

CALL FOR EVIDENCE FOR AN INITIATIVE WITHOUT AN IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This document aims to inform the public and stakeholders on the Commission's future legislative work so they can provide feedback on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and give any relevant information that they may have, including on possible impacts of the different options.

TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Joint Communication on an International Digital Strategy (indicative title)
LEAD DG (RESPONSIBLE UNIT)	Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT), European External Action Service (EEAS)
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Joint Communication from the Commission & the HRVP
INDICATIVE TIMETABLE	Adoption foreseen in June 2025
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	The Joint Communication responds to a call by the European Council to steer the EU's external digital policy. It will outline the EU priorities and modalities of cooperation with our international partners in digital policy, including technology, innovation and investments.

This document is for information purposes only. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described, including its timing, are subject to change.

A. Political context, problem definition and subsidiarity check

Political context (max 10 lines)

On XX April 2024, the European Council invited a Joint Communication by the Commission and High Representative on strengthening the EU's leadership in global digital affairs. They pointed to the risks for the EU in terms of competitiveness, if it were to fall behind in the global tech race. This implies building on the progress made by the EU in recent years in developing a network of Digital Partnerships and Alliances with partner countries across the world and using tools such as the EU's Digital Diplomacy¹. The race for digital and tech competitiveness is global, and the Joint Communication will outline a strategy for the EU to be a stronger digital player in the world stage, to pursue its strategic interests in the field of technology and digital transformation and support a secure and human-centric digital transformation of partner countries.

Problem the initiative aims to tackle (max 20 lines)

The global landscape is marked by increasing tensions, polarisation and instability, with digital technologies playing a growing role in international security issues, in areas such as supply chains, dual-use technologies (i.e., technologies that can be used both for civilian and military purposes), cybersecurity and hybrid threats (i.e., when foreign actors use a mix of tactics, including both military and non-military means, to harm a target, while not adopting conventional warfare instruments). Economic players and countries able to master digital technologies not only gain a decisive economic edge in terms of competitiveness and efficiency, but also can use them to strengthen their national defence and security. Conversely, those who are late in embracing these technologies risk lagging behind economically and undermining their political sovereignty. Tech competitiveness therefore is an economic and security imperative for all aspiring to durable wealth and stability. In the current geopolitical tech race, no single country masters all elements of the tech value chain and competition and innovation constantly reshape the game. International tech cooperation and trade with key partners and allies, coupled with proper diversification and risk mitigation policies are therefore needed to support EU tech and digital agenda.

Basis for EU action (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

Legal basis

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Practical need for EU action

¹ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/digital-diplomacy_en

There is an urgent need to reinforce the EU's external action on digital policy, with the goal to strengthen Europe's global tech competitiveness, as the EU faces challenges in keeping up with other global actors. Furthermore, the EU's economic security and defence are at risk due to its dependence on foreign technologies and supply chains. The EU needs to promote its own technology solutions and strengthen its cybersecurity and defence capabilities, enhance the resilience and security of global supply chains for technologies and critical inputs, and promote its approach on norms and standards to shape a global digital transformation that is human-centric, trustworthy, and respects human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Enhanced cooperation between the EU and EU Member States is needed to ensure a consistent and strong approach, and to allow for maximum impact, including at local level in the partner countries.

B. Objectives and policy options (max 20 lines)

The objectives of the upcoming Joint Communication are to define the strategy to step up internal and external actions to foster the EU's technological sovereignty, democracy, and security, with the EU acting in close coordination with its Member States and EU tech companies through a 'Team Europe' approach. Possible approaches include:

- Leveraging digital cooperation with partner countries and reinforcing the existing network of Digital Partnerships and Alliances to boost the EU's tech competitiveness and sovereignty, in line with the objectives of the Competitiveness Compass².
- Concrete action on international cooperation, in emerging technologies such as AI and quantum – including under Horizon Europe – on cybersecurity and secure connectivity, on talent mobility, on international aspects of digital governance (platforms, data, AI) and on Internet Governance.
- Building an integrated EU offer of tech solutions to international partners, as part of the Global Gateway³, closely involving EU tech companies and innovators, to support the digital transformation of partner countries.
- Better coordinating unified EU positions in plurilateral and multilateral fora
- Leveraging Digital Diplomacy tools to strengthen the EU's engagement with partner countries.

C. Likely impacts (max 10 lines)

A better-coordinated delivery of the EU's unique offer combining innovation, regulation and investment will protect the EU's strategic interests in the field of technology and digital transformation and strengthen the EU's economic security. An increasing number of effective partnerships will enable the EU to promote European technology solutions and policy approaches globally, while also supporting a secure and human-centric digital transformation of partner countries and promoting the EU's role in global digital governance.

D. Better regulation instruments (max 10 lines)

Impact assessment

No impact assessment is required for this initiative.

Consultation strategy

To ensure that this initiative responds to the needs and expectations of all concerned parties, we will employ a comprehensive and targeted consultation strategy for this Joint Communication.

First, all interested parties will have the opportunity to provide general feedback through this Call for Evidence. In addition, the consultation includes:

- Member States who have provided political perspectives and priorities in ministerial meetings and in the meetings of different Council formations.
- Targeted consultation has taken place of EU stakeholders from private sector, academia and civil society who are offering practical insights and feedback their specific needs and challenges consulted through dedicated meetings.

Why we are consulting?

The objective of the consultation process is to give stakeholders an opportunity to provide their views and help shape the EU's external digital policy going forward. Any initiatives with policy choices or significant impacts that

² https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/competitiveness-compass_en

³ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en

will emerge from the strategy will be accompanied by impact assessments in line with the Better Regulation Guidelines and Toolbox.

Target audience

This consultation aims to gather the views of a variety of stakeholders. These include:

- Tech companies, trade associations and business communities
- National authorities
- Citizens/General Public
- Third country authorities
- International organisations operating in the area of digital policies
- Civil society organisations and NGOs
- Experts, academia and think tanks