

EU digital policies and EU in the world

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TITLE: EU policies on digital technologies and EU in the world

SUBMISSIONS PERIOD: deadline 15 May 2022

SYNOPSIS: The European Union is often seen as a regulatory power but as a weak global player in technology or military matters. EU's digital policies and laws are often based upon market and economic motivations in particular to enable the free flow of goods, services, capital and people in the EU's internal market. Some policies are driven by fundamental right protection like data protection, as enshrined in the EU Treaties. Even if initiated from such EU-internal aspirations, they do have an external impact, that is on other countries in the global political and economic systems (the 'Brussels effect'¹).

Several trends impact the relation between the EU's digital policy-making and the EU's position in the world. Firstly, the EU is increasingly and in an ever wider range active in digital policy, from semiconductors, cybersecurity, electronic identity and trust services, to cloud, dataspace, platforms, harmful content, and AI. Secondly, the EU is ever more mobilising other than the internal and fundamental rights policies, namely 'external' policies such as on trade and foreign direct investment, international cooperation and partnerships. The EU also intends stepping up defence policy and involvement in global standardization. Thirdly, other internal policies notably those that come with finance and investment such as in R&D and roll-out of digital infrastructures but also harmful content policies are becoming geo-politicised. Generally, notions such as strategic autonomy and digital sovereignty or technological sovereignty have increasingly been discussed in recent years. They are, however, still hard to pin down as driving or integrating concept. Finally, the EU's position in the world is challenged by rising geopolitical tensions and bi-polarization as well as by its search for its own common identity and values. As a consequence of all these challenges the EU's 'capacity and freedom to act'² is under pressure.

The overall questions are what EU digital policies and the related politics can and should imply for the EU's position in the world. Answers can be analytical but may also be normative-constructive provided profound scientific substantiation is given.

Questions that could be addressed by contributions in the topical collection include, but are not restricted to, the following:

¹ Anu Bradford (2020), <https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/books/232/>.

² European Commission (2021), https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/foresight_report_com750_en.pdf

1. Can and should EU digital policies strengthen the position of EU in the world? If so, in which digital technologies or infrastructures should the EU strengthen the ‘Brussels effect’? How will this be affected by path-dependency and by changing geopolitics?
2. What are determinants of the interplay of political/democratic, economic, and social doctrines and governance and EU digital policy in infrastructural domains such as digital networks, internet management, cloud, electronic identity, or digital finance?
3. Does the EU’s mandate for digital policy-making (the EU Treaties) limit EU’s position in the world? Are there opportunities in digital policy in non-Internal Market areas such as defence or justice, or through enhanced cooperation of Member States?
4. Can values-driven digital policy be a third way for the EU in a bipolar world (e.g. in AI, self-sovereign identity, data governance, public interests)? With which technology principles and architectures? Should and can policy drive citizens’ digital behaviour?
5. Does the EU make full, integrated and coherent use of the policy toolbox in digital policy development? How does the EU approach deal with the agility, speed of change, and the dominance by a few companies and states of digital technologies?
6. Does the reality of market-led adoption of foreign-controlled digital solutions put the survivability of the EU-27 consensus approach under pressure? What does the approach to 5G security tell in this respect?
7. To what extent and how can the EU influence the private actors and foreign states that drive new norms, values and ethics linked to new technologies (AI, 6G, quantum technology, integrated digital platforms, etc)?

AUTHOR INSTRUCTIONS: Papers submitted to the topical collection should not exceed 10,000 words in total (including references).

Timeline for the topical collection:

- Deadline for submitted contributions: **15 May, 2022**
- First round of reviews completed: **31 May, 2022**
- Deadline for revisions: **31 July, 2022**

Submitted papers will be peer reviewed following the journal’s standard, and accepted papers will be published online on a rolling basis. Please blind submissions for peer review prior to submission and chose the relevant entry in the drop-down menu on the **Digital Society** submission page.