

ROADMAP

Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work in order to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have.

TITLE OF THE EVALUATION	Declaration of Digital Principles
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (Connect) – Unit B2 / D2
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Communication from the Commission / Commission Recommendation
INDICATIVE PLANNING	Q3 2021
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	-

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A. Context, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check

Context

In just a year, the COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the role and perception of digitalisation in our societies and economies. Digital technologies are now imperative for working, learning, entertaining, socialising, shopping, and accessing services such as health and culture.

The pandemic has also exposed the vulnerabilities of our digital space, and its impact on our societies. A new digital divide has emerged, not only between well-connected urban and rural areas, but also between those who can fully benefit from an enriched and secure digital space, and those who cannot. This makes it clear that digital policies must help nurture more democratic and inclusive societies and ensure that all people in the EU can leverage the digital transformation for a better life.

Problem the initiative aims to tackle

The Commission published, on 9 March 2021, a [Communication on the 2030 Digital Compass](#). It sets out a vision for a European way for a digital society that is about solidarity, democracy, prosperity, and sustainability, anchored in the empowerment of people and businesses.

The Communication also refers to **Digital Citizenship**, emphasizing that the deployment of digital infrastructures, strong skills and capacities and bringing businesses and public services in the digital sphere cannot, alone, define the EU's approach to its digital future. It is also necessary to **enable all Europeans to make full use of digital and technologies**, to have a society where geographical distance matters less, so that all Europeans can work, learn, interact with public administrations, manage their finance and payments, make use of health care systems, benefit of intelligent transport systems, participate in democratic processes, be entertained or meet and discuss with people anywhere in the EU, including those residing in rural and remote areas.

The Commission will therefore, propose **a set of digital principles that should shape Europe's digital society in the European way** in the form of a joint interinstitutional solemn declaration of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, based on a proposal from the European Commission.

In addition to this initiative, the Digital Compass Communication also sets out that the Commission intends to propose a **Digital Compass Policy Programme** to be adopted by ordinary legislative procedure (a separate, and dedicated roadmap will be published for this initiative).

Basis for EU intervention (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

This initiative is primarily about proposing via a joint interinstitutional declaration, a set of common principles for a European way for the digital society. By definition, its added value lies in it being commonly supported by the three main European institutions, which can only be achieved by acting at European level.

Establishing a comprehensive set of digital principles can strengthen the common understanding of a human-centred, secure and open digital environment, and shape the European way for the digital society. Furthermore, action at EU level can clearly best drive European actors towards a common vision through the joint formulation of digital principles by the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council.

B. What does the initiative aim to achieve and how

The main objective of the initiative is to **propose a set of principles that guide the European way for the digital society**. Such a set of digital principles, in the form of a solemn declaration of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council signed at the highest political level, and **providing a reference for policy makers and digital operators**.

Next to that, the aim would be to make the principles known and visible to all those living in the EU, and would allow to **inform people engaging in the digital environment**. This would be achieved by a broad outreach campaign and engagement, including for example in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The Digital Compass Communication makes a **clear distinction between already defined fundamental and other rights on the one hand, and the concept of digital principles on the other**. It recalls that the European way for the digital society is also based on ensuring full respect of EU fundamental rights. The following areas are particularly relevant in the digital environment:

- Freedom of expression, including access to diverse, trustworthy and transparent information,
- Freedom to set up and conduct a business online,
- Protection of personal data and privacy,
- Protection of the intellectual creations of individuals in the online space,
- Protection of consumers online,
- Non-discrimination.

Digital principles should be understood as essential concepts based on common European values serving as a foundation for a human-centred, secure and open digital environment. When implemented through policy initiatives, such principles will be applied together with other rights and principles and for the overall public interest. Where these principles reflect rights enshrined in law, those rights remain unaffected.

The Digital Compass Communication mentions the following as examples of principles:

- Universal access to internet services,
- A secure and trusted online environment,
- Universal digital education and skills for people to take an active part in society and in democratic processes,
- Access to digital systems, devices and services that respect the climate and environment,
- Accessible and human-centric digital public services and administration,
- Ethical principles for human centric algorithms,
- Protecting and empowering children and young people in the online space,
- Access to digital health services.

C. Better regulation

Consultation of citizens and stakeholders

As indicated in the Digital Compass Communication, the involvement of citizens and of a wide variety of stakeholders will be crucial for this initiative. In this context, the Commission will engage in a **broad consultation process with all relevant stakeholders**, including other EU institutions, Member State, regional and local authorities, NGOs and civil society organisations, international and umbrella organisations, other digital stakeholders, and citizens.

The consultation activities will be accompanied by a dedicated communication campaign targeting stakeholders and the wider public, to create awareness for the initiative and maximise participation in the consultation.

Furthermore, **several targeted consultation activities will be organised** to gather input and measure support from specific relevant stakeholder groups on the orientation and content of the principles. This will include, for example, a targeted consultation of children and young people; discussion panels with experts on human-centric internet, and outreach to organisations that represent vulnerable people that are not easily reached by traditional consultation tools.

A separate consultation track will be organised in preparation of the Digital Compass Policy Programme, which is another major follow-up initiative from the Digital Compass Communication.

Evidence base and data collection

There is already a solid and wide set of evidence available in support of a set of digital principles. This evidence was, for example, collected in the preparation of the Digital Compass Communication, and the [Communication on "shaping Europe's digital future"](#), and during the preparation of recent major legislative initiatives such as the proposals for the Data Governance Act, the Digital Services Act, the Digital Markets Act, the revised Directive on Security of Network and Information Systems and the revised Roaming Regulation for which stakeholder's consultations and impact assessments have been conducted.

The proposal for a set of digital principles will also build on the work carried out in preparation of other legislative initiatives, for example in the areas of Artificial Intelligence and a Digital Identity. It will also draw upon the evidence collected for previous policy initiatives such as for the Web Accessibility Directive, the European Electronic Communication Code, the Audiovisual Media Service Directive, the Single Digital Gateway Regulation, Platform to Business Regulation, the Accessibility Act, the Cybersecurity Act, or [the Digital Education Action Plan \(2021-2027\)](#).

Furthermore, there is already a wide set of data and analysis available, including policy proposals at national, European and international level. Among others, the [Declaration of Internet Rights adopted by the Italian Parliament](#), the [Declaration of Cities Coalition for Digital Rights](#), or the work on global digital cooperation undertaken by the United Nations based on the [report of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation](#) are valuable evidence sources. Other relevant evidence sources are for example the findings of the [Digital Economy and Society Index](#) (DESI) that summarises relevant indicators on Europe's digital performance and tracks the digital progress of EU Member States.

In addition, overarching studies that present analysis of the challenges ahead for Europe's digital transformation provide valuable information (an example is the study undertaken by McKinsey, "[Shaping the digital transformation in Europe](#)"). These overarching studies will be analysed together with more specific evidence and data such as research available on the use of digital tools by public authorities, the uptake of digital skills, the climate/environment dimension of digitalisation, the impacts of digitalisation on the world of work, and the impact of digitalisation on for example accessibility.