Digital Europe programme 2021–2027

2018/0227(COD) - 19/03/2021 - Council position

The Council adopted its position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Digital Europe Programme and repealing decision (EU) 2015/2240.

The proposed regulation aims at establishing the Digital Agenda for the duration of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027.

Programme's objectives

The overall objectives of the proposed programme are to:

- support and accelerate the digital transformation of Europe's economy, industry and society, bringing its benefits to citizens, public administrations and businesses across the EU;

- strengthen Europe's competitiveness in the global digital economy while helping to bridge the digital divide across the Union;

- strengthen the Union's strategic autonomy, through comprehensive, cross-sectoral and cross-border support and an enhanced EU contribution.

The programme has five specific interrelated objectives:

1) High Performance Computing;

2) Artificial Intelligence (AI);

3) Cybersecurity and trust;

4) Advanced digital skills;

5) Deployment and best use of digital capabilities and interoperability.

European Digital Innovation Hubs

In the implementation of the programme, a central role should be attributed to European Digital Innovation Hubs, which should stimulate the broad adoption of advanced digital technologies by industry, in particular by SMEs and by other entities that employ up to 3 000 people ('mid-caps'), by public organisations and by the academic community.

An initial network of European Digital Innovation Hubs, consisting of at least one hub for each Member State, would be set up in the first year of the programme. The designation of digital innovation clusters should be done through an open and competitive process.

Digital Innovation Hubs would serve as access points to the latest digital resources, including high performance computing (HPC), artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and other innovative technologies such as key enabling technologies, also available in available also in fablabs or citylabs. They should act as single-entry points in accessing tested and validated technologies and should promote open innovation.

Security restrictions

Actions carried out under the Programme should comply with applicable security rules, including with Union and national law and in particular in relation to the protection of the classified information against unauthorised disclosure.

As regards participation in actions under 'Artificial Intelligence' and 'High Performance Computing', the Council position provides that entities controlled from third countries may be eligible for participating in actions under those two specific objectives only if they comply with conditions related to security set out in the work programme.

Ethics

AI-based solutions and data made available shall respect the principle of privacy and security by design and shall fully comply with data protection legislation.

The Council position provides for the possibility for the Commission to carry out ethical reviews and the possibility to suspend, reduce or terminate funding in case of non-compliance with ethical requirements.

Third countries involved in the programme

The programme would be open to the participation of the following third countries through association or partial association, i.e. the association of third countries to a limited number of specific objective pursued under the programme.

Work programmes

The programme would be implemented through the work programmes. The Council's position foresees the use of implementing acts for the adoption of work programmes for directly managed actions.

Budget

The programme would have an overall budget of **EUR 7 588 000 000** in current prices for the period 2021-2027, with the following indicative breakdown:

- high performance computer: EUR 2 226 914 000

- artificial intelligence: EUR 2 061 956 000;

- cybersecurity and trust: EUR 1 649 566 000;

- advanced digital skills: EUR 577 347 000;

- digital capacity and interoperability: EUR 1 072 217 000.

The amounts under the programme could cover up to 100% of the eligible costs, without prejudice to the principle of co-financing.