# TOWARDS A EUROPEAN DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY POLICY

Digital technology provides undeniable benefits across many areas, but the "touchscreen revolution" has bolstered the position of the US tech giants (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft - GAFAM) within Europe, with their Chinese counterparts (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, Xiaomi - BATX) now not far behind. Coupled with trade, not to mention ethical, practices at stark odds with the principles by which the EU sets great store, such a stronghold is posing a major threat in terms of sovereignty.

For the EU, returning sovereignty to the heart of its digital strategy involves restoring and ensuring compliance with the rules of free and fair competition and tackling tax injustice, guaranteeing and shoring up freedom of consent and neutrality online, cracking down on illegal content and narrowing the digital divide. It also involves the EU charting its own way forward, reviving the principles of an open and decentralised internet, supporting European stakeholders in the sector, safeguarding the use of free software and investing in such promising technologies as high performance computing, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things or blockchain.

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# THE ESEC'S RECOMMENDATIONS

## PRIORITY 1: STRENGTHEN REGULATION OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS EU-WIDE

↘ **Establish a level-playing field on the European digital market**
- Further empower the European Commission in tackling abuse of a dominant position and barriers to free competition and improve the effectiveness of sanctions adopted.
- Step up efforts of persuasion and the forging of alliances at European and international level to pave the way to a common tax regime for tech giants in 2020.
  In the meantime, between the Member States who are in favour, engage in enhanced cooperation for the introduction of a GAFAM tax similar to the tax already decided by France.

↘ **Take account of the social and environmental impact of digital platforms at EU level and within Member States**
- At European level, effectively deliver on the integration of platform workers into the European Pillar of Social Rights by providing for suitable corporate statuses and setting up a joint labour authority tasked with supervising, in liaison with the national authorities, compliance with the relevant regulations.
- Encourage national and European initiatives aimed at bringing about methods for producing, using and recycling digital tools that are likely to improve their length of service and put them to work for the benefit of the ecological transition.

⤷ **Guarantee compliance with the principles and values of the EU in the data economy as well as net neutrality**
- Strengthen the principle of clear, freely given consent by users concerning the collection and use of their personal data by limiting restrictions of access to the service in the event consent is refused and by clarifying how they can find out about their rights and express their consent.
- Strengthen the legal regime governing platform accountability by giving them a unique status and underscore the principle of net neutrality under the scrutiny of an independent authority able to act as a trusted third party and supervise compliance with all users' rights.

## PRIORITY 2: SET THE STAGE FOR A DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM IN LINE WITH THE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF THE EU

⤷ **Lay the groundwork conducive to an open digital ecosystem in Europe**
- Harmonise regulations applicable to cross-border e-commerce by reforming regulations bearing on electronic telecommunications and connectivity and strengthen the capabilities (resources and competences) of the Body of the European Regulators of Electronic Communications (BEREC).
- Enhance cooperation in terms of cybersecurity between the EU, its Member States and strategic partners and refer this matter to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for the purposes of establishing a new global standard in a tripartite manner.

⤷ **Support the development of European digital technology**
- Accelerate the roll-out of high-speed broadband coverage across Europe as well as next generation mobile networks by establishing a universal right to a minimum level of megabits and unlocking European public resources.
- Define a common European pillar of digital skills and qualification, improve the digital technology training provision and tap into the European structural and investment funds (ESIFs) to support associations in assisting populations the furthest removed from such technology and in raising young women's awareness of the digital occupations.
- Improve young European companies' access to digital technology by creating a Euro Tech label, a European one-stop shop and a financial incentive similar to the research tax credit, only better targeted and better regulated.

⤷ **Invest in technological solutions of the future to cement the EU's leading role in the data economy by 2020**
- Speed up implementation of the European Cloud Initiative, acquisition of next-generation high-performance computers and development of quantum technology.
- Adopt an "artificial intelligence and disruptive technology" package which includes an artificial intelligence deployment strategy and regulatory framework conducive to ethical use of the latter; implementation of this package will be entrusted to a European Agency for Disruptive Innovation.
- Establish fundamental regulations governing the use of blockchains and free software in Europe and support their development by setting up developer cooperatives, introducing quotas in public tendering processes and financing projects meeting collective needs at local level.