

A Digital Europe – Open, Competitive and Resilient

B9+ vision and priorities for D9+ and EU policymakers for a Digital Europe, 2024-2029

A vision for a Digital Europe, 2024-2029

This paper outlines the B9+¹ vision and recommendations to D9+ and EU policy makers on the next steps for a digitalised Europe that enables national Governments, enterprise, innovators, and individuals to rise to the challenges of the 21st Century, creating further prosperity and resilience across Europe in the period 2024-2029². Achieving the EU's digital decade targets should remain a key political commitment for the EU and Member States. While progress has been made, we must address gaps in our digital readiness as a competitive imperative.

Our vision for the D9+ and a Digital Europe, 2024-2029:

A Digital Europe that:

- ✓ Is open³, this means open to further international co-operation and trade with likeminded partners, while encouraging capacities across Europe, so Europe can access and safeguard the economic benefits of further digital transformation;
- ✓ Is competitive and resilient;
- ✓ Enables and leverages a strong and effective internal market; and
- ✓ Fosters conditions and capacities in Member States, Businesses, Innovators and Individuals across the EU to develop and harnesses trusted digital tools and data, connect, innovate and trade to meet the challenges of the 21st century, enhancing prosperity and resilience.

We continue to encourage the D9+ to:

- ✓ **Be the authoritative and collaborative platform and voice for an outward-looking, secure, competitive, digitally enabled, innovative, and pro-enterprise EU** and to work together on a shared strategy to shape an EU agenda built on these principles.
- ✓ **Develop and deepen enhanced structures and engagement within the D9+ and with the B9+** on sharing experience in policies and learnings to enhance and safeguard our collective digital transition.
- ✓ **Lead on achieving shared digital targets for 2030.** We cannot be complacent on this collective competitive imperative. Ensure the digital tide raises all boats.

The D9+ initiative is important. B9+ collectively welcome the valuable engagement and contributions that the D9+ forum has made to date and stand ready to support the D9+ further. We welcome the D9+ use of pre-meeting statements setting out priorities⁴ and post-meeting declarations that contribute to both the ongoing focus and momentum of the forum and its work.

¹ The B9+ Group is composed of the business confederations of 12 digitally advanced (D9+) Member States: CEOE (Spain), VBO-FEB (Belgium), SPCR (Czech Republic), DI (Denmark), EE (Estonia), EK (Finland), Ibec (Ireland), FEDIL (Luxembourg), VNO-NCW (Netherlands), LEWIATAN (Poland), CIP (Portugal) and Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Sweden).

² European elections will be held between 6-9 June 2024 followed by the appointment of a new Commission.

³ See BusinessEurope 2020, [Smart technological sovereignty: how it could support EU competitiveness](#).

⁴ [Minister Calleary announces Programme for Chairmanship of the D9+, February 8, 2024](#).

Key B9+ recommendations to D9+ and EU policymakers for a Digital Europe, 2024-2029

1. **Support, deepen and leverage our Single Market.** Reinvigorate the Single Market Strategy with a clear ambition to empower SME growth through supporting effective digital adoption. A strong Single Market underpins a globally competitive European economy. Deliver a meaningful framework and programme to remove the bottlenecks in the Internal Market impacting the roll out of digital products and services and the potential of SMEs to scale, grow and export⁵. Support digital-first, openness, interoperability, productivity, prosperity and resilience and foster a level playing field. Support SMEs by implementing one-stop-shops on digitalised public services for business at Member State and EU level⁶. Boost access to capital through facilitating access to funding programmes, especially for SMEs. Deliver an effective and ambitious Capital Markets Union to mobilise funding.
2. **Promote an open⁷ and ambitious EU digital trade agenda.** Work with likeminded international partners at multilateral, bilateral and local levels. Deepen existing trade relationships and establish new ones, also with developing countries. Ensure governance and regulation enables and works with, not against further digital trade and facilitates data flows. Take a smart approach to economic security and resilience. Promote European competitiveness such as the roll-out of infrastructures which have the necessary compute/CPU power to enable AI deployment while maintaining openness⁸. Avoid protectionist, sovereigntist or autarkic temptations, which could hinder the growth of the productive fabric, the attraction of talent, innovation and foreign investment and the development of European technological capabilities.
3. **Optimise conditions for investment and growth.** There is a need to draw breath, to leverage the progress made, to embed and safeguard the coherence and quality of the EU's regulatory framework and enable Member States and organisations to implement, harmonise and adapt to this vast new framework so that it delivers shared digital ambitions. Efforts should be made to ensure that any new regulation is carefully considered and introduced only where regulatory gaps are proven. Where this is the case, new regulation must be targeted and developed in an evidence-based, risk-based and proportionate way and its interplay with existing rules must work with, not against, digital innovation. The rulebook must be designed and implemented to be fair and equitable to all parties. To strengthen European competitiveness, a 'competitiveness and internal market check' should be introduced for any proposed new digital regulation and one that takes stock of the cumulative interplay and impact of existing digital regulation too. Support timely regulatory innovation/adaptation⁹, for example by encouraging accessible regulatory sandboxes in all Member States across all digital regulation. Share and act on lessons from the regulatory sandboxes.

⁵ <https://www.buinesseurope.eu/publications/joint-call-comprehensive-long-term-single-market-agenda> and <https://www.buinesseurope.eu/publications/priorities-single-market-beyond-2024-reigniting-engine-europes-global-economic>

⁶ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/single-digital-gateway_en

⁷ See B9+ vision (page 1) and footnote 3.

⁸ See B9+ vision (page 1) and footnote 3.

⁹ For example, the [Spanish AI regulatory sandbox initiative](#), [Danish AI regulatory sandbox initiative](#) and [ICO regulatory sandbox for personal data](#).

4. **Strengthen capacities that enable a successful Digital Europe.** Boost skills, digital infrastructure and connectivity, cybersecurity and resilience, research and innovation, public and private sector adoption of digital technologies¹⁰, roll out AI, develop new opportunities for example in 5G/6G, edge, quantum technologies and the twinned green transition. To reach Europe's ambitious 2030 digital objectives and strengthen Europe's digital competitiveness, it is essential to bolster investment in critical technology domains, support R&D, skills development, and promote the integration of innovative technologies into European businesses.



¹⁰ Including Cloud, Big Data, AI, quantum computing, 5G/6G and immersive technologies

Expanded B9+ recommendations to D9+ and EU policymakers for a Digital Europe, 2024-2029

A. Support, deepen and leverage our Single Market

The issue:

The establishment of the EU Single Market transformed the economic opportunities for open economies such as the D9+ Member States in European cooperation to trade, attract investment and foster a skilled workforce. It also transformed the EU into a global economic player. Despite these undeniable achievements, 30 years on, the Single Market remains a work in progress at a time of great geopolitical challenges. **SMEs face growth barriers in the Single Market and the digital Single Market is far from completion.** On average, while 19.1% SMEs sell online¹¹, only 8.7% engage in online cross-border sales to other EU countries¹².

This provides an opportunity for the EU and its Member States to reinvigorate the Single Market, while preserving its achievements, in order to support the EU's long-term competitiveness, prosperity, resilience and place in the world¹³. **An EU strategy on long-term competitiveness should be prioritised to harness the benefits of further digital and data innovation.** For example, enable organisations and individuals to harness AI's economic potential. The Single Market remains key to our prosperity and to the productivity and competitiveness of European companies, and our regulatory framework needs to be made fit for the digital age. We need a Digital Single Market for innovation, to eliminate barriers to cross-border online services and to ensure free data flows. The EU and its Member States should introduce a new Single Market Strategy with a clear ambition to empower SME growth through digital adoption¹⁴. Significant private sector [investment](#) must be encouraged in meeting the 2030 ambitions.

Recommendations to EU policy makers:

- 1) Deliver a **meaningful framework and programme to support digital-first, openness, interoperability and deepen the Single Market**, particularly in services¹⁵. For products, explore digital adoption that could simplify regulatory requirements. This could include the ability for manufacturers to make more relevant, sustainable, and targeted information available to customers via the digital delivery of certain labelling and inbox documentation (i.e. eLabelling).
- 2) **Support SMEs by implementing one-stop-shops on digitalised public services for business** at member state and EU level.
- 3) **Maintain and respect key principles of the Single Market**, including the country-of-origin principle.
- 4) **Focus on removing the bottlenecks and regulatory barriers in the Internal Market impacting the roll out of digital products and services.** Enable businesses to scale into pan-European operations to become global players starting with a sustainable, pro-investment

¹¹ [SMEs selling online \(DESI period 2023\)](#)

¹² [SMEs selling online cross-border \(DESI period 2023\)](#)

¹³ <https://www.buinesseurope.eu/policies/eu-single-market/eu-single-market-strategy>

¹⁴ [15 Member States propose new horizontal EU Single Market Strategy, January 17, 2024.](#)

¹⁵ <https://www.buinesseurope.eu/publications/joint-call-comprehensive-long-term-single-market-agenda> and <https://www.buinesseurope.eu/publications/priorities-single-market-beyond-2024-reigniting-engine-europes-global-economic>

approach. Address the fragmented implementation and interpretation of digital rules to allow scale and agility. Enhance certainty for business and customers¹⁶.

- 5) **Capitalise on developments in the field of European digital identity of citizens and companies (SSI)** to simplify all transactions and movements throughout the EU.
- 6) **Improve the interoperability of important business processes like e-invoicing.** Explore how national e-invoicing standards can be made interoperable with European frameworks¹⁷ to facilitate further cross-border e-invoicing in Europe.
- 7) **Retain the achievement of the digital decade targets as a key political priority for the EU and Member States.** Install a process and mechanisms to secure focus, to safeguard coherence and drive this shared strategic agenda. Including a system that monitors progress on targets and that verifies the effectiveness of existing and proposed legislation.
- 8) **Boost access to capital. Deliver an effective and ambitious Capital Market Union to mobilise funding.** Develop complementary sources of finance to bank lending. Diversifying the financing landscape will not only improve the EU's economic resilience, but also unlock additional funds necessary to finance the twin (green and digital) transition (up to €500 billion a year until 2030). Unlock the potential of savings, pension funds and private wealth funds. Also encourage more venture capital support of start-ups from banks and venture capital companies from EU.
- 9) **At Member State level, use innovative procurement and co-development strategies, an environment for enterprise, with a focus on to engage and foster startups.** Consider guidance at EU level on the procurement of digital services to avoid fragmentation across the EU.
- 10) **Continue to leverage digital tools and data in the evolution of the financial sector.** Support a robust, competitive, innovative and sovereign European payment's market.

¹⁶ See Priority 1, Optimise regulatory conditions for investment and growth.

¹⁷ For example, [OpenPeppol](#)

B. Promote an open and ambitious EU digital trade agenda

The issue:

Digital trade continues to grow. In 2020, it represented 25% of global trade¹⁸, with Europe accounting for over half of global exports of digitally delivered services¹⁹. Digital trade influences the global economy and every company regardless of its activity and size, by allowing access to virtually limitless export markets with relatively low investment.

Data flows enable digital trade and modern business and are important to European business²⁰.

Our ongoing green and digital transitions can be mutually reinforcing, securing, and sustaining physical and digital environments that sustain us. **International trade is important to ensure that the most efficient digital solutions can spread globally, enabling a global green transition.** In addition, digital solutions can also decarbonise trade activity e.g., in logistics²¹. Global and harmonised intellectual property rules, championed by Europe, can also play an important role in global business and future trade agreements.

The EU must work with likeminded partners to deepen existing trade relationships and establish new ones²² while ensuring that the international rules-based order is upheld.

Recommendations to EU policy makers:

- 11) **Multilaterally, enable and safeguard trusted international data flows and adequate protections for privacy, intellectual property rights, source codes, algorithms, and trade secrets;** and commit to conclude the WTO Joint Initiative on eCommerce with a high-standard agreement. We welcome the recent extension of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions at the WTO Ministerial. Given that the moratorium is set to expire by March 2026, it is imperative that a permanent agreement to not impose tariffs on electronic transmissions is reached at the multilateral level or – if this is not possible – that a plurilateral agreement is reached. We also encourage the permanent agreement to confirm, for greater certainty, that this moratorium covers the electronic transmissions and the content being transmitted.
- 12) **Bilaterally, pursue ambitious EU digital trade agreements and chapters in trade agreements. Further Commission efforts to reinforce adequacy frameworks and extend them globally are welcome²³.** Advancing ongoing work on mutual recognition of SCCs should also be prioritised, as the primary tool used by business for international data transfers. Transatlantic data flows remain important in 2024 and account for more than half of Europe's data flows and about half of U.S. data flows globally. Atlantic submarine cables carry 55% more data than transpacific routes²⁴. The Joint Statement Initiative on e-commerce and the Trade and Technology Council between the EU and the US are key in this perspective. Engage business and leverage the EU-US Trade and Technology Council²⁵.

¹⁸ OECD (2023) [Key issues in Digital Trade](#)

¹⁹ WTO (2023) [Global Trade Outlook](#), Box 1 and Appendix Table 5

²⁰ DIGITALEUROPE, BUSINESSEUROPE, ERT and ACEA (2020), [SCHREMS II, Impact Survey, Figure 2](#)

²¹ BusinessEurope views on digital trade (2023)

²² Spanish EU Presidency (Resilient EU 2030).

²³ COM(2024) 7 final.

²⁴ U.S Chamber of Commerce (2023), [The Transatlantic Economy 2023, Chapter 5: The Digital Drivers of the Transatlantic Economy](#)

²⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/eu-us-trade-and-technology-council_en

Cooperation and leadership on digital innovation and regulation are key areas where benefits could materialise for several sectors. We encourage the TTC to:

- a. **Enhance digital trade and investment.** Avoid initiatives or incentives that could undermine transatlantic digital trade or investment.
 - b. **Engage business and catalyse beneficial collaboration and investment in key technologies** e.g., AI, 5G/6G, quantum computing, semiconductors, immersive technology, cloud, IoT, biometrics, digital health and space technology. We encourage the TTC to:
 - i. **Accelerate its work to address trade barriers associated with conformity assessment for exporters on both sides of the Atlantic.** Explore common actions that leverage digital and data innovation in enabling a green transition.
 - ii. **Develop and deliver joint roadmaps for collaboration,** including aligned/joint research calls, and report progress at subsequent TTC meetings.
 - iii. **Support beneficial co-operation around the implementation of Chips Acts on both sides of the Atlantic,** particularly on R&D and manufacturing. Promote regulatory stability in the global ecosystem, foster innovation and avoid duplication in investment and market saturation.
 - iv. **Develop and deliver joint understanding, standards and governance principles based on a risk-based approach to the development and use of AI** that strengthen innovation and safeguard safety and shared values.
- 13) **Locally, ensure EU regulation and governance works with, not against, digital trade.** Ensure the reform of the Union Customs Code enables the use of the latest technology for customs simplification and trade facilitation, as further digitalisation of EU Customs is crucial to facilitate trade and help avoid supply chain disruptions. Enable responsible data use to leverage further benefits in healthcare, education and mobility. Avoid unjustified sovereignty or protectionist requirements, particularly with likeminded partners.
- 14) Take a smart approach to ‘economic security’²⁶. **Promote European competitiveness while maintaining openness²⁷ and working with likeminded international partners, especially in the areas of emerging technologies like quantum, AI and semiconductors.** Promote a greater alignment between the ambitions of European digital leadership and competition policy, so that progress can be made towards greater open strategic autonomy, without falling into protectionist, sovereigntist, or autarkic temptations, which could hinder the growth of the productive fabric, the attraction of talent, innovation and foreign investment and the development of European technological capabilities.

²⁶ [An EU approach to enhance economic security](#) a Joint Communication on a European Economic Security Strategy that ‘focuses on minimising risks arising from certain economic flows in the context of increased geopolitical tensions and accelerated technological shifts, while preserving maximum levels of economic openness and dynamism’.

²⁷ See B9+ vision (page 1) and footnote 3.

- a. **Long term economic security and resilience related to key digital technologies²⁸ will especially be served well by ‘promote measures²⁹’.** Engage and support business to start, scale and stay in the EU. Grow the number of European unicorns. Support business in key markets through economic diplomacy.
- i. **In AI-technology, continued investment in building ecosystems is required to get Europe to a competitive position in global markets.** Progress is acknowledged in setting ethical guidelines (EU Digital Principles) and creating a regulatory framework (AI Act). However, driving further development requires more targeted investments to develop new AI-technologies that are cutting edge and will provide Europe a distinctive competitive position.
 - ii. **Accelerating AI development should be nourished by accelerating the availability of data.** The EU needs to ensure regulatory coherence³⁰, promote data flows/sharing, safeguard IP and trade secrets, and stimulate the development of data spaces. A sectoral approach, that is inevitable to address the diversity of data and how data is organized, can provide a basis for developing specific AI applications, which is another area where the EU can make a difference. Focus on coherent and accessible structures for data exchange that facilitate efficient data sharing along value chains and between information systems.
 - iii. **Invest further in AI-infrastructure.** We support the EU-initiative to further invest in HPC-capacity and would welcome that this would be accessible as-a-service not only to startups and research communities, but any company that is interested in developing any AI applications, and that these facilities are not necessarily limited to generative AI.
 - iv. **Europe's strategic competitiveness should be strengthened in the semiconductor sector,** with a particular focus on increasing production investments and ensuring that the EU becomes a key player in quantum chip production. Sufficient R&D funding should be provided to ensure the European semiconductor sector generates high-value-added products and services. Nurture the semiconductor ecosystem and necessary talent in this area.
 - v. Quantum computing, sensors, and communication, having great potential but still in its early stages, would **require further broad investments in infrastructure and research of its potential** across different domains (including cybersecurity effects).

²⁸ The Strategy identified 4 technology areas: AI, advanced semiconductors, quantum computing and biotechnology.

²⁹ Several measures are already highlighted in this paper that can promote EU competitiveness including completing the common and capital markets, building skills and supporting capacities.

³⁰ There are now several European data regulations.

C. Optimise conditions for investment and growth

The issue:

A stable, predictable, effective, and coherent regulatory framework facilitates competitiveness and enables investment and growth. We have seen almost a decade³¹ of intense European regulation related to digitalisation³². While acknowledging the need to safeguard trust in our digital tools and markets, the net cumulative impacts of all this new regulation, much of which has yet to be implemented across the EU, has yet to be assessed³³.

There is a need to draw breath, to leverage the progress made, to embed and safeguard the coherence and quality of the EU's regulatory framework and enable Member States and organisations to implement, harmonise and adapt to this vast new framework so that it delivers shared digital ambitions. Efforts should be made to ensure that any new regulation must be very carefully considered, targeted and developed in a robust and evidence-based way and its interplay with existing rules must genuinely work with, not against, digital innovation. The rulebook must be designed and implemented to be fair and equitable to all parties.

Recommendations to EU policy makers:

- 15) **Support the European Commission, Member States and organisations in the harmonised implementation, enforcement, and adaptation to new regulations³⁴. The reduction of burdens on competitiveness should be a priority for the next European Commission and a key consideration in delivery.** A proposed reduction of reporting obligations by 25 % is welcome and should remain an ongoing EU principle underpinned by a transparent 'one-in-one-out'³⁵ approach, offsetting full compliance costs (not only administrative costs). We call for significant progress on this in the period 2024-2029.
 - a. Deliver a proposed '**competitiveness and internal market check**' on any *proposed* new digital regulation and relevant non-legislative initiatives. This check should also take stock of the cumulative interplay and impact of *existing* digital regulation. Companies are confronted with a lot of new legislation. There needs to be an assessment and insight into this regulatory interplay to help business planning, adaptation, innovation and investment. We must support an agile and innovation friendly European ecosystem.
 - b. Devise a **digital regulation plan** to map and guide the future development of digital policy. The process should involve all affected stakeholders and be front loaded with consultation and evidence gathering exercises before new digital legislative proposals are published to safeguard the quality and consistency of legislative proposals. Promote meaningful engagement with business to ensure that regulation is aligned with the technological capabilities and competitive needs. This digital regulation plan should draw up a comprehensive and easily understandable list of all the digital EU laws which apply. It should encourage a more forward-looking and longer-term approach to legislation in this policy area and should include specific

³¹ The period 2014-2024, which saw the proposed Digital Single Market, subsequent strategies and regulation.

³² Zenner, Scott Marcus and Sekut (2023) [A dataset on EU legislation for the digital world](#).

³³ [BUSINESSEUROPE Reform Barometer 2023 - The EU's global competitiveness under threat](#)

³⁴ For example, '[A dataset on EU legislation for the digital world](#)', (Zenner, Marcus and Sekut, July 2023)

³⁵ Newly introduced burdens are offset by removing equivalent burdens in the same policy area.

goals with regards to safeguarding the competitiveness of the European digital economy.

- c. Develop an **inter-institutional initiative that builds solidarity by simplifying and aligning governance structures** to allow for: greater expertise among and collaboration between regulators, greater collaboration between DGs; and for swift, integrated and timely informed guidance on compliance. Support long-term competitiveness.
- d. **Ensure predictability, stability, coherence and harmonisation in the implementation and enforcement of existing rules – strengthen the Single Market.** It is crucial that the introduction of new requirements is adequately resourced; recognises existing digital and sectoral regulatory/governance frameworks; and seeks to avoid unnecessary regulatory burden, duplication and fragmentation in implementation and enforcement e.g. Ensure regulators:
 - i. Co-ordinate and provide joint guidance where rules intersect in the evolving regulatory landscape.
 - ii. Consult stakeholders to develop timely and actionable guidance to aid clarity and compliance.
 - iii. Ensure regulatory alignment where needed so organisations have certainty.
 - iv. Ensure cybersecurity certification schemes safeguard trust, resilience, free trade, and harmonisation of accessible, fair, and workable rules in the Internal Market. Leveraging harmonised European standards and alignment with international standards is also crucial for businesses' scalability both within and outside the EU market. We support a cybersecurity certification framework that achieves voluntary, robust, industry-relevant, state of the art, future proof and affordable schemes without creating trade barriers or considerable adverse impact on European SMEs. Take a principled approach to the development of draft certification schemes:
 - Consider and agree political choices politically, not at a technical level.
 - Ensure predictable and harmonized implementation of EU rules, including development of certification schemes and technical standards applicable to all players that wish to comply. Further engage industry, identify, understand, and address potential impacts of proposed schemes.
 - Enhance Stakeholder Cybersecurity Certification Group (SCCG) engagement and update the Union Rolling Work Programme for European Cybersecurity Certification (URWP), enhance certainty and broader engagement in the process.

16) New **legislative proposals should be evidence-based, risk-based, proportionate and introduced only where regulatory gaps are proven.** Regulation is more future proofed when rules are targeted, predictable, technology-neutral, and principle-based. For clarity and implementation purposes, new legislative proposals need to be – where applicable -

consistent (definitions etc.) with existing legislation and be based on thorough impact assessments.

- 17) **Support innovation.** Encourage accessible regulatory sandboxes in all Member States across all digital regulation to permit testing and accelerate innovation to the largest extent possible. Regulatory sandboxing can support the testing of innovative technologies, products, services, or approaches. Regulatory sandboxes can also offer guidance on more effective regulatory design. Sandboxes should be accessible to any business that wants to participate, including smaller companies. Share and act on aggregated lessons gained from regulatory sandboxes. Leverage the network of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) to support innovation and compliance, through clear and accessible support to companies.
- 18) **Considering the growth of cyber threats, invest in cooperation with like-minded public and private partners to improve the EU's cybersecurity and resilience. Work towards harmonised policy approaches and standards with likeminded partners to advance a global and open cyberspace.** Ensure Europe's policies and legislative initiatives consider, strengthen and support cybersecurity and resilience. Ensure a truly unified cyber governance framework and trusted cooperation between the public and private sectors. Ensure an equitable sharing of knowledge of vulnerabilities between both sides.

D. Strengthen capacities that enable a successful Digital Europe

The issue:

EU policy makers acknowledge that businesses are the *‘engines of our society,’* and that competitiveness and productivity are essential conditions to support them³⁶. **Stronger business means a stronger Europe, with benefits flowing both ways. This will only happen by focusing on our digital competitiveness and reinvigorating our Single Market**³⁷. [Recent research](#) indicates that **while progress has been made there are quantified gaps to be met if Europe is to fulfil its 2030 targets and compete with other regions in relative digital competitiveness**. [EIB \(2023\)](#) reports that Europe must do more to encourage digital innovation. We must maximise and monitor collaboration in the achievement of EU and Member States’ digital targets to 2030, including digital infrastructure and connectivity, skills, cybersecurity and resilience, innovation, public and private sector adoption of digital technologies³⁸ and the twinned green and digital transition, focusing on initiatives that attract investment.

Recommendations to EU policy makers:

- 19) **Boost connectivity in a technology-neutral and market-driven way.** Ensure the value of the EU Recovery and Resilience to digital spending, particularly connectivity, are maximised. Facilitate further private investment in infrastructure to achieve high-speed connectivity as an essential enabler for digital transformation and inclusion. Spectrum licensing regimes should be leveraged to encourage sufficient spectrum and avoid high prices or undue regulatory burdens and inter-EU fragmentation in order to allow further investment in mobile networks. Ensure regulation enables and does not hamper, electronic communications. Implement an effective Gigabit Infrastructure Act, harmonise network infrastructure policy and support speedy broadband deployment. Provide guidance on the Open Internet Regulation that supports 5 G Services. Promote connectivity as a catalyst for carbon abatement. Any potential policy interventions affecting relationships in the online ecosystem³⁹, shared digital decade ambitions and competitiveness must be carefully considered, and based on clear evidence-based risks⁴⁰. Continue to safeguard net neutrality and the advantages of an open internet must be protected.
- 20) **Set ambitious digital targets and funding across all relevant EU programmes to ensure Europe benefits from AI and other emerging technologies**⁴¹. Grab opportunities in areas such as 5G/6G, Cloud, edge and maximise funding in areas where the green and digital transition have synergies or are twinned⁴².
- 21) **Digital Solutions and infrastructure can empower and reinforce the green transition. Roll out targeted digital transformation strategies.** Apply a holistic/integrated approach. Enable the attraction of funding. Build a coherent and consistent framework to foster the twin digital and green transitions. All the different elements of European policies aimed at

³⁶ [European Commission COM\(2023\) 168 final](#) Long-term competitiveness of the EU: looking beyond 2030

³⁷ B9+ Group (2023) Joint statement to D9+ Ministerial meeting, Poznań, May 10, 2023.

³⁸ Including Cloud, Big Data, AI, quantum computing, 5G/6G and immersive technologies

³⁹ Telecom operators, platforms, and digitalised businesses using their services

⁴⁰ [Results of the exploratory consultation on the future of the electronic communications sector and its infrastructure](#)

⁴¹ For example, go beyond the 20% provided for digital initiatives in the Recovery and Resilience Fund

⁴² B9+ Statement to D9+ Ministerial, October 2021 called on policymakers to support coherence in green and digital policy, trajectories and enablers and a need to enable both agendas to work in tandem.

fostering the twin digital and green transitions must be aligned to ensure legal certainty especially since most investments are long term. Uncertainty could deter investments. In this regard, the EU's sustainable financing policy should be a driving force that supports European priorities to foster the twin digital and green transitions, as set out in the Green Deal and the EU's Next Generation Funds.

22) Prioritise awareness, skills, and education for citizens and businesses.

- a. **Governments should work with business to develop strategies to tackle digital skills shortages**, to ensure that technological developments are not stalled due to a lack of talent and to expand education and training pathways to in-demand jobs. This is crucial to ensure no one is left behind in the digital transition.
- b. **Strengthen training in digital skills, attraction and retention of talent at different levels of organizations**, to close the digital talent gap, including the gender gap in digital technologies, and as a basic tool to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the rapid digital transformation of the economy and society from an economic, social and environmental point of view and getting the talent in place that can drive the development of trendsetting technologies in the EU. This training must be linked to an exceptional and necessary employability opportunity and will require listening and coordination with industry and the education sector.
- c. **Promote digital skills and re-skilling for employment by incorporating the necessary skills into education systems, upskilling initiatives, and public-private collaboration** to ensure that businesses and individuals have the tools they need to thrive in a digital world. This should be encouraged not only within primary, secondary and university education, but also at later stages to support career change for individuals wishing to acquire new skills to enter the programming-related job market.
- d. **Support diversity in training providers, a strong focus on Vocational Education and Training, and more agile pathways to new skills** such as micro credentials, and scale-up of successful private-sector skilling initiatives.
- e. **Promote digital literacy** and improve the digital skills of European Union citizens to ensure that no one is left behind.
- f. Explore a **new programme to attract mobile talent with digital skills**. There is global competition for digital talent⁴³.
- g. **Enhance mutual recognition of educational qualifications and credentials**, including industry lead training.

⁴³ Zeki (2024) The State of AI Talent 2024