

Lisbon Declaration

*Europe stands at a critical decision point in shaping its digital and economic future. Building on the momentum of the Draghi and Letta reports, which underscore the urgency of **strengthening Europe's competitiveness, resilience and capacity to innovate**, and guided by the Digital Decade Policy Programme for 2030 vision, bold and coordinated actions are required.*

Digital transformation is not only a driver of growth, but also a cornerstone of European strategic autonomy, social cohesion, and sustainable development. The coming years will be decisive to harness advanced technologies, empower European citizens and businesses, and secure prosperity and security.

In Lisbon, we, the D9+ ministers, discussed the following key strategic areas:

1. Regulatory simplification and harmonisation to create a supportive environment for European businesses.

Effective regulation should safeguard Europe's values and public trust, while also reducing unnecessary bureaucracy to enable innovation, competitiveness and investment. Simplified regulation can ease regulatory burdens for business, particularly for SMEs, and governments. Coordinating national regulatory sandboxes and encouraging a pro-innovation regulatory culture, can help accelerate technological progress while ensuring responsible effective oversight.

2. Strategic modernisation of public administration and services should be driven by comprehensive digital transformation.

Digitalisation is key to provide seamless and efficient public services, a resilient digital government and a digital society that aligns with our shared values. Interoperability and the once-only principle can help to reduce repeated administrative procedures for citizens and businesses across the EU. It should also create a supportive ecosystem for scaling responsible AI solutions in public services, open-source technologies and open standards, including actively promoting startups as key accelerators of innovation.

3. Strengthening Europe's digital competitiveness through coordinated strategic investments

Coordinated public and private investments in AI, sustainable digital infrastructures, green innovation and next-generation technologies to secure long-term technological leadership and digital sovereignty in an open manner. Easier access to capital, particularly for next-generation innovations, alongside resilient and coordinated supply chains for energy and raw materials, reinforces EU's global competitiveness.

4. Developing citizens' digital skills is essential to empower individuals and strengthen Europe's talent base.

To close the skills gap, providing digital and AI skills from an early age should be a priority, complemented by ongoing training and incentives throughout adulthood. Equipping citizens with essential digital skills can support inclusion, innovation and competitiveness in line with the Digital Decade 2030 targets and objectives.

The full implementation of the Single Market, supported by coordinated public and private AI investments, regulatory simplification, reduced fragmentation among digital regulators, and comprehensive reskilling programmes, should be the backbone of Europe's strategy to become a globally competitive digital powerhouse rooted in sustainability and digital sovereignty in an open manner.

Hence, we, the D9+ ministers:

- **Call for the advance on regulatory simplification and the elimination of bureaucracy.**

It is essential that the expected digital Omnibus, and the subsequent Digital Fitness Check is ambitious in streamlining regulatory frameworks, reducing administrative burdens, optimising processes and simplifying implementation. Legislative frameworks should integrate the needs of business, including SMEs and startups, and reduce the overlapping and redundant reporting obligations for public administration and businesses, to create a transparent and innovation-friendly environment.

- **Support pro-innovation regulation and reduce regulatory fragmentation.**

Strengthening regulatory coordination mechanisms, to reduce regulatory fragmentation, ambiguity and to ensure coherent and effective enforcement of EU digital legislation, would be a positive step towards fostering an innovation-friendly regulatory culture. Regulatory sandboxes are considered key instruments for collaborative innovation.

- **Promote the continuous modernisation of public administration.**

Digital transformation should embed digital expertise across public administration and regulatory bodies, while prioritising interoperability, open-source solutions, user-centric services, and the once-only principle.

- **Support Artificial Intelligence as a driver for European competitiveness.**

Coordinated investments in responsible AI, digital infrastructures, increased sustainable energy supply and shared R&D facilities will strengthen Europe's technological leadership while enhancing public services and supporting inclusive growth. Facilitated access to funding, for EU innovators, is essential to ensure that the best ideas and talent can grow from EU R&D labs but remain rooted in Europe.

- **Call for sustained investments in the development of digital skills.**

Sustained investment in education by mandatory digital and AI skills, in primary and secondary education, continuous curriculum revision, and teacher training are fundamental. Lifelong learning incentives by upskilling and reskilling programmes, flexible learning pathways and talent attraction and retention, strengthens Europe's talent base and the competitiveness of digital industries.

- **Underline the Single Market as the backbone of Europe's digital strategy.**

Full implementation of the Single Market Strategy, supported by regulatory simplification, uniform application and enforcement, reduced fragmentation, coordinated AI investments, and comprehensive reskilling, underpins Europe's ambition to become a globally competitive digital powerhouse.

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