

Commission Proposes Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles

Anna Pingen

On 26 January 2022, the Commission proposed a [Declaration on digital rights and principles for a human-centred digital transformation](#). The Commission builds upon previous Council initiatives such as the [Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment](#), the [Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government](#), and the [Lisbon Declaration – Digital Democracy with a Purpose](#). The proposal was shaped through consultation and exchange with citizens and interested parties.

The adoption should take the form of a joint solemn declaration to be signed by the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission. In doing so, the Commission wishes to define a set of principles for a human-centred digital transformation and make sure that the values of the Union and the rights and freedoms of individuals as guaranteed by Union law are respected and reinforced both offline and online.

The Commission has recognised that digital technologies and emerging technological breakthroughs are transforming every aspect of our lives and have a great impact on how the economy and society are organised. These developments, which have become accelerated in the wake of COVID-19, have also increased the digital divide across the EU – the divide between well-connected urban areas and rural/remote territories and the one between those who can benefit from an accessible and secure digital environment and those who cannot. It is therefore vital that all actors (such as administrations, research and education institutions) ensure inclusiveness, so that everyone can benefit from digital transformation. However, these new digital technologies and digital data can also entail undesirable risks that can have far-reaching effects for citizens, democratic values, and security. In line with the 2030 Digital Compass (→ [eu-crim 1/2021, 8-9](#)), the Commission would like to define a set of principles that will serve as guidance for a sustainable, human-centric, and value-based digital transformation.

The Commission therefore proposed that the EU should be committed to the following:

- To put people at the centre of the digital transformation by strengthening the democratic framework for a digital transformation that benefits everyone and by taking the necessary measures to ensure that the values of the Union and the rights of individuals are respected both online and offline;
- To strengthen solidarity and inclusion by making sure that technological solutions respect people's rights, enable the exercise of these rights, and promote inclusion, thus making sure that digital transformation leaves no one behind, and by developing adequate frameworks so that all market actors benefit from the digital transformation;

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- To ensure access to excellent connectivity for everyone;
 - To ensure the right to digital education and skills for everyone by promoting and supporting efforts to equip all education and training institutions with digital connectivity, infrastructure, and tools;
 - To ensure that everyone is able to "disconnect" and benefit from safeguards for a better work-life balance in the digital environment;
 - To ensure that all Europeans are offered an accessible, secure, and trusted digital identity that enables access to a broad range of online services;
 - To empower European citizens to benefit from the advantages of artificial intelligence (AI) while protecting them against risks that the use of AI might entail;
 - To ensure a safe, secure, and fair online environment in which fundamental rights are protected;
 - To continue safeguarding fundamental rights online, notably the freedom of expression and information;
 - To take measures to tackle all forms of illegal content and to create an online environment in which people are protected against disinformation and other forms of harmful content;
 - To ensure the possibility to easily move personal data between different digital services;
 - To support the development and use of sustainable digital technologies that have a minimal environmental and social impact.
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