



EU budget: Commission proposes €9.2 billion investment in first ever digital programme

Brussels, 6 June 2018

The European Commission is today proposing to create the first ever Digital Europe programme and invest €9.2 billion to align the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027 with increasing digital challenges.

With the [Digital Single Market strategy](#) we have established a regulatory framework that is fit for the digital age. This needs to be matched with equally ambitious funding and investments in the Digital Europe programme for increasing EU's international competitiveness as well as developing and reinforcing Europe's strategic digital capacities. These key capacities concern high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and advanced digital skills and ensuring their wide use and accessibility across the economy and society by businesses and the public sector alike.

Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, said: *"The Digital Single Market provides the legal framework to ensure people and companies fully benefit from the digital transformation. Our aim has been to make the EU budget fit for future challenges: digital transformation is taken into account across all proposals, from transport, energy and agriculture to healthcare and culture. To reinforce this, today we are proposing more investment in artificial intelligence, supercomputing, cybersecurity, skills and eGovernment – all identified by EU leaders as the key areas for the future competitiveness of the EU."*

Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, said: *"Having the first pan-European digital programme is a major step for strengthening Europe's world leadership in the digital transformation. We will invest in key strategic digital capacities, such as artificial intelligence, high performance computing and cybersecurity, and, as is the case with all our digital initiatives, European citizens will stay at the heart of this programme. One of the main pillars of the programme is investment in our citizens to acquire the advanced digital skills they need for accessing and using the latest digital technologies."*

The Commission's proposal focusses on five areas:

- 1. Supercomputers:** €2.7 billion will fund projects to build-up and strengthen supercomputing and data processing in Europe, which is crucial for the development of many areas – from health care and renewable energy to car safety and cybersecurity. The funding will ensure a more effective and wider use of supercomputing in both the public and private sectors, including small and medium-sized enterprises. Digital Europe will aim to deploy a world-class supercomputer and data infrastructure with exascale capabilities (a billion billion or 10¹⁸ calculations per second) by 2022/2023, and post exascale facilities by 2026/2027, endowing the EU with its own independent and competitive technology supply, achieving excellence in applications and widening supercomputing availability and use. The planned initiatives will build on the [European strategy on supercomputers](#) that will help the EU advance in many areas from health care and renewable energy to car safety and cybersecurity.
- 2. Artificial intelligence (AI):** €2.5 billion is planned to help spread AI across the European economy and society. This budget builds on the [European approach on AI](#) presented on 25 April 2018: the aim is to boost investments to make the most out of AI, while taking into account the socio-economic changes brought about by AI and to ensure an appropriate ethical and legal framework. The Digital Europe programme will give better access for public authorities and businesses, especially smallest ones, to AI testing and experimentation facilities in Member States, while increased investments in research and innovation under Horizon Europe will ensure that the EU stays at the forefront of scientific and technological developments in AI. The Commission proposes to develop common 'European libraries' of algorithms that would be accessible to all, to help the public and private sectors to identify and acquire whichever solution would work best for their needs. Open platforms and access to industrial data spaces for artificial intelligence will be made available across the EU in [Digital Innovation Hubs](#), providing testing facilities and knowledge to small businesses and local innovators.
- 3. Cybersecurity and trust:** €2 billion will be invested into safeguarding the EU's digital

economy, society and democracies through boosting cyber defence and the EU's cybersecurity industry, financing state-of-the-art cybersecurity equipment and infrastructure as well as supporting the development of the necessary skills and knowledge. The proposal builds on the wide range of [cybersecurity measures](#) presented in September 2017, and on the [first EU-wide legislation on cybersecurity](#) that came into force in May 2018.

4. **Digital skills:** €700 million will ensure that the current and future workforce will have the opportunity to easily acquire advanced digital skills through long- and short-term training courses and on-the-job traineeships, regardless of their Member State of residence. In the Digital Europe programme, the Digital Innovation Hubs will carry out targeted programmes to help small and medium-sized enterprises and public administrations to equip their personnel with the needed advanced skills to be able access the new opportunities offered by supercomputing, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.
5. **Ensuring a wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society:** €1.3 billion will ensure the digital transformation of public administration and public services and their EU-wide interoperability and facilitate access to technology and knowhow for all businesses, notably SMEs. Digital Innovation Hubs will be 'one-stop shops' for small and medium-sized enterprises and public administrations, providing access to technological expertise and experimentation facilities, as well as advice to better assess the business case of digital transformation projects. A network of Digital Innovation Hubs will be supported, ensuring the widest geographical coverage across Europe. Digital Innovation Hubs are today one of the key elements of the Digitising European Industry strategy.

Next Steps

A swift agreement on the overall long-term EU budget and its sectoral proposals is essential to ensure that EU funds start delivering results on the ground as soon as possible.

Given the urgency of the situation and the scale of the investment required, there is a strong case for EU intervention to jointly finance and coordinate actions on a scale capable of meeting the challenges brought by the digital transformation. This should ensure that the benefits of new digital technologies are fully shared.

Failing to address the investment gap quickly would risk weakening the EU's innovation capacity and industrial competitiveness.

An agreement on the next long-term budget in 2019 would provide for a seamless transition between the current long-term budget (2014-2020) and the new one and would ensure predictability of funding to the benefit of all.

Background

Digital Europe is a new programme and part of the "Single Market, Innovation and Digital" chapter of the EU's long-term budget proposal. Building on the [Digital Single Market strategy](#) launched in May 2015 and its achievements over the past years, its main objective is to shape Europe's digital transformation to the benefit of citizens and businesses.

Additional funds will allow the EU to invest more in digital economy and society. Today the Commission is also proposing to increase the budget for the digital infrastructure projects under the Connecting Europe Facility to €3 billion. The Connecting Europe Facility focuses on projects of highest European added value and particularly on cross-border connections. On digital, it will contribute to ensuring that all main socio-economic drivers such as schools, hospitals, and transport hubs, main providers of public services and digitally-intensive enterprises have access to future-oriented broadband connections by 2025 (see separate [press release](#)).

In addition to Digital Europe, financing for research and innovation in next generation digital technologies needs to be continued and reinforced in the next multiannual financial framework under Horizon Europe programme. The two programmes will work hand in hand: while Horizon Europe provides crucial investments in research and innovation, Digital Europe builds on these results to create the necessary infrastructure, as well as supporting deployment and capacity building, which in turn will provide input for future research in artificial intelligence, robotics, high-performance computing, and big data.

For More Information

[Legal proposal and factsheet](#)

[Press release: Connecting Europe Facility](#)

[EU budget for the future](#)

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