A digital future for Europe

The digital transition is a key element for the EU's economic development and strategic autonomy. The EU is working on a number of policy areas to facilitate a digital future for Europe.

Your life online: how is the EU making it easier and safer for you?

The European Union is actively working on improving the digital environment for the benefit of all Europeans. Our digital life needs to be safe, easy and respectful of basic freedoms.

Read our feature story to discover how the EU is creating a common eID, wants rules for a safe and trustworthy AI and facilitates data sharing for medical research.

The digital transition in the EU

Timeline of the digital transition in the EU

14/12/2023

- **Council and Parliament agree on EU liability rules for the digital age**

09/12/2023

- **AI act: the EU will have its first AI rules**

08/12/2023

- **Council adopts a regulation on the digitalisation of judicial cooperation and access to justice**

23/10/2023

- **Council adopts new framework to boost the roll-out of intelligent transport systems**

18/09/2023

- **Council adopts new EU law to modernise judicial cooperation on terrorism cases**

25/07/2023

- **Council gives its final approval to the 'Chips Act'**

18/04/2023

- **Chips Act: Council and European Parliament strike provisional deal**

14/12/2022

- **Provisional agreement on information exchange in terrorism cases**

09/12/2022

- **Digital justice: Council adopts position on two proposals**

08/12/2022

- **Council adopts 2030 Digital Decade policy programme**

06/12/2022

- **Council agrees on negotiating mandate on AI Act**
- **Council adopts position on eID**

05/12/2022

- **Council adopts European declaration on digital rights and principles**

01/12/2022

- **Council adopts position on European Chips Act**

19/10/2022

- **Council and Parliament sign Digital Services Act**

04/10/2022

- **DSA: Council gives final approval to the protection of users' rights online**

14/09/2022

- **Council and Parliament sign Digital Markets Act**

18/07/2022

- **Council approves conclusions on EU digital diplomacy**
- **DMA: Council gives final approval to new rules for fair competition online**

14/07/2022

- **Deal on the Digital Decade programme**

09/06/2022

- **Digital justice: Council adopts position on two proposals to improve information exchange**

03/06/2022

- **Council reviews progress on EU digital transition initiatives**

16/05/2022

- **Council approves Data Governance Act**

- **Provisional deal by the Council and the European Parliament on new NIS2 directive**

- **EU and Japan leaders launch the EU-Japan Digital Partnership**

- **2030 policy programme 'Path to the Digital Decade': the Council adopts its position**

- **Digital Services Act: Council and European Parliament provisional agreement on a safer online space**

- **Mobile roaming with no extra fees to continue in the EU**

- **Digital Markets Act (DMA): agreement between the Council and the European Parliament**

- **EU ministers united in strengthening cyber resilience in the EU**

- **Common charger for electronic devices - Council position**

- **Presidency reaches deal with European Parliament on new rules on free roaming**

- **Council agrees its position on new cybersecurity directive**

- **Presidency reaches deal with Parliament on Data Governance Act**

- **Council approves position on Digital Services Act**

25/11/2021

- **Council approves position on Digital Markets Act**

22/10/2021

- **EU leaders call for swift progress on the digital agenda**

19/10/2021

- **Council adopts conclusions on exploring the potential of a joint cyber unit**

14/10/2021

- **EU ministers discuss Artificial Intelligence Act**

01/10/2021

- **Council agrees position on Data Governance Act**

12/07/2021

- **A globally connected Europe: Council approves conclusions**

16/06/2021

- **Council agrees its position on revision of the roaming regulation**

07/06/2021

- **Digitalisation of justice: Council approves general approach on e-CODEX system**

28/05/2021

- **Council agreement secures EU financing of high performance computing**

27/05/2021

- **Ministers debate Digital Services Act package**

29/04/2021

- **Combating child abuse online – informal deal with European Parliament on temporary rules**

20/04/2021

- **Bucharest-based Cybersecurity Competence Centre gets green light from Council**

25/03/2021

- **EU leaders stress need to enhance the EU's digital sovereignty**

22/03/2021

- **Council adopts conclusions on the EU's cybersecurity strategy**

16/03/2021

- **Digital Europe Programme gets green light from Council**

11/03/2021

- **Connecting Europe Facility: informal agreement with European Parliament on the post-2020 programme**

10/02/2021

- **Confidentiality of electronic communications: Council agrees its position on ePrivacy rules**

17/12/2020

- **Digitalisation for the benefit of the environment: Council approves conclusions**

15/12/2020

- **Council calls for strengthening resilience and countering hybrid threats, including disinformation**

14/12/2020

- **Digital Europe programme – informal agreement with European Parliament**

14/12/2020

- **Council adopts resolution on encryption**

11/12/2020

- **Provisional agreement on the new EU Cybersecurity Competence Centre**

09/12/2020

- **Bucharest will host the seat of the new European Cybersecurity Competence Centre**

07/12/2020

- **EU ministers discuss proposal for data governance act**

04/11/2020

- **Council adopts new rules to digitalise judicial cooperation**

13/10/2020

- **Council adopts conclusions on digital justice**

- **EU leaders agree on way forward for the digital transition**

- **EU imposes the first ever sanctions against cyber-attacks**

- **Council conclusions: Shaping Europe's digital future**

- **EU ministers discuss digital priorities in the post COVID-19 recovery**
- **Mandate on cybersecurity centres and state of play of 5G networks**

- **A green and smart recovery for the transport sector**

- **Council adopts Cybersecurity Act**

- **Significance and security risks of 5G technology – Council adopts conclusions**

- **Post-2020 digital policy – Council adopts conclusions**

Digital technologies are changing peoples' lives - from the way we **communicate** to how we **live and work**. Digitalisation has the potential to provide solutions for many of the challenges Europe and Europeans are facing and offers opportunities such as:

- creating jobs
- advancing education
- boosting competitiveness and innovation
- fighting climate change and enabling a green transition

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalisation is a key component for both **economic recovery** and the **resilience** of Europe's health and care sectors. Digitalisation has given the EU further impetus to accelerate technological transition, by boosting eHealth and promoting enabling technologies like cloud computing, quantum technologies and high-performance computing.

To make our societies and economies fit for the digital age, the EU is committed to creating a **safe digital space** for citizens and businesses in a manner that is inclusive and accessible for all. This means enabling a digital transformation that safeguards EU

values and protects citizens' fundamental rights and security, while also enhancing Europe's digital sovereignty.

The '**Path to the Digital Decade'** is the EU policy programme for the digital transformation. It sets specific digital targets and milestones to be reached by 2030. The programme puts digital skills and education at the forefront and is structured around four areas: skills, business, government and infrastructure.

- [Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030 (European Commission)](#)
- [Video conference of the members of the European Council, 25-26 March 2021](#)
- [A recovery plan for Europe (background information)](#)

Key policy areas of the EU digital strategy

The EU is working on several policies to bring about the digital transformation.

Key policy areas:

- Digital decade
- European declaration on digital rights and principles
- Digital services
- Data economy
- Digital taxation
- Artificial intelligence
- Connectivity
- Cybersecurity
- European digital identification (eID)
- Digitalisation of justice
- Digital information exchange

Digital decade

In March 2021, the Commission presented the Digital Compass which sets out a vision and targets to foster digitalisation in the EU by 2030. The strategy includes a proposed decision on establishing the **'Path to the Digital Decade' policy programme**, which sets the governance framework to reach the 2030 digital objectives.

The Council adopted the programme on 8 December 2022.

- ['Path to the Digital Decade': Council adopts key policy programme for EU's digital transformation (press release, 8 December 2022)](#)

European declaration on digital rights and principles

The EU, within the scope of the Digital Compass, wants to adopt a European declaration on **digital rights and principles**. The objective of the declaration is to define citizens' rights in the digital space and develop a framework of principles which the EU and member states agree to uphold in the digital transformation.

In December 2021, EU telecommunications ministers discussed the Commission's proposal. They expressed strong support for the declaration, which would make it clear that the same fundamental rights are **equally valid online as they are offline**.

The negotiations between the three EU institutions on the declaration were concluded on 14 November 2022. The Council adopted the declaration on 5 December 2022.

On 20 October 2023, the Council approved conclusions on **digital empowerment** to protect and enforce fundamental rights in the digital age.

- [Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Telecommunications), 3 December 2021](#)
- [Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030 (European Commission)](#)
- [Declaration on digital rights and principles: EU values and citizens at the centre of digital transformation (press release, 14 November 2022)](#)
- [Council sets out vision for protecting fundamental rights in the digital world (press release, 20 October 2023)](#)

Digital services

Online platforms are an important part of the EU digital market and economy. EU member states recognise the need to strengthen, modernise and clarify the rules for **digital services** to:

- ensure the **safety of users online**
- allow **innovative digital businesses to grow**

The EU's legal framework for digital services has been unchanged since the adoption of the e-commerce directive in 2000. In the meantime, digital technologies, business models and services have changed at an unprecedented pace.

The digital services package is the EU's response to the need to regulate the digital space. The two legislative acts it contains aim to define measures to protect users while supporting innovation in the digital economy.

The digital services act (DSA) sets out new rules to protect EU citizens' fundamental rights online. It entered into force on 16 November 2022.

The digital markets act (DMA) creates a level playing field for EU businesses by regulating big tech. It entered into force on 1 November 2022.

- [Digital Markets Act (background information)](#)
- [Digital Services Act (background information)](#)
- [The Digital Services Act package (European Commission)](#)
- [Digital Markets Act (infographic)](#)

Data economy

With the development of technology, more and more **data is available**. The Council aims to create a single market for data in line with common EU values, allowing more data sharing and data re-use across sectors and across borders.

A growing economy

From 2018 to 2025 the:

- value of the data economy in the EU27 is expected to grow from €301 billion to €829 billion
- number of data professionals will rise from 5.7 million to 10.9 million
- EU population with basic skills will increase from 57% to 65%

The European Commission has proposed a **strategy for European data** that will facilitate the digital transformation for the next five years. During the October 2020 Special European Council, the **European Council** welcomed the strategy, which supports the EU's global digital ambitions to build a true European competitive data economy, while ensuring European values and a high level of data security, data protection and privacy.

An important component of the European strategy for data is the **data governance act (DGA)**, which aims to promote the availability of data for reuse across sectors and borders.

The DGA will set up robust mechanisms to increase trust in data intermediation services and foster data altruism across the EU, while playing a central role in enabling and guiding the creation of EU-wide common interoperable data spaces in strategic sectors such as energy, mobility and health.

The **Council approved the data governance act** on 16 May 2022.

- [Council approves Data Governance Act (press release, 16 May 2022)](#)
- [Promoting data sharing: presidency reaches deal with Parliament on Data Governance Act (press release, 30 November 2021)](#)
- [EU looks to make data sharing easier: Council agrees position on Data Governance Act (press release, 1 October 2021)](#)
- [European data strategy (European Commission)](#)

The Council is also working on a regulation on **harmonised rules on fair access to and use of data (data act).**

The main objectives of that Commission's proposal for a data act are to ensure fairness in the allocation of value from data among actors in the data economy and to foster access to and use of data.

The Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the data act on 27 June 2023.

- [Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Telecommunications), 3 June 2022](#)

With a view to accelerating digital transition and smarter mobility in the EU, the Council adopted a new framework on the **deployment of intelligent transport systems** (ITS) by revising the 2010 directive.

The revised ITS directive aims to accelerate the availability and enhance the interoperability of digital data that feed services, such as multimodal journey planners and navigation services. This will allow vehicles and road infrastructure to communicate with one another, for example to warn about unexpected events, such as traffic jams. The new directive was **adopted by the Council** on 23 October 2023.

- [Council adopts new framework to boost the roll-out of intelligent transport systems (press release, 23 October 2023)](#)

Digital taxation

Digital services have become a growing challenge for existing taxation systems. The current rules governing international taxation matters were designed to apply to **businesses with a physical presence** in a country. As a result, profits from digital activities are often not taxed in the country where the profits are generated.

Work is ongoing on adapting EU countries' taxation systems to make them fit for the digital age. The EU plays an important role in this process, not least in the context of the current negotiations within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), seeking a long-term solution based on a global consensus. The Council is nevertheless ready to examine possible solutions at EU level, if the prospect of a global solution is not forthcoming.

- [Digital taxation (background information)](#)

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) can contribute to a more **innovative, efficient, sustainable and competitive economy**, while also improving safety, education and healthcare for

citizens. It also supports the fight against climate change. While supporting the development of AI technology, the Council recognises the potential risks and encourages an **ethical and human-centric approach** to this technology.

In October 2020, the European Council invited the Commission to:

- propose ways to increase European and national public and private investments in artificial intelligence research, innovation and deployment
- ensure better coordination and more networks and synergies between European research centres based on excellence
- provide a clear, objective definition of high-risk artificial intelligence systems

More jobs in AI

60 million new jobs could be created by AI and robotics worldwide by 2025.

In April 2021, the Commission released a proposal for a regulation aiming to harmonise rules on artificial intelligence (**AI Act**) and a coordinated plan which includes a set of joint actions for the Commission and member states. This package of rules aims to **improve trust** in artificial intelligence and foster the development and update of AI technology.

The Council discussed the proposed act in October 2021, highlighting on the one hand the considerable **societal and economic benefits** that AI can bring across a wide range of sectors and on the other the need to **protect privacy and ensure safety** and security.

The Council adopted its position on new rules for AI on 6 December 2022.

- [Artificial Intelligence Act: Council calls for promoting safe AI that respects fundamental rights (press release, 6 December 2022)](#)
- [A safe, lawful and trustworthy AI (feature story)](#)

Following 3-day 'marathon' talks, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the law on 9 December 2023, after months of negotiations.

The final text needs to be formally adopted by both Council and Parliament, as the EU's co-legislators. The AI act should apply from 2026.

- [Artificial intelligence act: Council and Parliament strike a deal on the first rules for AI in the world (press release, 9 December 2023)](#)

Connectivity

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven the need for fast and ubiquitous connectivity across the EU to **give all Europeans access to digital technology**. The EU has set **objectives for connectivity for 2025**, including:

- gigabit connectivity for all of the main socio-economic drivers
- uninterrupted 5G coverage for all urban areas and major terrestrial transport paths
- access to connectivity offering at least 100 Mbps for all European households

The EU's overall objective is to develop harmonised rules for connectivity services in the EU. Some actions already delivered are:

- supporting wireless networks such as 5G
- ending roaming charges in the EU

In April 2022, the EU adopted **revised rules on roaming** in the EU. These ensure that people can continue to make calls, send text messages and surf on the web while travelling in other EU countries without surcharges. The new rules will apply until 2032.

- [Mobile roaming with no extra fees to continue, following Council approval (press release, 4 April 2022)](#)
- [Connectivity (European Commission)](#)

Cybersecurity

As cyber threats and crimes **increase** in number and sophistication, the EU is working to **improve its response capabilities** and safeguard the integrity, security and resilience of digital infrastructure, communication networks and services. A stronger cybersecurity response can ensure **greater trust in digital technology** and protect safe, open and secure cyberspace. During the Special European Council in October 2020, EU leaders called for the enhancement of the EU's ability to protect itself against cyber threats, to provide for a secure communication environment, especially through quantum encryption and to ensure access to data for judicial and law enforcement purposes.

- [Cybersecurity in Europe (background information)](#)

As more and more criminals use technology to plan and commit offences, authorities are becoming increasingly reliant on **e-evidence** to fight crime. The EU is currently discussing new rules to make accessing e-evidence easier and faster.

- [Better access to e-evidence to fight crime (background information)](#)

European digital identification (eID)

In October 2020, the European Council called for the development of an EU-wide framework for **secure public electronic identification (eID)**, including interoperable digital signatures, to provide people with control over their online identity and data as well as to enable access to public, private and cross-border digital services.

The Commission presented a proposal for a regulation on the European eID in June 2021. The proposal includes the creation of a **European digital wallet** app that allows for safe storage, management and sharing of documents.

The Council adopted its position for negotiations on eID on 6 December 2022. The Council wants to make sure the European digital wallet is **highly secure**, **respectful of data privacy** and **free** for everyone.

The Council and the Parliament agreed on the eID regulation on 29 June 2023.

- [Council and Parliament strike a deal on a European digital identity (eID) (press release, 29 June 2023)](#)
- [A secure digital identity for everyone (feature story)](#)

Digitalisation of justice

The further digitalisation of member states' judicial systems can **improve access to justice for citizens and businesses** and can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of court proceedings.

Some EU countries have already started using digital tools in the field of justice, for example:

- conducting of digital court proceedings
- electronic communication between the parties
- electronic transmission of documents
- use of video-hearing and conferencing

Member states should use more extensively digital tools for judicial proceedings without undermining fundamental principles such as the independence and impartiality of the courts.

On 8 December 2023, the Council **adopted the regulation on the digitalisation of cross-border judicial cooperation** and access to justice and an accompanying directive which will facilitate electronic communication in the context of cross-border judicial cooperation procedures in civil, commercial and criminal matters.

EU ministers of justice also recently approved an **e-justice strategy for the years 2024 to 2028.** The strategy will give guidance to member states in implementing a broad range of legislative and non-legislative initiatives which, together, aim at speeding up the digitalisation process and the use of digital services in the justice area.

- [Council presidency and European Parliament reach provisional agreement to improve information exchange in terrorism cases (press release, 14 December 2022)](#)
- [Digital justice: Council adopts negotiating mandates on two proposals to digitalise judicial cooperation and access to justice (press release, 9 December 2022)](#)
- [Council adopts new rules to modernise judicial cooperation (press release, 4 November 2020)](#)
- [Council adopts conclusions on digitalisation to improve access to justice (press release, 13 October 2020)](#)
- [EU takes important step towards digitalisation of justice systems (press release, 8 December 2023)](#)

Digital information exchange

In order to boost the digital information exchange in terrorism cases between national authorities and Eurojust, the EU made a proposal for new legislation in December 2021.

Under the new rules, **member states will need to provide Eurojust with information on any criminal investigations** regarding terrorist offences as soon as such cases are referred to the judicial authorities. The proposal:

- creates a modern, digital case-management system which stores this information and allows it to be cross-checked
- empowers Eurojust to better detect links between transnational investigations and prosecutions in the field of terrorism and to proactively inform member states about the links found
- creates a secure digital communication channel between member states and Eurojust
- simplifies cooperation with third countries by granting liaison prosecutors seconded to Eurojust access to the case-management system

On 18 September 2023 the Council adopted the new law.