Joint Call to the G7: Our crisis response must be digital

The war in Ukraine, coming so soon after the COVID-19 pandemic, is yet another wake-up call for the importance of digital for our health, environment, prosperity, and our security.

We condemn this act of aggression and stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We welcome the strong coordinated reaction of the G7. We call on the G7 to start planning support action to rebuild the Ukrainian economy, to leverage digital technologies for health and our climate, and to protect ourselves from hybrid threats.

The digital and technology industries put forward these six recommendations:

1. Working together to secure Cyberspace and stay at the technological edge

To increase resilience against cyberattacks, we call on G7 leaders to increase spending on emerging and disruptive technology. Stronger cooperation on cybersecurity, from cloud to connected devices, will support businesses and citizens to use digital technologies confidently. Promoting responsible state behaviour in cyberspace through international fora is essential. Nation states have the responsibility to protect civil society and business against criminal and state actors. In the United Nations, as well as in the G7, governments should work towards more binding, internationally accepted, and applied rules for state action in cyberspace. Additionally, we call on the G7 to advocate for common global standards in the international community. Only on the basis of jointly agreed norms, states can meet the rapidly growing challenge posed by cyberattacks and improve cyber resilience.

2. Facilitating data flows to drive the international economic recovery

We call on G7 Leaders to set global rules on data flows. DIGITALEUROPE's 'Data Flows and the Digital Decade' -Study shows, that the European Union alone stands to profit from an additional €720 billion extra growth, if we utilize the power of international data transfers. A practical example is health: 25% of input into the provision of healthcare consist of data-reliant products and services which are key to achieve the WHO goal for resilient healthcare systems. The same is true for cybersecurity and AI, technologies that are underpinned by data flows and that are crucial to enhance our digital resilience.

A successful and prompt conclusion of the JSI negotiations on E-commerce will benefit all economic sectors by removing barriers to digital trade. We place particular emphasis on enabling the cross-border flow of data and making permanent the ban on customs duties on electronic transmissions, two areas which should be prioritised for the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference. Ensuring commitments against unjustified forced data localization and measures that require the transfer of, or access to source code as a market access requirement is critical. The G7 can play a vital part in advancing these issues. The forum provides the opportunity for countries to align positions, and work towards ambitious outcomes. The same is true for last year's G7 Digital Trade Principles. The goal now is to fully operationalise them.

3. Digital technologies' positive footprint for a sustainable planet

We call on the G7 to lead in the development of international standards for measuring the enabling impact of digital technologies on reducing carbon emissions across key sectors of our economies. The latest IPCC report warns that "without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all

sectors, limiting global warming to 1.5°C is beyond reach". Urgent action is required, as humanity is now "on a fast track to climate disaster", stressed by the UN Secretary-General.

We need to make the most out of digital technologies if we are serious about reaching our climate goals. At European level, the European Green Digital Coalition is developing methodologies to measure the net impact of green digital technologies on the environment and climate. We call for a similar approach at the international level.

4. Healthier lives

The G7 has rightfully put digital on the health agenda. In June 2021, G7 ministers reaffirmed "the importance of international collaboration on health, in the context of a significant global crisis". The declaration included provisions on digital health, concrete improvements in data heavy clinical trials coordination and highlighted the need for cross border data flows for the delivery of care. We urge for decisive action, prioritising its operationalisation.

We call on the G7 to continue this commitment by facilitating, legally and practically, the secure sharing and use of ever-increasing volumes of health data in order to leverage the clout of global R&D ecosystems, while preserving privacy and control of what can be sensitive personal data. Key to this is the development of cross-border digital R&D infrastructure based on converging standards for interoperable and secure data generation, storage and transfer, enabling not only R&D but also regulatory approval.

5. Digitalisation to drive recovery, development and inclusion

We call on G7 leaders to drive forward work on legal frameworks and investing in technological solutions to promote smart working and telemedicine. Governments should make the digitalisation of all sectors an integral part of their recovery plans, including in the areas of manufacturing, security, health, energy, education and e-learning. Standards are a key enabler for innovative and competitive economies. The G7 should support companies in the creation of norms and standards in the relevant committees, e.g., through cross-regional coordinators for standardization or financial support for participation in the standardisation process.

The same is true for Connectivity: G7 countries should work in concert to increase digital inclusion around the globe. The tech industry stands ready to assist the G7 in the implementation of the Build Back Better World Initiative and the EU's Global Gateway Initiative. Modern connectivity is a prerequisite to build the sustainable societies of the future: The digital infrastructure gap will only be addressed by a combination of technology neutral public and private investment. Digital infrastructure development in low- and middle-income countries needs to be supported, including through technology neutral regulation, to catalyse growth and unlock opportunities.

6. Digital Skills to revamp our educational systems and upskill workers

In a rapidly changing world, digital skills have become a must for society. Basic digital competences are key to build trust in technology among future users. At the same time, advanced digital skills are essential to reap the full benefits of new digital solutions, including cybersecurity.

We need a foundational knowledge of computer science in primary and secondary education. We equally need to launch ambitious private-public partnerships to upskill the existing workforce in areas like AI and big data: 52% of European workers are in need of reskilling. In cybersecurity only, Europe alone lacks 200,000 specialists. The G7 must add momentum and see the current level of cyber warfare as a wake-up call to train more cybersecurity specialists.