

**White Paper on Artificial Intelligence – A European Approach to Excellence and Trust
(COM(2020)65 final)**

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A
European strategy for data (COM(2020)66 final)**

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions –
Shaping Europe’s digital future (COM(2020)67 final)**

FINAL DOCUMENT APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Transport, Post and Telecommunications Committee of Italy’s Chamber of Deputies,

Having examined, pursuant to Rule 127.1 of the Chamber’s Rules of Procedure, the following documents: the White Paper on Artificial Intelligence – A European Approach to Excellence and Trust (COM(2020)65 final); the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A European strategy for data (COM(2020)66 final); and the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Shaping Europe’s digital future (COM(2020)67 final);

Whereas:

The object of the Communications and the White Paper (hereinafter called “documents”) that the European Commission submitted on 19 February 2020 is the advancement of the digital transition and, through the setting of ambitious targets and the adumbration of various legislative and non-legislative measures (some of which have already been presented), the development and dissemination of technologies, infrastructures and skills that will contribute to the digital sovereignty of the EU;

The European Commission estimates that for digital infrastructure and networks alone, the EU has an investment gap of €65 billion per year. Implementing reforms and stepping up investments in technological R&D would, the Commission avers, yield 14 per cent of cumulative additional GDP growth by 2030;

In the Communication "Shaping Europe's digital future," the European Commission sets out three key objectives for technological development over the coming years: first, the digital transformation of public administrations across Europe to improve citizens' transactions with government offices and public service providers; second, the expansion of the single market so as to provide a level playing field for competing businesses and afford protection to consumers; and, third, the construction of a secure and reliable digital environment that adheres to the principle that whatever is illegal offline should also be illegal online;

Among the main actions envisaged in its framework Communication, the European Commission has already promulgated several regulatory proposals, now enshrined in the "Digital Services Act," both to extend and to harmonise the accountability of online platforms and information providers, as well as to reinforce oversight of the content policies of EU-based platforms. The Commission has also prepared ex-ante rules (for inclusion in a "Digital Markets Act") to ensure that markets characterised by large platforms with significant network effects acting as gatekeepers remain fair and contestable for innovators, businesses, and new market entrants;

The framework Communication (COM(2020)66 final) sets 2025 as the term for the attainment of European connectivity objectives and confirms that the objective is to offer, by that date, all European citizens, including those in peripheral and rural areas, ultra-fast broadband (at least 100 Mbps upgradable to Gigabit speed). To this end, EU, national, or local-level private and public investments will be mobilised through the Digital Europe Programme (DEP), the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF 2) and Horizon Europe.

Digital transition is also one of the two priorities targeted by the European Recovery and Resilience Facility, and at least 20 per cent of the resources of national recovery and resilience plans will be allocated to its achievement;

Observing that:

The volume of data produced in the world is growing rapidly, from 33 zettabytes in 2018 to an expected 175 zettabytes in 2025, while a small number of large technology companies (“Big Tech”) currently hold a large part of the world’s data;

The European Strategy for data proposes measures to supersede the current fragmentary state of the market, create a single European data market, and thus exploit the opportunities for economic growth that the sector offers, while also respecting European legal standards of privacy, data protection, and fair competition;

The Commission has already presented a Proposal for a Regulation on European data governance (known as the “Data Governance Act”) that aims: to establish the conditions under which the re-use within the EU of certain categories of public sector data is permissible; to set up a notification and supervisory framework for the provision of data sharing services; and to put in place a mechanism for the voluntary registration of entities that collect and process data made available for altruistic purposes;

The European Strategy for data draws attention to the need to build federated cloud infrastructures and European data spaces in the next few years to cover the following nine strategic sectors and areas of public interest: industry (manufacturing); Green Deal; mobility; health; finance; energy; agriculture; public administration.

According to a 2018 study that is cited in the European strategy for data, the potential use value of non-personal data in manufacturing could reach €1.5 trillion by 2027;

Observing that:

The White Paper on artificial intelligence (AI) sees as necessary the following: adequate investment in research and innovation; an EU-wide coordinated approach that promotes the development in the EU of AI applications and facilitates their adoption by public administrations and businesses, including SMEs; and the drafting of a specific regulatory framework covering issues of security, accountability and the protection of fundamental rights (such as respect for personal data and non-discrimination);

The European Commission recently presented a Proposal for a Regulation establishing a legal framework relating to the security risks posed by AI systems, accompanied both by a coordinated EU legal framework that fosters conditions propitious to the development and uptake of AI and by a new regulation on the safe integration of AI systems into machinery as a whole;

Considering that:

The pandemic gave ample global proof of the strategic and crucial importance of new technologies and communication networks for the continuance of economic and educational activities, as well as the delivery of services to households and businesses;

The digital transformation is an essential part of the EU's response to the economic crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Its acceleration will be one of the chief challenges facing the European Union and the Member States in the coming years, and the outcome will determine how much strategic autonomy Europe enjoys in a global setting;

The European Commission recently presented the Digital Compass setting out objectives to be achieved by 2030 in fulfilment of the European policy of digitalisation of the economy and society, with particular regard to digital skills, secure and sustainable infrastructures, the digital transformation of businesses, and the digitalisation of public services;

Closing the gap that separates the European Union from the largest global competitors and attaining the ambitious objectives set out in the strategies will require a transformative improvement of quality and a significant increase in investment spending in the sector;

Italy now has a unique opportunity to make up for past delays, which have been apparent in the statistics on the digitalisation rate of European countries, notably as measured by the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI);

Support for the digital transformation is one of the key targets of Italy's national recovery and resilience plan that was recently submitted to the European Commission;

Taking cognisance of: the information and knowledge acquired during the hearings held for the purpose of examining the documents in question; the extensive parliamentary work carried out in connection with an analysis of the guidelines for the National recovery and resilience plan (NRRP), concerning which the Transport, Post and Telecommunications Committee published

its findings at its sitting of 29 September 2020; and the draft NRRP concerning which the same Committee issued its opinion on 24 March 2021;

Recognising the international scope of the matter and acknowledging the importance of the contribution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe which, on 22 October 2020, adopted Recommendation 2181 and Resolution 2341 on the “Need for democratic governance of artificial intelligence,” the rapporteur for which, Ms Bergamini MP, is both a member of the Italian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and a long-serving Deputy Chair of the said Transport Committee;

Aware that this final document needs to be promptly transmitted to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council as part of the so-called political dialogue,

Expresses a

FAVOURABLE ASSESSMENT

With the following remarks:

a) Whether already undertaken or still under preparation, the European Commission’s initiatives to turn the general orientation of the documents into a practical reality need to be framed as part of a structured approach to realising not only the ambitious goals articulated in the documents themselves but also the objectives recently laid out in the EU’s 2030 Digital Compass;

b) There needs to be an acceleration of spending on the development in the EU of technological infrastructures, such as fibre optics, 5 G and 6 G, the cloud, and quantum computing tools, and a recognition that synergising funding sources can maximise the impact of investments. Every effort should be made to reach the connectivity targets indicated in the examined EU documents, especially those relating to rural, peripheral and mountainous areas, in pursuit of which it seems advisable to accelerate the creation of fast fibre connections while also promoting “edge computing,” which can bridge delays in the roll-out of ultra-broadband infrastructure;

c) Initiatives for the development of network and information systems security should be encouraged, with particular regard to the need to combat cybercrime in all its forms, a need that is now all the more pressing in view of the significant increase in risk that occurred in parallel with the sharp increase in network use during the pandemic;

d) Wherever the proposed legislative measures and the regulatory initiatives still under review by the European Commission affect the rights and obligations of the various subjects operating in the digital ecosystem, they must not under any circumstances entail any backsliding in the area of fundamental rights, to which end it is imperative that the new legal frameworks align with the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU, with particular regard to the precepts contained in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union relating to privacy, the protection of personal data, non-discrimination, the freedom of expression and information, media pluralism, cultural diversity, and children's rights;

e) The rate of implementation of the initiatives envisioned in the European plan for digital education needs to be stepped up, and investments in training, education and digital upskilling need to be prioritised with a view to increasing the supply of dedicated degree courses, enhancing literacy in the classroom, and providing professional retraining in businesses. Meriting particular attention are tools designed to encourage higher female participation in the Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (the STEM subjects), where the gender gap is still wide;

f) The creation of a common European data space constitutes a strategic objective, the attainment of which requires adequate investments in standards, infrastructures and tools for the storing and processing of data. A model of governance based on a decentralised operating ecosystem is also necessary, as is the inculcation of a culture of data sharing geared to the needs of SMEs and consumers. With respect to this latter and in light of the pandemic, particular attention should be devoted to the creation of a common European health data space in which to actuate a targeted health data management strategy;

g) More effort needs to go into initiatives to build a single market for cloud services and a European cloud that can rival the most powerful international providers of such services. In particular, higher investment spending is to be recommended for the building of cloud infrastructures based on trust, openness, security, portability, and interoperability. Warranting particular attention is edge cloud computing, which refers to the homogenous distribution across

the EU of technologies and digital supports, and has the potential to become the main technology for the general improvement of the quality of the digital ecosystem;

h) Also needed is a legal framework capable of addressing the issues raised by the risks inherent in the use of artificial intelligence. The pace of implementation of measures that encourage the development and uptake of AI at a European level needs to be stepped up, for which reason the swift roll-out of a coordinated network of centres of excellence across the European Union is to be recommended, as is the laying of solid foundations for the participation of the European Union as a whole in international research projects. The links between the world of research and the world of manufacturing and production must be maintained, also because it is through these links that skills and capabilities in the use of new technologies can be transferred to SMEs and micro enterprises that often lack the resources to carry out the research themselves;

i) Attention needs to be brought to bear on how artificial intelligence can be deployed in the building of a sustainable economy (in the sectors of transport, the environment and energy). It is also worthwhile measuring the potential of AI for a large number of sectors, including tourism, culture and heritage. Taking due account of the risk inherent in the use of AI for certain purposes, it is worth reiterating that AI should continue to be used as an instrument that supports decision making but that it may not replace humans or absolve people of their accountability. Finally, proper attention should be paid not only to matters of liability arising from bad decisions made by machines equipped with artificial intelligence but also to the need for research to prevent malfunctions of this type. Such research could lay the foundation for a more discriminating use of AI that is based on a rigorous principle of transparency, according to which the choices made by the machines must be amenable to explanation and human comprehension. In any case, if AI that has been built in the service of humans is to perform its function in full, the outcome of processes must remain under human control.