

## Europe in the Digital Age:

### Global partnerships to foster European leadership

September 29, European Parliament, Brussels

Europe's burgeoning drive for greater digital sovereignty is likely to be complex. Increased autonomy from the (mainly Silicon Valley-based) technology providers that have become ubiquitous and central to EU citizens' lives, not only poses practical and technical questions, but also raises many political and diplomatic ones.

The delivery of a more independent European digital infrastructure, principally driven by Europe's legitimate privacy and security priorities, but also linked to questions around competition and dependency, will not only demand large investments from governments in complicated projects - an entrepreneurial approach towards the development of digital technologies that delivers competitive, and crucially European-developed, digital products and services is also essential.

It would, however, be too simplistic and economically damaging to prematurely cut the digital umbilical cords of which society has come to depend. Europeans rely on a data and digital eco-system that, while largely non-European, has made a significant contribution to productivity in the EU. It is also clear that any Balkanisation of the internet would not be in the EU's interests and that working towards mutual trust and the development of global norms that reinforce shared values is critical.

The principal choices available to the EU are, broadly, to prioritise privacy-focussed, secure technologies and services, using additional regulation and competition enforcement if required, regardless of where the services may be based or headquartered; or to work towards a true digital sovereignty through the development of services and infrastructures that are, to all intents and purposes, European built and delivered.

This debate will address how the EU and its member states should approach and develop digital sovereignty. It will look at issues around greater data ownership on the part of the citizen and how and where data are used and held; and consider new, sustainable business models that are constructed around privacy by design. In so doing, it will look at the potential roles for European and international businesses, investors, regulators and civil society in determining the path for Europe's digital future.

#### **15:00 – 15:30 Welcome Addresses**

- Axel Voss MEP (EPP) (Confirmed)
- García del Blanco MEP (S&D) (Confirmed)

#### **15:30 – 16.15 Keynote Session**

#### **16:15 – 17:00 Session 1 – Developing the European Digital Eco-System**

The push for greater digital autonomy in Europe is arguably as much a political project as it is a technical and commercial one. This session will look at how European policymakers should approach digital sovereignty from legislative, diplomatic and political perspectives. It will look at how global cooperation around internet services and governance might develop over time and how Europe should be preparing itself for the future.

#### **17:00 – 17.45 Session 2 – What tools does Europe have at its disposal? (45 mins)**

It is well documented that while Europe has leading players in the global digital eco-system, it is still far behind countries such as the U.S. and China. This session will look at the risks and benefits of European attempts to further develop its own systems and platforms, from operating systems to cloud infrastructures. Would increased possibilities on the market, regardless of origin, be enough to drive more competition? And what role should current non-European businesses play in building up the European eco-system? This session will look at what policymakers need to do to support European businesses to gain a better foothold, both in Europe and globally, and analyse the merits of a European-first approach.