPP, including in its monitoring mechanism</u></p>	<p><u>global technology-driven companies – in part by improving access to capital, improving access to research infrastructures, addressing regulatory burdens and fostering pathways from research to market, which is relevant to the Digital Decade</u></p>
<p>18. [WELCOMES the Commission’s Apply AI Strategy <i>(to be developed later)</i>.]</p>		
<p>19. [WELCOMES the Commission’s Data Union Strategy, <i>(to be developed later)</i>.]</p>		
<p>20. NOTES that the target on deploying 10,000 edge nodes may no longer reflect technological or market realities and could therefore be reconsidered. HIGHLIGHTS the relevance of ensuring access to computing capacity among the DDPP targets.</p>		

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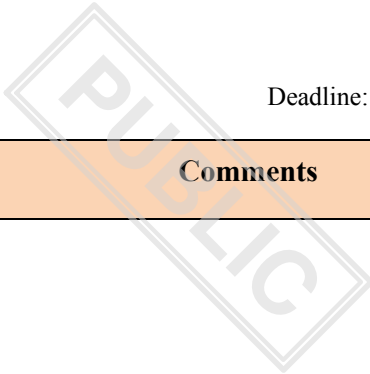
Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
<b>Reinforcing digital sovereignty</b>	<u><b>Reinforcing digital sovereignty and promoting international cooperation</b></u>	
<p>21. UNDERLINES the importance of strengthening the EU’s digital sovereignty and economic security through a bold, effective, open, risk- and evidence-based strategic approach. SUPPORTS greater European capacity and leadership in critical digital technologies, while STRESSING that sovereignty equally relies on a strong and well-functioning single market with clear, innovation-friendly rules and better framework conditions for growth – including simpler, more proportionate and predictable regulation – and underpinned by strategic global collaboration and investment to ensure openness and diversified digital supply chains. CONSIDERS that such a balanced approach could be integrated in the DDPP review.</p>	<p><u>(...) SUPPORTS greater European capacity and leadership in critical digital technologies, including the semiconductor ecosystem, while STRESSING that sovereignty equally relies on a strong and well-functioning single market with clear, innovation-friendly rules and better framework conditions for growth – including simpler, more proportionate and predictable regulation – and underpinned by strategic global collaboration, trade and investment to ensure openness and diversified digital supply chains. (...)</u></p>	<p><u>IE would welcome here a reference to the critical nature of the strengthening the EU's semiconductor industry through the European Chips Act which is a strategic initiative designed to enhance the Union's technological independence and resilience, as well promoting open strategic autonomy in this critical sector, bolstering its overall digital sovereignty, resulting in the Union having greater control over its technological capabilities while being less susceptible to external pressures related to chip supply.</u></p> <p><u>IE would welcome stressing here the importance of open trade policy.</u></p>

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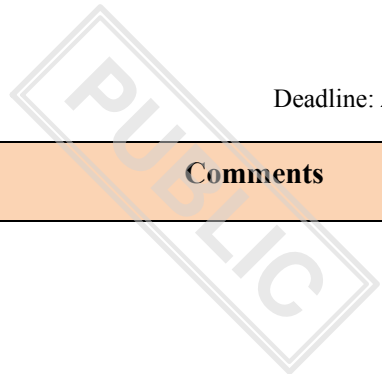
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Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
<p>22. RECOGNISES the importance of strengthening Europe’s data infrastructure as an enabler for the development and deployment of advanced digital technologies such as AI. RECOMMENDS maintaining a high level of ambition in the development and deployment of sustainable digital infrastructure, in particular as part of the forthcoming DDPP review.</p>		
<p>23. In this regard, LOOKS FORWARD to the forthcoming EU Cloud and AI Development Act as a key initiative to enhance access to data centres and compute capacities in Europe and foster a more diverse and competitive cloud landscape.</p>		
	<p><u>23b.STRESSES the importance of continued dialogue with like-minded international partners</u></p>	



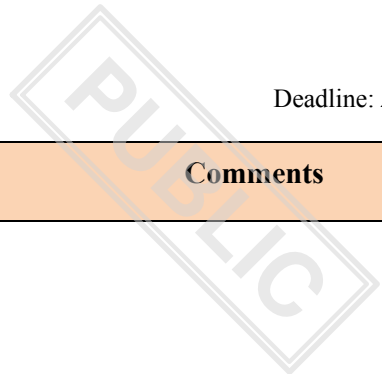
Presidency text	Drafting suggestions	Comments
	<p><u>on open and interoperable digital solutions and cooperation on the development of technical standards in critical technology areas, through Digital Partnership Agreements, Trade and Technology Councils, G7 and G20, and through international standard setting bodies</u></p>	
<p>24. Furthermore, INVITES the Commission to consider, as part of the DDPP review, targets on:</p>		
<p>i. the processing time for permitting digital infrastructure projects in the EU,</p>		
<p>ii. promoting the uptake of open-source and multi-cloud solutions in both the public and private sectors, with a view to improving transparency, enhancing interoperability and reducing reliance on single providers,</p>		
<p>iii. championing effective cloud switching in the EU – in order to reduce vendor lock-in,</p>		



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strengthen interoperability and support the uptake of competitive and sovereign digital solutions – such as average switching time between cloud providers, or the proportion of organisations switching cloud providers over a defined period.		
<b>Next steps</b>		
25. In line with the “one-in, one-out” principle, ENCOURAGES the Commission to assess whether some of the existing DDPP targets could be replaced by – or integrated with – new targets, such as the proposals set out in these Council Conclusions, considering their policy relevance, feasibility of monitoring, availability of data and overall administrative burden.		
26. LOOKS FORWARD to continued discussions in the Council and the Digital		



**Draft Council Conclusions on European Competitiveness in the digital decade**

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<b>Presidency text</b>	<b>Drafting suggestions</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Decade Board on strengthening the EU's digital competitiveness, within the framework of the Digital Decade and beyond.		

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