

Digital Europe programme – Coreper confirms common understanding reached with Parliament

The EU is supporting the **digitisation of its economies and societies** by setting up a **new funding programme, Digital Europe**, for the years 2021 to 2027. Today, the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee confirmed the common understanding reached by the Romanian presidency and the European Parliament on the proposal, which aims to promote the large-scale roll-out and uptake of key digital technologies such as artificial intelligence applications and state-of-the-art cybersecurity tools.

The common understanding excludes budget-related and horizontal issues which are being discussed as part of the negotiations on the EU's next multiannual financial framework (MFF) covering the period 2021 to 2027.

Digital Europe will help European businesses, especially smaller ones, benefit from the vast opportunities of digital transformation, scale up and gain a competitive edge. At the same time, it will have a significant impact on bridging the digital divide so that everybody has the skills and knowledge to participate fully in a digitised society. The programme will also foster greater professionalism taking into account gender balance, especially with regard to high performance and cloud computing, big data analytics and cybersecurity.

Alexandru Petrescu, Minister for Communications and Information Society of Romania, President of the Council

The Digital Europe programme will provide funding for projects in five crucial areas: **supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills**, and ensuring **wide use of digital technologies** across the economy and society.

Funding for projects to build up high-performance computing will benefit areas such as healthcare, environment and security. Support for spreading the use of artificial intelligence will include, for example, better access to AI testing facilities.

The programme will support advanced digital skills training for the workforce and students, as well as for small and medium-sized enterprises and public administrations. The provision of financing will help ensure that people have easy, trusted and seamless access to digital public services, for instance by enhancing the EU-wide interoperability of public services.

A network of **European Digital Innovation Hubs** will provide access to technological expertise for businesses – in particular SMEs – and public

administrations. These hubs will bring together industry, businesses and administrations in need of new technological solutions on the one hand, and companies that have market-ready solutions, on the other. With a broad geographical coverage across Europe, the hubs will play a central role in the implementation of the programme.

Digital Europe will be complementary to a number of other programmes supporting digital transformation, such as Horizon Europe and the digital aspects of the Connecting Europe Facility.

Next steps

The Council expects the negotiations with the next European Parliament to start as soon as possible, with a view to being finalised on the basis of the progress achieved as reflected in the common understanding. Negotiations will also need to take into account the overall agreement on the multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027.