



Joint statement between France and Denmark – a vision for European leadership in the Digital 21st century

Digitalisation and technology are defining parameters for how our societies evolve in the 21st century – at the national, European and global level. The impacts of the digital transformation and the race to advance the development of artificial intelligence, robotics, Internet of Things, 5G infrastructure, data-driven business models, and more, create enormous opportunities as well as new challenges.

Digitalisation is global in its nature. It therefore calls for closer international cooperation. France and Denmark firmly believe that Europe has a key leadership role to play in promoting a balanced, human-centric approach in which exchanges, openness, freedom of press and speech are values shared by many. We need a multi-stakeholder approach to make sure that we reap the benefits of digitalisation. Technology will be an essential tool for not only innovation at the domestic level, but also to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals as well as to combat global climate change and deliver on the Paris agreement. At the same time, we need to stand firm and protect our basic democratic principles and values and address the new challenges and vulnerabilities arising from new technologies.

France and Denmark welcome the report of the UN High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation (“The Age of Digital Interdependence”). The report should serve as a starting point in the effort to ensure continued focus on a visionary and ambitious approach, involving all stakeholders, to the global digital agenda. We strongly agree with the report’s overall recognition that human rights ‘apply fully in the digital world’, and we are committed to further consider and discuss the recommendations in detail.

There are legitimate differences in the approaches by governments to technology and digitalisation – also among European countries. However, Europe is more united than divided, and both France and Denmark have put technology and digitalisation at the top of their political agendas, including at the global level as a strategic foreign policy priority.

Time is ripe for a renewed focus on working together to foster cooperation based on our shared values. Europe has a pivotal role in this regard. This task and the opportunities and challenges we face as nations, as European democracies, and as an international community, require courage to join forces in finding innovative, forward-looking, and responsible solutions. We commend the new President-elect of the European Commission for making ‘*Europe fit for the digital age*’ a top priority. The European digital agenda must be firmly grounded in a reinforced commitment to strengthening the European Digital Single Market and Europe’s technological capabilities. Moreover, ensuring continued trust in digital solutions and innovation should be a central objective of this work.

Furthermore, Europe must engage at a global level with a clear vision and strong normative voice about the questions triggered by digital technologies. The EU is already

an agenda-setting global actor on a range of digital issues including aspects related to the Digital Single Market such as protection of personal data, the digital transformation of public service delivery, and securing net neutrality. Based on this foundation, we should promote the European digital agenda and our shared interests and values more pro-actively as a foreign policy priority through building alliances and EU's external policies vis-à-vis likeminded and potential partners. We firmly believe that in doing so, the EU has the potential to become a true 'soft power' in the digital era.

A vision for European leadership in the Digital 21st century should build on the following principles:

- *Values, ethics and rights*: Embracing digital innovation and opportunities while safeguarding our democratic values, including human rights and European cultural diversity.
- *Cohesion*: Working to ensure inclusive and sustainable digital growth to benefit all countries and regions within Europe and globally, in order to avoid new digital divides and threats to societal cohesion.
- *Security and stability*: Safeguarding our democracies and societies from disinformation and attempts to meddle in or tamper with election campaigns, malicious cyber activities and privacy violations, while protecting and promoting the principle of a global, open, free, stable and secure internet.
- *Digital economy and society*: Promoting an innovative digital economy with a balanced and smart approach to regulation, ensuring good framework conditions, transparency and a level playing field in the digital economy for businesses to innovate, prosper, and create jobs as well as offering the best possible digital solutions to Europeans in both the private and the public sector. All actors should contribute their fair share in the digital economy, including with regard to taxation.
- *Smart governance*: Continuous dialogue with the tech industry to ensure that all actors, including companies, take responsibility proportional to their influence in the global, digital economy and society.

France and Denmark are committed to reinforcing a European digital leadership agenda by enhancing cooperation and focus on key areas such as:

- a) strengthening the Digital Single Market making it coherent and fully integrated for digital businesses from start-up to scale-up as well as providing unhindered access to the newest digital technologies and services for all businesses and citizens, including through the development and use of key digital technologies in Europe;
- b) a European regulatory framework that is digital by default, agile, innovation-friendly, and futureproof and explores new ways to regulate the platforms in a fair and balanced way and without obstructing innovation and the fundamental principles of the Digital Single Market;
- c) good practices regarding digital government with emphasis on a user-friendly and accessible public sector providing digital services to citizens and businesses;
- d) promoting investments in and implementation of artificial intelligence nationally and at EU level, while also finding ways to promote, implement and put into practice guiding principles for ethical use of data and artificial intelligence (building on the recent work at EU level, in the OECD, in the Council of Europe and on the future work of the Global Partnership for Artificial Intelligence);

- e) protecting and promoting a multi-stakeholder approach to technology at a point in time where the multilateral system and a rules-based international order is under pressure, with special attention on the digital agenda in the UN, including follow up on the report of the UN High Level Panel for Digital Cooperation, on the resuming discussions in the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), and by support to the reinforced focus on rights in the digital age in the Human Rights Council;
- f) international cooperation concerning: cyber and information security; attempts to meddle in or tamper with election campaigns; detection and removal of online terrorist propaganda and other illegal content as well as cyber harassment. Outreach to the private sector and global tech industry will be key in this domain, including through promotion of the Paris Call on Cybersecurity, the Christchurch Call for Action and the Charter for a free, open and safe Internet. Furthermore, emphasis is needed on using the array of options adopted in the EU's cyber-diplomatic toolbox; reinforcing the general level of resilience of European digital infrastructures via the full implementation of the NIS directive; and supporting a common EU approach on cybersecurity issues related to 5G networks as promoted by the EU Commission in March 2019.
- g) technology in development cooperation and digitalisation as a driver in the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and as a way of addressing the threat of digital poverty.

France and Denmark recall their particular attachment to strengthening their dialogue concerning the digital agenda in the time to come in order to promote a vision for European leadership in the Digital 21st century, building on the principles and agendas laid out above, and by exploring further areas of cooperation. As a first step, we will initiate a discussion among EU foreign ministers concerning external relations aspects of the digital agenda in order to explore ways to make sure that digitalisation becomes a systematic priority in the EU's global activities, promoting the EU as a pro-active digital alliance-partner.