



Conference on the Future of Europe: 'Digital' topic

January 2022

The Conference on the Future of Europe, launched on 9 May 2021, is an opportunity for people across the EU to share their ideas on the EU's challenges and opportunities and help build the future they want for the EU. One of the topics in the citizen-led series of debates is digital policy and how to achieve the digital transformation of our public and private sectors. This topical digest compiles a selection of publications produced by the European Parliamentary Research Service on various aspects of the digital transformation, the rise of technology in all areas of our daily lives and the challenges this poses, and the EU-level response.

[Regulating facial recognition in the EU](#)

Briefing by Tambiama Madiega and Hendrik Mildebrath, September 2021

While there are real benefits to using facial recognition systems for public safety and security, the systems' pervasiveness and intrusiveness and their susceptibility to error raise a number of fundamental rights concerns with regard, for instance, to discrimination against certain segments of the population and violations of the right to data protection and privacy. Although the EU already has strict rules in place to address these effects, various actors are questioning whether the current EU framework is addressing the fundamental rights concerns of facial recognition technology effectively.

[The EU digital decade: A new set of digital targets for 2030](#)

Briefing by Mar Negroiro, August 2021

As part of its digital decade strategy, the European Commission put forward its vision for new strategic digital objectives for 2030 in a March 2021 communication. These objectives should prepare Europe for the roll-out of the next generation of broadband infrastructure with gigabit speeds, including 5G, and for the digital transformation of the public and private sectors, to enable an array of new innovative services that should transform the manufacturing, energy, vehicle manufacturing, digital government and health sectors.

[Data Governance Act,](#)

Briefing by Tambiama Madiega, June 2021

While data volumes are expected to increase dramatically in the coming years, data re-use is hampered by low trust in data-sharing, conflicting economic incentives and technological obstacles. As the first of a set of measures announced in the European strategy for data, the Commission put forward its proposed data governance act on 25 November 2020. The aim is to facilitate (largely) voluntary data sharing across the EU and between sectors by strengthening the mechanisms that increase data availability and foster trust in intermediaries.

[Digital Europe programme: Funding digital transformation beyond 2020](#)

Briefing by Marcin Szczepeński, May 2021

The 'digital Europe' programme is a new financial support tool for the 2021–2027 period, aimed at bolstering the digital transformation of society, the economy and public administration in the EU. With a financial envelope of €7.6 billion (in current prices), the programme will operate mainly through coordinated and strategic co-investments with the Member States in the areas of high-performance computing and data

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processing, artificial intelligence in the public and private sectors, cybersecurity and trust, advanced digital skills, best use of digital capacities and interoperability.

Digital markets act.

Briefing by Tambiama Madiaga, May 2021

In December 2020, the European Commission published a proposal for a regulation on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector, otherwise referred to as the digital markets act (DMA). The proposed legislation lays down harmonised rules aimed at regulating the behaviour of digital platforms acting as gatekeepers between business users and their customers in the EU.

The rise of digital health technologies during the pandemic

Briefing by Mar Negroiro, April 2021

The pandemic has accelerated the rise of digital health, a broad concept that includes solutions for telemedicine and teleconsultation, remote monitoring, connected devices, digital health platforms and health apps. Digital technologies are indeed becoming critical in the fight against the coronavirus. Nevertheless, there are many challenges to overcome as advances in digitalisation of healthcare come with drawbacks. One problem is the widening 'digital divide' that risks leaving the elderly and socially disadvantaged behind. Liability, reimbursement and cybersecurity issues are among other key challenges that need to be considered. Meanwhile, the transfer of personal health data is fuelling a debate over who owns and controls that data, raising questions over individuals' right to privacy.

Digital services act.

Briefing by Tambiama Madiaga, March 2021

In December 2020, the European Commission tabled a new legislative proposal on a digital services act to amend the e-Commerce Directive and set higher standards of transparency and accountability to govern the way platform service providers moderate content, advertising and algorithmic processes.

The rise of e-commerce and the cashless society

Briefing by Mar Negroiro, March 2020

Thanks to the level of convenience they offer, both online shopping and cashless electronic payments are booming and are among the key drivers of the digital transformation taking place in our economy and society. However, they come with a host of challenges relating to cybercrime, fraud, privacy, the digital divide and pollution, among others. The pandemic is also posing various challenges to e-commerce supply chains, many of which are based in the hardest-hit countries. However, in the long run, the opportunities that e-commerce and cashless transactions afford in terms of convenience, efficiency and affordability will help them gain further ground.

Further reading

Digital automation and the future of work

Study by the European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2021

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