**Digitalization, a high priority for Europe's future – the European Commission showcases its new digital and AI strategy**

**1.       Background**

The way technology is used has changed significantly in the past decade and continues to change at a rapid pace, disrupting the way people interact both within the private and the public sector.

Advances in technology make possible achieving efficiencies by streamlining processes, open markets for new products and services, and help communities reach social goals. Data, both personal and non-personal, is at the core of these changes. The European Union strives to harness the power of data to drive innovation forth while observing European values and human rights.

On February 19, the European Commission unveiled its [strategy](#) for Europe's digital future, a strategy that aims to be the stepping stone for creating an effective single market for data in the European Union (the "**Digital Strategy**"). On the same day, the European Commission released a communication on the [European data strategy](#), as well as a [White Paper on Artificial Intelligence](#) (the "**AI White Paper**"), highlighting the benefits, but also the risks of artificial intelligence and proposing human-centred policy options.

**2.   Objectives of the Strategy**

The Digital Strategy sets the objectives of the European Commission for the next five years. It rests on three main pillars:

(i)       technology that works for people;

(ii)      a fair and competitive economy; and

(iii)     an open, democratic and sustainable society.

The main ideas of the Digital Strategy revolve around safety of and trust in the digital services and infrastructure. Europe's ambition is to create its own resilient networks and communications infrastructure, so that it is less dependent on technologies from other parts of the world and may freely instil its values, rules and standards in the European economic ecosystem.

## 2.1. Technology that works for people

The Digital Strategy promotes:

(i) investing in research and development for the creation of digital capacities in AI, cyber, super and quantum computing, quantum communication and blockchain; investments in AI are discussed in more detail in the AI White Paper;

(ii) accelerating investments in connectivity infrastructure (including 5G and future 6G);

(iii) encouraging private-sector investments in digital innovation, to complement the EU funding that shall be made available;

(iv) increasing cybersecurity, including by creating a European cybersecurity strategy and establishing a joint Cybersecurity Unit, as well as a single market for cybersecurity;

(v) equipping citizens with the necessary digital skills.

It is noteworthy that the European Commission places a heavy focus on investments in research and development and innovation, but also in security and enhancing human digital skills. Indeed, it is already apparent that having the infrastructure alone cannot help societies reap the benefits of technology, as long as a majority of citizens cannot fully use the digital tools at their disposal.

## 2.2. A fair and competitive economy

The main goals of this objective are:

(i) to reduce Europe's dependency on technologies controlled by non-European entities;

(ii) to create a level playing field for both tech giants and SMEs;

(iii) to adapt EU competition law rules to the digital environment.

The central role of competition-related goals reflects the pioneering work of the Commission and of other European competition authorities in regulating aspects of the technology market, in particular as regards large players and their perceived abuses.

## 2.3. An open, democratic and sustainable society

By its third objective, the Digital Strategy aims to:

(i)     strengthen and modernise the rules applicable to digital services, for increasing and maintaining trust in such services;

(ii)    protect democracies from specific digital environment threats, such as targeted and coordinated disinformation;

(iii)   clarify the rules on responsibilities and liability of online platforms and information service providers, as well as enforce existing rules;

(iv)    implement electronic identification of citizens;

(v)     support the transition to decarbonisation and a climate-neutral society.

By its Digital Strategy, the European Commission recognizes the major impact of the technology society in various aspects of society, including politics, the impact of tech companies on the economy and the interplay between large companies and SMEs or consumers, security and environment, all major challenges of today's world.

**3.      Conclusions**

Well-thought, multi-angled strategy responding to today's needs shows proficiency of policy making at EU level. We will closely follow the developments in this exciting sector and will report on the findings.

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