

Policy Recommendations for a European Tech Agenda

Europe's opportunity to preserve an enabling environment for innovation and ensure its global competitiveness and security

The Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) is the premier advocate and thought leader for the global technology industry. ITI's membership comprises 70 of the leading technology and innovation companies from all corners of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, including hardware, software, digital services, semiconductor, network equipment, cybersecurity, and Internet companies.

The technological innovations of ITI's members, and the digitalisation of the economy more broadly, bring innumerable benefits to European industry and society. The tech sector empowers European companies of all sizes and across industries – from agriculture to education, financial services to manufacturing, healthcare to energy and transportation – to leverage frontier innovations towards competition and success in the global marketplace. Whether it is sensors that detect health and safety hazards for workers in real time, or artificial intelligence that allows doctors to analyse complex medical data faster than ever, technology allows us to address some of the most challenging issues of our time and improve the quality of everyday life for Europeans. The tech sector is also already taking significant steps to help prepare the workforce of the future for the shifting skills and competencies that are required in the 21st century.

Tech policy is a crucial priority in the 2019-2024 EU term, one on which Europe has an opportunity to play an international leadership role on policy issues that are increasingly global. ITI and its members believe that building trust and fostering the public interest in the era of digital transformation are essential. Our companies have made great strides in bringing the positive societal benefits of transformative technologies to fruition and remain committed to upholding the fundamental principles of privacy, inclusivity, transparency, and democracy that underpin European society. We believe in the importance of preserving an enabling environment for innovation to ensure Europe's global competitiveness and security. Europe's digital infrastructure is the foundation for that. 5G is a core element to support digital transformations in industry and society, estimated to enable more than €2.2 trillion worth of economic output in Europe by 2030.

ITI has developed recommendations outlining concrete steps that policymakers can take, in partnership with industry, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders, to effectively implement the ambitious agenda for **"Shaping Europe's Digital Future"** launched by the European Commission in February 2020. Our recommendations address the economic and social implications of technology and the role of our industry, in a manner that supports innovation, while recognising the public interests at stake.

Read ITI's full EU Policy Recommendations [here](#).

International Cooperation

Global cooperation and open competition are essential to advancing innovation

Amid calls to boost Europe's "technological sovereignty" in response to concerns about the bloc's diminishing contribution to global value chains and its significant dependence on foreign technologies, we embrace the Commission's statement that this notion is not about protectionism, but about developing stronger players on key technologies in Europe (e.g. artificial intelligence, 5G, quantum computing, cybersecurity, blockchain, data sharing and data usage etc.), and we believe that together we can increase Europe's global competitiveness.

Maintaining and increasing the ability to develop key technologies and ensure their availability to the EU in the future is an unquestionable aim for the EU, as it would be for any government. Our industry acknowledges the sincere public interest objectives the EU is pursuing, and we want to be an active and constructive partner of the EU in achieving those aims.

The notion of technological sovereignty is closely intertwined with that of "strategic autonomy," addressed by the European Commission's own think tank - the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC) – in its note on strategic autonomy in the digital age (July 2019) noting how digital technologies affect all dimensions of strategic autonomy. We welcome the European Commission's statement made in its *Shaping Europe's Digital Future* Communication of February 2020 to not define technological sovereignty *against* particular actors but rather to use it as a way to advance the European technology industry while excluding protectionism and discrimination. Any other approach could harm European interests, and negatively affect larger societal and economic goals, such as the pursuit of innovation, prosperity, peace, and security.

Our Recommendations

- 1. Ensure Europe remains committed to free trade and multilateralism.** Europe can strengthen its ability to shape the digital revolution by embracing globalisation; recognising the significance of its mutual interdependence with like-minded democratic countries like the U.S., Japan, Australia, Singapore and others; and building on the benefits and successes of global collaboration. Moreover, the EU is well placed to benefit from increased international trade, given its companies' high levels of global competitiveness. Since the beginning of the century, EU goods exports have almost tripled, increasing by approximately EUR 1.5 trillion.¹
- 2. Embrace openness as a key driver of innovation.** Many people have put forth suggestions to achieve "technological sovereignty" through new approaches to trade, data and other issues. Most of these ideas can be implemented in ways that are compatible with Europe's longstanding commitments to free trade and open markets and should not be based on the false premise that excluding or otherwise treating foreign entities differently is the way to strengthen Europe's technological autonomy. An open EU economy is in fact a major source of productivity gains and private investment, which in turn foster new technologies, research, and innovation. One cannot and should not forget that globalisation benefits European innovation.
- 3. Recognise globalisation's contribution to the European economy.** We encourage the Commission to maintain its long-standing commitment to collaborating with like-minded democracies and

¹ See [European Commission Communication - Trade for All, Towards a more responsible trade and investment policy, 2015](#)

economic partners. The global nature of many companies is a crucial element of their innovation strategies, their contributions to Europe's goal of maintaining and increasing the ability to develop key competences and technologies and ensure their availability in the future, their efforts to create jobs and enhance competitiveness in Europe, and their commitments to European values, regardless of where they are headquartered.

- 4. Maintain a global leadership role in fostering innovation by relying on global industry-led standards.** In a context of globally integrated markets and value chains, the EU will maintain a leadership role in fostering innovation and interoperability by deepening its international engagement in a broad range of standards development organisations, as well as advancing its legislative agenda. GDPR and the EU Cybersecurity Act are recent examples of Europe's global influence. As the EU moves to implement these measures, it will be important to support international, industry-led, consensus-based standards development bodies. These bodies will develop the most appropriate voluntary standards, which can serve as ways for companies to meet regulatory or other requirements; however, governments should resist the temptation to prescriptively select specific standards that shall fulfill regulatory requirements. As technology and consumer demand changes, so too will standards, allowing companies to adopt the newest and most appropriate standards. This supports the ongoing rethinking of regulation's impact on domestic innovation, industry's competitiveness overall, and Europe's goal of developing new technological capability, resiliency, and influence on the development and deployment of new technologies globally.