



EU DIGITAL CHALLENGES

# 15 KEY PRINCIPLES

TO SUPPORT THE AMBITION  
OF EUROPEAN DIGITAL  
CITIZENSHIP

**EuropaNova**  
Action pour une Europe politique



# GIVE EUROPEAN DIGITAL CITIZENS THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

The European Commission's current term of office, which is coming to a close, has marked a turning point for technology in the region. In 2015, the Commission initiated a digital single market strategy, based on three "pillars": improving access to digital goods and services, creating the right legal framework for digital networks and services to flourish, and maximising the growth potential of the digital economy. This strategy has notably given a major boost to consumer protection. The most obvious example is General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force on 25 May 2018, standardising Member States' approach to data privacy and providing individuals with numerous rights. However, a number of weaknesses persist in the digital single market, particularly the difficulty of building an industrial policy able to drive a "third way" for Europe to address global competition.

Beyond its economic basis, this policy has been shaken up in recent years by the increase in new risks undermining the foundations of European democracy. At a time when the internet is being territorialised, digital technology has become a geopolitical issue. Unlike other world powers, Europe has not yet equipped itself to advance on this new global stage. Built on peace, the European Union is being rocked by threats such as fake news, data leaks, hate speech and hacking, which are not always managed effectively or create new divides between Member States. In fact, the solutions offered sometimes challenge the fundamental principles of our rule of law. Digital technology may be new, but the means and upholding of public freedoms and fundamental European values are not, and they must be protected by new regulatory approaches.

***The EU must assume its responsibilities for building an inclusive e-society***

In this context, the citizen is the last link in the chain and often the weakest. This latest term of office has seen the first steps towards an inclusive e-society with the promotion of internet access, particularly the rollout of WiFi4EU access points in local communities, and the development of digital education. However, these efforts remain insufficient to give digital citizens the right to self-determination. The EU must assume its responsibilities for building an inclusive e-society. Alongside the issue of digital vulnerabilities, European institutions have so far failed to maximise the opportunities offered by digital technology for updating their approaches and building closer relations with their citizens.

In the run up to the European elections, European think tanks Das Progressive Zentrum, EuropaNova and Renaissance Numérique are launching an appeal to defend an ambitious vision of European digital citizenship, based on 15 key principles. This appeal is the outcome of the “EU Digital Challenges” series of debates organised by the three think tanks since July 2018. The aim of these events was to reflect on the coordination of new digital regulatory policies at the European and national levels, particularly through Franco-German relations.

**RENAISSANCE NUMÉRIQUE**  
**EUROPA NOVA**  
**DAS PROGRESSIVE ZENTRUM**

# GUARANTEE A FAIR DISTRIBUTION OF VALUE GENERATED BY THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

## 1

### MAKE DATA A SHARED SOURCE OF WEALTH

Of varying forms and legal statuses, data is at the heart of the new global economy. The European framework must ensure that this new source of wealth is shared and managed across the value chain, from producer to consumer, by:

- Developing incentives for stakeholders to open up access to their data and boost the value chain
- Giving data producers (companies, public organisations, civil society stakeholders and citizens) the ability to manage them
- Enabling consumers to access information on products and services

# 2

## **PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIZEN-FRIENDLY INNOVATION**

While the development of innovation must uphold the values and foundations of European law, the European legal framework must not constitute a barrier to value generation in the region. The European Union must rethink its regulatory processes in the digital age, favouring more agile practices, such as the “regulatory sandboxes” set up by authorities.

## **OVERHAUL EUROPEAN SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

# 3

Like the rest of the world, the European market is facing transformations in the workplace and new ways of production and working. In the digital age, the growing disconnect between employment and work is challenging traditional protection structures. The European Union must guarantee a minimum level of social protection to new digital workers, especially those working on platforms and those negatively impacted by transformation in the employment market. This means rethinking both social protection and social conditions as a whole (the granting of loans, access to housing, insurance processes, etc.). The European Union must spearhead international discussions on the rights of these new workers.

# PREPARE AND EQUIP SOCIETY FOR THE TRANSFORMATIONS PRODUCED BY DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

## 4

### EMPOWER EUROPEAN CITIZENS TO FULLY EXERCISE THEIR DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

In addition to enabling citizens to better understand the new digital ecosystem in which they find themselves, we need to educate them on their rights and duties, and empower them to participate actively in society. In an e-society where digital technologies are helping to transform our institutions and our social relations, digital education must go beyond code, digital media or information. The European Union must encourage ambitious programmes to raise widespread awareness of digital citizenship based on European values, from the earliest age and all throughout life. Civic training programmes (education and service) must be reinforced to bring about a shared European and digital culture. The EU must also enable these rights to be exercised by providing sufficient resources to enforcement authorities.

## **RETHINK VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICIES IN LIGHT OF DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

# 5

This last decade has shown how we do not always fully appreciate the unpredictable nature of disruptive technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and their impact on society and employment. Improved knowledge of these technologies should be instilled into every level of society and to different degrees, from initial education to lifelong learning. The European Union must promote training policies in line with this transformation by:

- Making vocational training accessible at any age, particularly to low-skilled workers or those with skills that are no longer required in the new economy
- Massively boosting general skills in the current and future work force, whether social (e.g. team work and social intelligence) or situational (e.g. autonomy and adaptability)
- Introducing more agile training systems to help workers develop their skills in line with changes in their sectors

# 6

## **GUARANTEE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURES FOR DIGITAL RIGHTS TO BE EXERCISED BY ALL**

While substantial progress has been made in terms of coverage and equipment, internet access remains an issue for a large swathe of the European population. As the arrival of new technological solutions, particularly 5G, offers communities new opportunities and services, the European Union must ensure that implementation does not create new divides, especially geographical. The rollout of digital infrastructures in Europe must take into account local environmental and social conditions, and protect public goods.

# 7

## **ENSURE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES WITH E-ADMINISTRATION**

While EU Member States have engaged in major transformation, particularly by digitizing their administrations, they need to ensure that the changes provide universal benefits and avoid creating new forms of exclusion. In addition to ensuring access, digital services must help improve the quality of public services, rather than undermine them. The European Union must define key principles for access and quality, as well as for support to guide these transformation policies. These principles must focus on people and the ability to choose.



# CONSOLIDATE AND PROTECT DEMOCRACY IN THE FACE OF NEW THREATS

## 8

### MAKE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY A TOOL FOR SUPPORTING STRONG DEMOCRATIC GOALS

Built on economic foundations, the European Union is struggling to embody its democratic values. While this last decade has seen institutional changes along these lines, in particular with the election of the President of the European Commission by the European Parliament, and communication efforts, European institutions have yet to define an efficient framework for citizen integration. They must seize the opportunities offered by digital technology to reshape their relationship with citizens, enabling them to participate more directly in EU decisions. To this end, solutions such as the European Citizens' Initiative must be reinforced with binding powers and their use facilitated.

# 9

## **GUARANTEE CITIZENS' SAFETY AND RESILIENCE IN A DIGITAL SOCIETY**

From hacking to fake news, criminals and certain States alike are threatening safety and even the very existence of the digital society. Recent global attacks by ransomware such as WannaCry and Petya, as well as attacks to networks, essential infrastructure, have demonstrated their devastating impact on both business and government institutions. As digital transformation increases our society's exposure to vulnerabilities, the peace-driven European Union has a major political role to play in cyber-security, by:

- Championing the building of an international legal environment to manage these behaviours and protect populations from the consequences of cyber-risks
- Promoting measures to reinforce software and equipment security (a high-level certification framework aligned with industrial practices, a reduction in the lifecycle of zero-day vulnerabilities, the introduction of bug bounty programmes, and so on)
- Raising awareness and equipping society as a whole (companies, public organisations, civil society stakeholders and citizens, especially the most vulnerable, including youths, micro-businesses and SMEs) to manage these new risks

# 10

## **PROMOTE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER GOVERNANCE OF DIGITAL POLICY AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL**

European institutions are the appropriate places to promote exchanges with digital stakeholders as a whole: States, technology and digital transformation companies, NGOs and think tanks. The European Union could set up an independent body bringing together and addressing different digital skills to guide European digital policies. This authority could report to the Commission, the Parliament or the Council or act on its own initiative. It would also have the capacity to consult with European citizens. Finally, it would have *amicus curiae* power at the European Court of Justice.

# DEFEND OUR PUBLIC FREEDOMS WHILE GUARANTEEING PROTECTION FOR CITIZENS

## 11

### UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPORTIONALITY IN NEW DIGITAL REGULATION

In a rule of law, the principle of proportionality with regards to the infringement of rights is intended to seek a balance between several fundamental freedoms. With digital technology, this means upholding both freedom of expression and human dignity in the face of increasingly intrusive digital services. Recent debates on regulating online content (terrorist content, hate speech, etc.) and facial recognition have brought the issue of this balance into sharper focus. Content regulation, for example, implies finding the right balance between respecting individuals and their dignity or public security on one hand and freedom of expression on the other. The European Union must preserve the proportionality principle in the measures implemented by public and private stakeholders.

# 12

## **GUARANTEE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF REGULATION IMPLEMENTED BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS**

European politicians are legitimately striving to promote an effective security policy. The European Union must, however, pay attention to the measures implemented, which can lean towards censorship or even undermine the development of innovation and therefore the economy. If restrictions on public freedoms may sometimes be warranted, they must be limited to the strict minimum to guarantee public safety and judicial supervision. These restrictions must also remain temporary and undergo regular reassessment. It is also essential to offer effective and universally accessible appeal procedures, and to provide the necessary resources to the bodies in charge of supporting or processing any such appeals.

## **PROVIDE A CLEAR, SHARED LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON ACCESS TO DIGITAL DATA AND EVIDENCE DURING INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS**

# 13

Even when it meets a public safety need, access to personal data must follow a clear process defined by the European Union and its Member States or risk undermining the fundamental rights of citizens. Europe must have a legal framework for governing access to evidence and digital data during legal requisitions and protecting its citizens during international investigations. Multilateral agreements signed by the European Union are advisable to preserve fundamental freedoms in the digital age.

# 14

## **PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY IN ALGORITHM AND DATA USE**

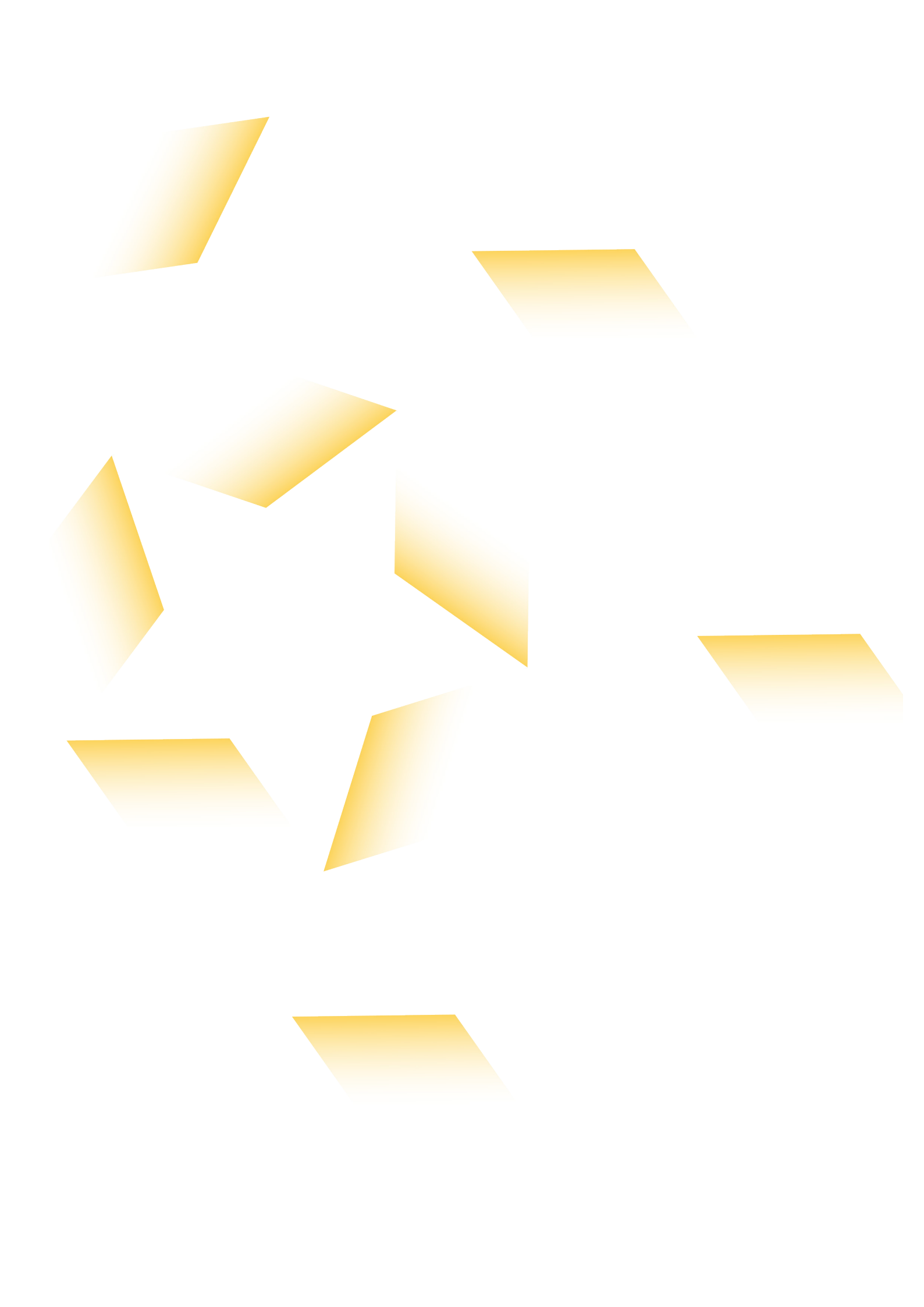
Day to day, algorithms take decisions that have a direct impact on European citizens' lives. This is illustrated in particular by the ranking of information on online platforms. The European Union must empower citizens to better understand the criteria used for these choices and appeal if necessary. To this end, European institutions must:

- Promote research to make artificial intelligence more transparent and explain its reasoning
- Encourage industry to build technologies ethically (“ethics by design”), identifying the potential equity and bias issues inherent in these technologies, from the design phase
- Set up human-directed continuous monitoring and improvement mechanisms, particularly for self-learning systems

## **PROTECT FREEDOM OF INFORMATION IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

# 15

As technologies shake up the way information is produced and circulated, the European Union must ensure that their use protects citizens' freedom of information and access to information. This challenge must be met by the media industry in particular, inspired by the current European discussions on guidelines for ethics and artificial intelligence.





Renaissance Numérique is France's main independent think tank focusing on the challenges of digital transformation in society. Bringing together universities, associations, corporations, start-ups and schools, it aims to develop workable proposals to help public stakeholders, citizens and businesses promote an inclusive e-society.

[www.renaissancenumerique.org](http://www.renaissancenumerique.org)

**EuropaNova**  
Action pour une Europe politique

EuropaNova is a European collective founded in 2003 by Guillaume Klossa with the support of Enrico Letta. The aim of this think tank is to accelerate the move towards a democratic, economic and social European public authority capable of withstanding crises and resisting the temptation to focus inward. Currently chaired by Denis Simonneau, the EuropaNova team is composed of young workers surrounded by more experienced advisors with in-depth knowledge of European institutions and different stakeholders.

[www.europanova.eu](http://www.europanova.eu)



Das Progressive Zentrum is an independent non-profit think tank based in Berlin. Founded in 2007, its objective is to bring progressive, innovative ideas to the political agenda. The think tank aims to promote new networks of progressive stakeholders from different backgrounds and innovative policies for economic and social progress. It involves mainly young German and European thinkers and decision makers in its progressive debates.

[www.progressives-zentrum.org](http://www.progressives-zentrum.org)

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