

# Commission Sets Out Digital Compass

**Thomas Wahl**

## News

On 9 March 2021, the Commission presented a concrete vision, targets and avenues for Europe to become a leader in the digital area by 2030. The [Communication “2030 Digital Compass: the European Way for the Digital Decade”](#) (COM(2021) 118 final) sets out:

- A vision for the successful digital transformation by 2030 that is anchored in empowerment of European citizens and businesses and ensures the security and resilience of its digital ecosystem and supply chains;
- Clear and concrete objectives along the following four cardinal points that will map the EU’s trajectory: a digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals, secure and performant sustainable digital infrastructures, digital transformation of businesses and digitalisation of public services;
- A framework for digital principles that will enable Europeans to make full use of digital opportunities and technologies;
- An outline of a digital compass to ensure that the EU will reach its goals. The digital compass provides a governance structure, a framework to facilitate and accelerate the launch of multi-country projects to address gaps in EU critical capacities, and a multi-stakeholder forum to engage with the wider public;
- Actions to project the European way for digital transformation on the global stage.

The concrete targets to be achieved by 2030 include, for example:

- At least 80% of all adults should have basic digital skills;
- All populated areas should be covered by 5G;
- Three out of four companies should use cloud computing services, big data and Artificial Intelligence;
- All key public services should be available online and 80% citizens should use an eID solution.

The Commission’s Communication is to start a societal debate on digital principles. According to the Commission, the European way should be built upon the fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and protection of personal data and privacy, including the right to be forgotten, but include more comprehensive guiding principles, e.g.:

- Universal access to internet services;
- A secure and trusted online environment;
- Universal digital education and skills;
- Access to digital systems and devices that respect the environment;
- Accessible and human-centric digital public services and administration;

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- Ethical principles for human-centric algorithms.

The Commission proposes that, after further public consultation, the digital principles could be enshrined in a solemn, inter-institutional declaration between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. This declaration could complement the European Pillar of Social Rights. An annual Eurobarometer survey should monitor whether Europeans feel that their digital rights are respected.

Ultimately, the Commission wishes that Europe promotes its ideas through increased international digital partnerships. To this end, the EU will liaise with external funds, so that common global goals can be achieved.

The Communication on the Digital Compass follows [President von der Leyen's call](#) to make the next years Europe's "Digital Decade"; it responds to the [European Council's call](#) for a "Digital Compass" and builds on the Commission's [digital strategy](#) presented in February 2020 (→ [eucrim 1/2020, 24](#)).

The Communication will be followed by structured consultations on the targets and elements of the compass as well as by an open consultation on digital principles. By the end of 2021, the Commission aims to reach agreement on a "Declaration of Digital Principles" with the other institutions. In the third quarter of 2021, a Digital Policy Programme operationalising the Digital Compass is to be proposed.

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