[G7 tech leaders agree bold new proposals to boost online safety worldwide](#)

- Declaration signed in digital and tech ministerial meeting ahead of June G7 Leaders Summit
- Principles to improve online safety include commitments on human rights and protecting young people
- Roadmap to digitise outdated paper-based system for global trade among other agreements

Leaders from the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the US and EU signed a declaration containing a series of shared principles on how to tackle the global challenge of online safety, including that online firms should have systems and processes in place to reduce illegal and harmful activity and prioritise the protection of children.

The principles, which have been shaped by the UK's world-leading approach, say that any steps to improve online safety must support the values of open and democratic societies and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The [joint ministerial declaration](#) was signed at a virtual meeting hosted by UK Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden to fire the starting gun on this year's G7 Summit. The agreements are part of the first of seven ministerial declarations due to be signed this year.

Other measures include plans to turbocharge exports by digitising the cumbersome and centuries-old paper-based system for key international trade transactions and improving the free flow of data.

In a sign of stronger cooperation to address concerns over the market power of big tech platforms, international regulators and policymakers will meet with the UK's Competition and Markets Authority in the autumn to discuss long term coordination and enforcement.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

> As a coalition of the world's leading democracies and technological powers, we want to forge a compelling vision of how tech should support and enhance open and democratic societies in the digital age.
>
> Together we have agreed a number of priorities in areas ranging from internet safety to digital competition to make sure the digital revolution is a democratic one that enhances global prosperity for all.

The G7 Digital and Tech ministerial meeting is the culmination of ongoing discussions and negotiations around a number of priority areas and in the ministerial declaration published today, G7 member states have agreed to:

- Internet safety principles to guide work to improve online safety. G7 countries commit to protecting human rights online and agree that tech companies have a corporate responsibility for their users' safety. This means they should have systems and processes in place to reduce illegal and harmful activity and prioritise the protection of children. These are based on underlying principles in the UK Government's [Online Harms White Paper](#).

- Develop a framework for the use of electronic transferable records, to address legal barriers and coordinate domestic reforms so companies can use digital solutions for the shipment of goods and trade finance — replacing slow and outdated paper transactions.

- A consensus that a more joined-up approach to regulation and promoting competition in digital markets is needed to better serve consumers and businesses. Regulators have agreed to meet in the autumn to discuss these issues further.

- Cooperation to seize the opportunities and benefits of data free flow with trust for people, businesses and economies. The G7 will build evidence on the impacts of data localisation, promote regulatory cooperation and accelerate the development of best practice approaches for data sharing across a broader set of priority areas. These areas may include transport, science and research, education and natural disaster mitigation.

- Collaboration on how democratic governments and stakeholders can support the development of digital technical standards that online tools, services and protocols should measure up to, and which, among other things, will guide the development of a free, open and secure Internet.

For the first time the G7 also discussed the importance of promoting security and resilience in critical digital infrastructure, in particular in telecommunications, including 5G and future communications technologies. In the declaration, G7 countries commit to developing their collaboration on this throughout the year.

Building on the momentum from this G7 Digital and Technology track, the UK will also host the Future Tech Forum this September. The Forum will convene like-minded democratic partners to discuss the role of technology in supporting open societies and tackling global challenges, in collaboration with industry, academia, and other key stakeholders.

As is tradition for the host nation to highlight their culture, over the two days of the ministerial track (28 – 29 April) G7 ministers and invited guests will enjoy performances from the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and National Theatre. These organisations, and over 5,000 others, have benefitted from the unprecedented £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund.

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Notes to editors:

- The talks came after the Digital Secretary separately spoke with his US counterparts yesterday to emphasize the importance of global collaboration to protect people online and drive the international debate in this area.

- The UK is already leading the way internationally with domestic work in the priority areas:

- In coming months Britain will become one of the first countries in the world to [introduce legislation](#) that will hold social media companies to account for tackling a comprehensive range of harms on their platforms.

- Last month the government unveiled a trailblazing pro-competition [Digital Markets Unit](#) to help make sure tech giants cannot exploit their market dominance to crowd out competition and stifle innovation online. Given the increasingly borderless nature of digital markets, the G7's support for this new pro-competition approach is an important step forward to tackle the issue globally.

- As part of plans to build back better from the pandemic and level up communities, the UK is working with international partners to promote the flow of data across borders. It is making use of its independent powers to deepen its strategic international relationships and ensure trade deals include cutting-edge data provisions which reduce barriers to trade and promote data protection standards. The government struck such a deal with Japan which came into force on 1 January 2021 that removes barriers to the free flow of data, including on data localisation, and commits both parties to a legal framework protecting the personal information of users of electronic commerce.

- The UK Government is currently progressing its £250 million [Diversification Strategy](#) to boost innovation in the domestic telecoms market and reduce reliance on a small number of 5G equipment suppliers.

- Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden recently set out his [ten tech priorities](#) which include leading the global conversation on tech, keeping the UK

safe and secure online, and championing free and fair digital trade.

- The government also published its groundbreaking [Integrated Review](#) of defence and security last month setting the goal of cementing the UK's position as a responsible and democratic cyber power.

- More information on electronic transferable records:

- The International Chamber of Commerce estimates that 99 per cent of trade transactions remain paper-based, generating 25 billion documents each year for container shipping alone. The Digital Container Shipping Association estimates that if 50 per cent of container shipping transactions are digitised it could save US$4 billion per year globally by 2030.

- Transferable records, like bills of lading, warehouse receipts or promissory notes, are documents which dominate international trade and trade finance and developed out of medieval mercantile customs to ensure consistency across borders. In the UK, a mix of common law and legislative rules prevent the transition from paper to digital, the Bills of Exchange Act 1882 and the Carriage of Goods by Sea Act 1992 being clear barriers.

- Enabling businesses to use electronic transferable records will generate efficiencies in time, security or data processing, as well as economic savings. This will strengthen the resilience of our global economic system and play a crucial role in trade recovery across the G7.

- There is clearly work to be done to develop a domestic legislative solution. The UK Government is reforming the UK's laws for the digital age and has asked the Law Commission to make recommendations to solve the legal barriers to using electronic transferable records. This research project is ongoing and we expect a consultation report will be published shortly.

- In addition, it is important to remember that these are international documents and it is vital for the private sector that these legal documents continue to meet commercial expectations across the globe. This means that the UK must work to socialise these reforms in international fora, promote interoperability between systems and data sets, and encourage regulators to meet and cooperate on relevant issues, such as data protection.

- Our G7 policy agenda is the subject of negotiation with our partners via the Ministerial tracks and Sherpa network, both in the build up to and

after the Summit. The other G7 ministerial tracks include:

- The Finance Track
- The Foreign and Development Track
- The Health Track
- The Climate and Environment Track
- The Interior Track

- The Trade Track

- Further information on the G7 can be found at the [G7 website](#).
- Follow the G7 on Twitter and Instagram @G7