2030 policy programme “Path to the Digital Decade”

2021/0293(COD) - 15/09/2021 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish the 2030 Policy Programme ‘Path to the Digital Decade’.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: digital skills, basic and advanced, are essential to reinforce the collective resilience of the EU’s society. Digital progress in the Member States has been very uneven in the last years. The trend shows that the countries progressing at a slow pace five years ago, have continued to progress slowly until now.

Building on the 2030 Digital Compass, in which the Commission laid out the vision for a successful digital transformation of Europe's economy and society by the end of the decade, the Commission now introduces a robust governance framework to reach the digital targets in the form of a Path to the Digital Decade. The path seeks to ensure that the EU achieves its objectives and targets towards a digital transformation of society and economy in line with the EU´s values, reinforcing our digital leadership and promoting human centred, inclusive and sustainable digital policies empowering citizens and businesses.

With this new Path to the Digital Decade, there will be structured cooperation to work collectively towards the agreed objectives, while recognising different starting points among Member States.

CONTENT: this draft Decision proposed by the Commission establishes a Policy Programme ‘Path to the Digital Decade’ and sets out a monitoring and cooperation mechanism for that programme consisting of measures to:

- set a clear direction for the digital transformation of the Union and for delivery of the digital targets;

- structure and stimulate cooperation between the Union institutions and Member States;

- ensure the consistency, comparability and completeness of the monitoring and reporting by the Union.

The proposed Decision also establishes a framework for multi-country projects.

Targets

The proposed Decision lists common digital targets along **four cardinal points** (digital skills, digital infrastructures, digitalisation of businesses and of public services) to translate the EU’s ambition for a successfully digitalised Union by 2030 into common concrete objectives.

Cooperation

Specifically, the Commission proposes to engage in an annual cooperation mechanism with Member States that will consist of:

- a structured, transparent and shared monitoring system based on the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) to measure progress towards each of the 2030 targets; including key performance indicators (KPIs);

- an annual report on the ‘State of the Digital Decade', in which the Commission will evaluate progress and provide recommendations for actions;

- multiannual digital decade strategic roadmaps for each Member State, in which they will outline adopted or planned policies and measures in support of the 2030 targets;

- a structured annual framework to discuss and address areas of insufficient progress through recommendations and joint commitments between the Commission and the Member States;

- a mechanism to support the implementation of multi-country projects.

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) should become a part of the report on the state of the Digital Decade and should be used to monitor the progress towards the digital targets. This monitoring should include an analysis of the indicators measuring progress at Member States’ level, national policies and initiatives aimed at reaching the objectives of this draft Decision. For each digital target, key performance indicators (‘KPIs) should be set out in implementing acts to be adopted by the Commission.

Multi-country projects

The Policy Programme ‘Path to the Digital Decade’ also foresees a mechanism for a legal structure enabling the swift and flexible set-up and implementation of multi-country projects, in particular for the deployment across countries of large-scale digital infrastructures and/or services. These large-scale projects would contribute to achieving the targets for Europe's digital transformation by 2030 - projects that no single Member State could develop on its own. Such projects will allow Member States to come together and pool resources to build digital capacities in areas that are fundamental for enhancing Europe's digital sovereignty and for fuelling Europe's recovery.

The Commission has identified an initial list of multi-country projects, which includes several areas for investment: data infrastructure, low-power processors, 5G communication, high-performance computing, secure quantum communication, public administration, blockchain, digital innovation hubs, and investing in people's digital skills.

Reports

The proposal entails the monitoring and reporting on digital progress which will be presented in an annual report on the ‘State of the Digital Decade’, to be submitted to the Parliament and Council. On that occasion, the Commission would share its strategic assessment of the EU’s digital transformation with Council and Parliament and would provide recommended actions and measures to Member States or discuss joint commitments undertaken between the Commission and the Member States.

Review

Lastly, the Commission proposes that the targets are to be reviewed by the Commission by June 2026 to take account of technological, economic and societal developments.