European Cloud Initiative

2016/2145(INI) - 26/01/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the own-initiative report by Jerzy BUZEK (EPP, PL) on the European Cloud Initiative.

The report noted that the full potential of cloud computing for Europe can only be realised when data can flow freely across the Union with clear rules, and when international data flows play an increasingly important role in the European and global economy.

The EU is lagging behind on the development of high-performance computing (HPC) as a result of its under-investment in establishing a complete HPC system.

Firstly, Members welcomed the Commission’s European Cloud Initiative as part of the implementation of the Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy and the Digitising European Industry Package, thus fostering the growth of the European digital economy, contributing to the competitiveness of European businesses and services and enhancing global market positioning. They stressed that work on standardisation in cloud computing should be accelerated and that creating more awareness of the benefits of cloud computing is crucial.

European Open Science Cloud (EOSC): Members gave their support to the EOSC as part of the European Cloud Initiative that will create a virtual environment where scientists and professionals from all regions can store, share, manage, analyse and reuse their research data. It must be developed and used with due regard for the fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The committee welcomed the Commission's plan to extend the user base to the industry and to governments as fast as possible. The EOSC should be accompanied by a comprehensive **cyber-security strategy**, because the scientific community has a need for a reliable data infrastructure that can be used without exposing research work to data loss, corruption or intrusion.

European programmes: Members urged the Commission to:

- lead by example, and to make all research data funded by European programmes – such as Horizon 2020, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) and others – and its results to be open by default, based on the findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable (FAIR) principles;
- identify appropriate financing mechanisms for the EOSC and the European Data Infrastructure (EDI);
- ensure that the EOSC **benefits all regions** of the Union, exploring the use of regional development funds for widening the initiative.

Removing barriers: Members supported the Commission’s intention to remove barriers, especially technical and legal ones, to the free movement of data and data services, to remove as well disproportionate data localisation requirements, and to promote the interoperability of data by linking the European Cloud Initiative to the Free Flow of Data Initiative. In order to achieve a digital society, the free flow of data must be regarded as the **fifth freedom** within the single market. They noted that a clear legal framework, sufficient skills and resources related to the management of big data, as well as the recognition of relevant professional qualifications are prerequisites for unleashing the full potential of cloud computing.

The Commission is urged to engage with stakeholders, especially the industry, in identifying big data, and to create incentives for stakeholders, in particular SMEs and start-ups, to use, open and share data in the Single Market.

Text and data mining: the report stressed that full availability of public data within the EOSC will not be sufficient to remove all barriers to data-based research. The initiative needs to be complemented by a **modern copyright framework** that should allow for the removal of fragmentation and lack of interoperability from the European data research process.

Data protection, fundamental rights and data security: the report urged the Commission to take action to promote the further harmonisation of laws in the Member States in order to avoid jurisdictional confusion and fragmentation, and to ensure transparency in the digital single market.

Stressing that the EU is a global importer and exporter of digital services, and that it requires a strong cloud computing and data economy to be competitive, Members called on the Commission to take a lead in striving towards the creation of uniform, globally accepted standards of personal data protection.

Members recognised that a harmonised approach to the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation, including guidelines, compliance toolkits and awareness-raising campaigns for citizens, researchers and businesses, is crucial, especially for the development of the EOSC and the facilitation of research cooperation, including by high-performance computing.

Lastly, the Commission is urged to:

- cooperate in establishing a safe and trustworthy digital infrastructure and to build up high levels of cybersecurity in compliance with the Network and Information Security Directive;
- work with industry-led standard setting initiatives to ensure that the single market remains accessible to third countries and responsive to technological evolution, avoiding barriers which will hinder innovation and competitiveness in Europe.