

# Declaring our digital rights



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Whether it's a place to do business, study, shop, keep in touch, find a partner, or sustain a lifeline to family and friends, we did not need a pandemic to show us why the internet matters. But the pandemic has reminded us that when we act to shape the online experience, we need to get it right. How we manage the digital world says a lot about who we are.

But how should we manage it? For starters, it helps to know specifically what we hope to achieve. For example, we want people to have access to affordable networks and the skills to use technology. We want to choose which data we share, and when and with whom we share it. We want to know the carbon footprints of our tablets and the videos we stream. We want to be protected as much online as we are offline. And we want to be able to disconnect.

Everyone in Europe – and in the rest of the world – should be able to rely on these basic principles. Everyone should know that these rights exist and deserve protection. In addition to national governments and members of the European Parliament, 82% of people across all 27 EU member states say they want the European Commission to define and promote a common framework of digital rights and principles.



And now we have done precisely that. The Commission's proposed declaration of digital rights and principles, released late last month, puts people first. Digital policies should be human-centric and designed to leave no one behind. At a time when digital technologies play an increasingly prominent role in social, economic, and political life, we want safe tools that work for everyone, and that respect our rights and values.

Building on this vision, we grouped our proposed principles and rights into six chapters. First, technology should have a worthy purpose: to serve us, the

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people, who are at the center of the digital transition. We should be able to pursue our aspirations knowing that we are secure, and that our fundamental rights will be respected.

Second, social solidarity is key. Everyone must be able to feel like they belong and can benefit from becoming more digital. That is why our proposed framework includes commitments on digital education, connectivity, and digital public services. Reliable access to digital health care across the European Union (which would have helped us immensely during the pandemic) also

falls under this heading.

The third chapter focuses on freedom of choice. Artificial-intelligence technologies must not predetermine people's decisions, algorithms must be transparent, and data samples must be as unbiased as possible. These principles are necessary to protect not only our rights and personal agency but also our health and safety.

Fourth, we must ensure widespread participation in the digital public sphere.

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