

Digital Europe 2.0 – Moving Towards a Digital Society

Resolution adopted at the EPP Congress, Madrid-Spain
21-22 October 2015



EUROPE is facing an era of great technological change. Digital innovations are reshaping our society, economy and industries with a scale and speed like never before. Mobile and cloud technologies, big data and the Internet of Things (IoT) offer unimaginable opportunities for Europe, driving growth, jobs and improving the lives of citizens.

We must embrace these new technologies, as they bring improvement and efficiency to many areas including health services, transportation, energy, agriculture, manufacturing, retail and public administration. Technology can also improve the governing process by helping policy-makers take better decisions and more closely involve the citizens.

The internet has considerable potential to promote democracy, cultural diversity and human rights like the freedom of expression and freedom to information. We must protect these online freedoms.

However, we also have to understand how the scale and speed of these changes impact consumers, users, citizens and workers, including all of these combined into a single «e-person», as well as how they affect social and private life, education, science, government, democracy and business.

The EPP is committed to leveraging the benefits and tackling the challenges in order to create an inclusive, secure and sustainable digital society benefitting from the internet and digital technologies.

01

Jobs and growth boosted by the digital transformation of industry and enterprise

Renewing industry and enterprise through new technologies and innovation will create new jobs and allow businesses to prosper. The digital revolution, though, also presents a challenge. Most of the value of the digital economy will come from increased productivity and competitiveness through technologies that support new business models and deliver new services. To embrace the digital transition, we need a regulatory environment that drives competition and innovation, and empowers companies with trust and an awareness of the benefits of digital technology.

The European People's Party:

- Emphasises the need to establish centres of digital transformation in a pan-European network to support and incentivise digital innovation through financial and non-financial instruments, positive awareness and e-Leadership, especially among smaller organisations;
- Encourages Member States to make the digital transformation a political, economic and social priority-Europe's growth and competitiveness depends to a large extent on embracing the digital transformation;
- Stresses the importance of achieving and maintaining an open and competitive EU digital single market where innovation is encouraged and its go-to-market is facilitated, so that European citizens and businesses can make use of the latest technology and European entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs can grow and compete globally;
- Draws attention to the need for harmonised technical standards and interoperability;
- Emphasises the need for coherence between the EU's industrial and digital agendas (industry 4.0, the 'industrial internet') as essential for re-launching industrial investment;
- Invites the EU Commission to sponsor Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for pioneering business models that can create added value.

02

Enhancing citizens' healthcare through new technology and innovation

New technologies in healthcare can increase efficiency, improve quality of life and unlock innovation in health markets (eHealth). Healthcare in Europe faces challenges including rising costs, ageing populations, increasing expectations by the citizens, and increased budgetary pressure. Therefore,

the European People's Party:

- Underlines the importance of the European Commission's renewed eHealth plan 2012-2020 on patient-focused solutions and widespread deployment;
- Notes that tools for eHealth and mHealth (mobile health, for example phone apps) are best for tackling the challenges and supporting the shift towards prevention. These tools can empower citizens to take control over their personal data;
- Recognises that further initiatives are needed to give patients a more participative role and to make healthcare services available for all. Examples such as medical consultations made over videoconference and the Internet of Things for medical devices (IoT-MD) should be explored;
- Calls on the European Commission and Member States to promote modern healthcare technologies by analysing infrastructure needs and potential pitfalls. A common citizen-driven strategy needs to involve all stakeholders—physicians, governments, researchers and tech companies—to address safety, privacy protection, transparency, equal access and interoperability at local and EU level, especially with patient medical records, insurance and refunding models;
- Considers that the IoT-MD and the use of mHealth will generate large amounts of data that should be used to boost healthcare R&D by looking for patterns, reducing trial periods for medication, and the early detection and prevention of diseases.

03

Smart technologies, smart cities, and smart living

More than half the world's population lives in cities, and by 2050 the figure will near 70%. Innovative solutions can make our cities better to live, work and do business in. In «Smart Cities», merging urban planning, ecology, and information technology will ensure the benefits reach every neighbourhood and improve the lives of citizens. Real-time information on mobile devices about public transport or access to shared resources (like cars, bikes or parking) will bring economic, social and environmental impacts. Systems providing real-time information to guide drivers to less congested routes are another example.

The European People's Party:

- Encourages Member States to support local governments in assessing citizens' and cities' needs in order to design framework strategies for piloting solutions, involving ICT, energy and transport sectors, taking into account the dimensions of smart mobility, smart environment, smart people, smart living, smart governance and smart economy;
- Invites the European Commission to intensify support for Member States by creating ways to share the achievements and results of co-funded demonstration projects or research and innovation partnerships, and by providing funding for pilot projects and large-scale implementations;
- Asserts that citizens are the key element in all phases, and therefore, strongly recommends their involvement in order to promote social cohesion and reinforce the community.
- Stresses the importance of embedding security and privacy by design in all smart developments as a matter of ensuring the resilience, reliability and trustworthiness of such systems.

04

Innovation of the public sector with the digitalisation of public services

Citizens and businesses are demanding more open, transparent, accountable and effective governance. Reaching economies of scale and agility by adopting cloud computing architectures will help move towards e-government, e-health, e-procurement and e-invoicing, allowing public services to share information and making it easier for citizens and businesses to interact. The implementation of the «once only» principle removes administrative burdens when users are required to supply the same information more than once. Points of single contact make interactions between government and user simpler, faster and more effective.

The European People's Party:

- Encourages Member States to adopt «digital by default» strategies in which interactions with public services are personalised, user-friendly and delivered through electronic channels and cloud computing;
- Calls on Member States and the European Commission to further analyse which public services and under which circumstances the «once only» principle is applicable across borders. In this regard, the use of electronic identities as well as a common and interoperable platform for electronic identification (eID) among Member States is crucial;
- Recommends that the European Commission and Member States to build on the success of the European Inter-operability Framework (EIF) for delivering government services across Europe, and make it mandatory for cross-border e-services and IT systems developed by the EU institutions;
- Calls on Member States to foster Open Government implementations including public data not related to citizens, which are crucial for transparency, accountability and participatory democracy development. Public data can facilitate the creation of innovative services for citizens and businesses, stimulate new markets, create jobs and retain talent. Moreover, the Internet enables citizens to play an active role in different stages of the decision-making process, deepening the connection between citizens and elected representatives.

05

Digital literacy and inclusion - the right skills to make the most of the digital age

The EPP reaffirms its concerns regarding long-term policies for digital literacy acquisition in the e-Inclusion context (employability, re-skilling, up-skilling and social inclusion). As technology is dramatically shaping the labour market with automation, organisations struggle with the shortage of skilled workers necessary for productivity and efficiency. This is also true regarding «digital natives» who overestimate their skills. Nearly 70% of people who lack basic digital skills are older than 55, so there is a large risk of digital exclusion with significant social and economic impacts.

The European People's Party:

- Calls on the European Commission and Member States to provide incentives for companies to offer certified training and internships targeting certain skills, exploring the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs);
- Encourages employers to use the European Social Fund to invest in human capital, either by providing learning vouchers to low-skilled workers, or by supporting the recruitment of new, low-skilled candidates if employers invest in their training;
- Further calls on Member States to support those initiatives and organisations that encourage and train digital illiterates to use digital services, and to create an environment for better cooperation between people, businesses, non-profit organisations and the public sector;
- Stresses the importance of including digital skills in all types of education: formal, non-formal and informal;
- Encourages Member States to create their own National Grand Coalitions for Digital Jobs to further engage the private sector, making better use of the available European funding mechanisms for digital skills development (Structural funds, ESF, H2020, Erasmus+, Youth Guarantee, etc.).

06

Disruptive thinking to ensure digital is rooted in our education systems

Europe must continue to embrace new, more adaptive models of learning and education technologies. Education systems need to develop a culture of risk-taking, allowing the cycle of error, learning and success that is fundamental to creation and innovation. We must ensure the digital world is rooted in our education systems; that we mentor young people, in particular women, and support them on the path towards technology careers.

The European People's Party:

- Calls on Member States to analyse education systems and their inclusion of digital skills. It is important to give the right incentives and provide e-leadership competencies to school directors to develop the best strategies for digital learning in the classroom. The engagement and training of teachers should be key drivers in defining new curricula based on a multi-stakeholder model, fit for market needs;
- Considers that we must ensure an adequate supply of workers with the skills needed to sustain long-term economic growth and social cohesion;
- Considers that we must ensure a supply of high-demand professionals like data analysts and data scientists to make the most of the data economy; cyber security professionals to strengthen security and trust; and e-Leaders capable of understanding and envisioning how technologies could improve their businesses, both in performance and new business models and services.
- Supports initiatives to include coding-related subjects in national curricula and emphasises the need to promote online security and proper online behaviour in schools, raising awareness among children and parents about the risks of the Internet.

07

Digital infrastructure for connecting everyone, everything, everywhere

Infrastructure is the backbone of the digital world. According to the European Commission, in 2014 only 54% of EU citizens had broadband at speeds greater than 30 megabits per second. If we are to connect everyone, everything, everywhere in order to foster growth and jobs, and to bridge the digital divide, Europe needs to be more ambitious on widely available and competitively priced fast and ultra-fast internet access, especially in underserved, rural communities.

The European People's Party:

- Calls on the European Commission to urgently promote investment in developing and deploying next-generation technologies. European structural funds and the public funding for broadband and Trans-European Telecommunication Networks must be flexible, technologically neutral and based on the criteria of tomorrow; broadband competition that allows consumers to easily change providers and appropriate regulatory oversight will ensure consumers' interests;
- Calls for developing an efficient spectrum policy that would ensure adequate connectivity for EU citizens bringing a coordinated spectrum assignment and certainty for investors. We should also continue to explore the idea of a single regulator of pan-European licenses;
- Encourages the European Commission and Member States to eliminate retail roaming charges and review wholesale charges;
- Requests that the European Commission accelerate the investment in ICT research and innovation via Public-Private Partnerships by using the Horizon 2020 research funding programmes in examples like the 5th generation wireless systems and high-performance Cloud Computing infrastructure;
- Congratulates the successful developments and recent achievements of the European Navigation System (Galileo Galilei), which will provide a high-precision positioning system, interoperable with the US GPS and Russian Glonass systems, and increase Europe's technological independence.

08

Ensuring security and protecting privacy to enhance confidence and trust

For the EPP, all the aforementioned digital innovations need to be implemented with trust and security. In the digital world, network and information security is a prerequisite for the safety of individuals, society and the economy. Innovation will be key for cybersecurity in order for Europe to be at the forefront of global competition.

Our policies must prioritise cybersecurity and ensure security-by-design across three pillars: people, process and technology. Policies must protect the citizens' right to safety, security and privacy; support businesses in innovation; and enable law enforcement to use digital resources to protect public security online and offline in ways which do not undermine public trust in technology.

Compliance with modern and harmonised personal data protection rules; with well-established standards of security-by-design in all digital technologies, networks and services in all Member States; and clear privacy rules which balance citizens' rights and businesses' needs, are vital for building trust and security. The regulatory framework should be guided by the concept of «as little as possible and as much as necessary», fit for the digital age, and open and technologically neutral enough to accommodate future developments. In particular, small businesses and start-ups must remain at the heart of the discussion.

The European People's Party:

- Calls on the European institutions to finish the Data Protection package by the end of 2015, consider adjusting the e-Privacy Directive, and finalise the Directive on Network and Information Security to create a stable and balanced regulatory system that protects users and incentivises investment;
- Calls on the European Commission to intensify research and innovation projects on cyber security, in public-private partnership, to seek user- and business-friendly ways to use available data from a data-driven security model, and to find solutions to protect end point devices in a security-by-design principle;

- Calls on the European institutions and national governments to advance policies and legislative initiatives to tackle cybercrime and other advanced threats to the safety and security of Europe's digital economy and society, including through public-private partnership and international cooperation based on due process, trust and transparency;
- Calls on the European institutions and Member States to foster a culture of security to influence people's attitudes, awareness and behaviour so that they become more security conscious in the online world.

**If you have any question
you would like to ask
please contact us.**

Rue du Commerce 10
1000 Brussels
T +32-2-2854140
E connect@epp.eu