

Digital Europe 2021-2027

The Digital Europe programme for the period 2021-2027 aims to increase and maximise the benefits of digital transformation for all EU citizens, public administrations and businesses. Strategic funds will be invested in supporting projects in five key areas: supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills, and ensuring a wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society.

Programme's objectives

Digital Europe aims to **strengthen and promote Europe's capabilities in key areas of digital technologies** through large-scale implementation.

In the private sector and in areas of public interest, **expand the deployment and take-up of key European digital technologies**, promoting transformation and access to digital technologies.

The European Commission intends to complement the funding available through other EU programmes, such as the Horizon Europe programme, the Connecting Europe Facility for digital infrastructure, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the Structural funds.

The five interlinked specific objectives of the programme are the following:

Objective 1 - High-Performance Computing

Operational objectives:

Implement, coordinate and operate in an integrated, demand-driven, application-driven, world-class exascale data and supercomputing infrastructure, easily accessible to public and private users, in particular SMEs, and easily accessible for research purposes, in accordance with EU Regulation 2018/1488;

deploy operational ready technology from research and innovation activities in order to create an integrated Union-wide ecosystem for HPC encompassing various aspects of the scientific and industrial value chain segments, including hardware, software, applications, services, interconnections and e-skills, with a high-level of security and data protection;

implement and operate a post-exascale infrastructure, including integration with quantum computing technologies, and research computing infrastructures; encourage the development in the Union of the necessary hardware and software for such implementation.

Objective 2 - Artificial Intelligence

Operational objectives:

developing and enhancing the capabilities and knowledge base of AI in the Union, including the development and strengthening of quality data resources and corresponding exchange mechanisms, and algorithm repositories, while ensuring a people-centred and inclusive approach respecting EU values;

making the capabilities referred before accessible to businesses, in particular SMEs and start-ups, civil society, non-profit organisations, research institutes, universities and public administrations, in order to maximise their benefits to European society and the economy;

strengthening, network testing and experimenting facilities for AI in the Member States;

developing and enhancing commercial application and production systems to facilitate the integration of technologies into value chains and the development of innovative business models and reduce the time gap between innovation and commercial exploitation, and foster the uptake of AI-based solutions in areas of public interest and society.

Objective 3 - Cybersecurity and Trust

Operational objectives:

To support the development and procurement of advanced cyber security equipment, data infrastructures and tools, together with the Member States, in order to achieve a high common European level of cyber security, in full respect of data protection law and fundamental rights, while ensuring the strategic autonomy of the Union;

support the development and optimal use of European cyber-security knowledge, capabilities and expertise, as well as the sharing and integration



of best practices;
 ensure wide deployment of effective and state-of-the-art cyber-security solutions in all European economic sectors, with a particular focus on public authorities and SMEs;
 strengthen capacities in the Member States and the private sector to help them comply with Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council, including through measures aimed at supporting the adoption of best practices in cybersecurity;
 improve resilience to cyber attacks, help develop greater risk awareness and better knowledge of cyber security processes, and support public and private organisations in achieving basic levels of cyber security, e.g. through the introduction of end-to-end data encryption and software updates;
 improve cooperation between the civil and defence sectors on cyber security projects, services, expertise and dual-use applications, in accordance with a regulation establishing the European cyber security competence centre for industry, technology and research and the network of national coordination centres (Regulation on the European cyber security competence centre).

Objective 4 - Advanced digital skills

Operational objectives:

Support the design and delivery of high-quality and long-term training courses and activities including blended learning for students and the workforce;
 Support the design and implementation of high-quality short-term training courses and activities for the workforce, in particular in SMEs and the public sector
 Support high-quality on-the-job training activities and work experience for students, including work placements, and the workforce, particularly in SMEs and the public sector.

Specific Objective 5 - Implementation and optimal use of digital capabilities and interoperability

Operational objectives:

support the public sector and public interest sectors, such as health and care, education, justice, customs, transport, mobility, energy, environment and the cultural and creative sectors, including relevant businesses established within the Union, to effectively implement and access state-of-the-art digital technologies, such as HPC, AI and cybersecurity;
 deploy, operate and maintain interoperable state-of-the-art digital service infrastructures across the Union, including relevant services, in complementarity with national and regional actions;
 support the integration and use of trans-European digital service infrastructures and approved European digital standards in the public sector and areas of public interest to facilitate cost-effective implementation and interoperability;
 facilitate the development, updating and use of solutions and frameworks by public administrations of businesses and citizens, including open source solutions and reuse of solutions and frameworks for interoperability;
 to enable the Union public sector and industry, in particular SMEs, to easily access and extend the piloting and testing of digital technologies and their use, including across borders;
 to support the take-up by the Union public sector and industry, in particular by SMEs and start-ups, of advanced digital and related technologies, including in particular HPC, AI, cybersecurity, other cutting-edge and future technologies, such as distributed ledger technologies (such as Blockchain);
 to support the design, testing, deployment, implementation and maintenance of interoperable digital solutions, including digital public administration solutions, for Union-wide public services delivered through a platform of data-driven reusable solutions aimed at fostering innovation and establishing common frameworks to realise the full potential of public administration services for citizens and businesses;
 ensure continued ability at the EE level to lead digital development, as well as to observe, analyse and adapt to rapidly evolving digital trends, and to share and integrate best practices;
 support collaboration in building a European ecosystem for trusted digital and data-sharing infrastructures using, inter alia, services and applications based on distributed ledger technologies (e.g. blockchain), including supporting interoperability and standardisation and promoting the deployment of Union cross-border applications based on security and privacy by design, while respecting consumer and data protection legislation;
 implementing and enhancing European digital innovation hubs and their networks.

Forms of Funding

The programme can provide funding in the form of contracts, grants and prizes. **Grants may cover up to 100% of eligible costs.**

An action which has received a contribution under another Union programme, including funds under shared management, may also be financed under the Programme, provided that such contributions do not cover the same costs. The rules of the relevant Union programme shall apply to the corresponding contribution to the action. The cumulative funding shall not exceed the total eligible costs of the action. The contribution from the various Union programmes may be calculated on a pro-rata basis in accordance with the documents specifying the conditions for the contribution.

In order to receive a **label of excellence** under the Programme, actions shall comply with all of the following conditions:

- have been evaluated in the framework of a call for proposals under the programme;
- they shall comply with the minimum quality requirements laid down in the call for proposals;
- they cannot be funded under the call for proposals due to budgetary constraints.

In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Regulation laying down Common Provisions for the period 2021-2027, the ERDF or the ESF+ may support proposals subject to a call for proposals under the programme that have been awarded a label of excellence under the programme.

Budget

The total budget for the implementation of the programme for the period **from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027 is 7.588.000.000.**

Links

Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme and repealing Decision (EU) 2015/2240 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0694>)

PUBBLICATO 05 Aug 2022		AMBITO Europeo	
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