

Visegrad Group's digital industry: digital priorities are crucial for EU's economy in aftermath of pandemic

Organisations of digital and advanced technologies industry from Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary – associated in Digital V4 group – join in approval for the European Union's digital priorities for the next 5 years, designed by the European Commission. However, they believe that in order to achieve the goals, the European budget must provide more financial resources for digital expenses, actions supporting start-ups and SMEs, as well as for a major boost in educating our community in the field of digital competences.

Digital priorities for the European Union were described in „Shaping Europe's Digital Future” communication. The strategy presented is based on three key goals: supporting development of technology and digital skills, building a digital single market rooted in fair competition and creating an open, democratic society in the digital environment. Public consultations in regard to the document are taking place in Europe.

Representatives of the digital industry in Visegrad Group, which brings together four organisations: from Poland (Digital Poland Association), Hungary (IVSZ), Czech Republic (ASE) and Slovakia (ITAS) – associated in Digital V4 Group – addressed their signed position to the European Commission and prime ministers of their home countries. In their opinion, the digital priorities making up the EU's strategy deserve support, but they also require taking specific legislative action.

More resources for innovations and stimulating start-ups

In their position, Digital V4 Group states that it is necessary to boost investments based on advanced technologies in the European Union. This includes the 5G network, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and cloud computing solutions. But for that – according to the industry – proper financial resources will be needed. *„If Europe truly wants to “lead the way in the adoption and standardisation process of the new generation of technology”, in the light of the legitimate goals set by the European Commission, it must be noted that reaching those goals will be an ambitious task, highly needed and just as expensive. We would like to voice our concern that the resources designated for a key piece of our growth, namely the digital transformation, as provided for in the EU's 2021 – 2027 budget and set at 3 percent, might prove to be insufficient.”* – the position reads.

Moreover, the industry expects the EU and their governments to implement regulations, which will work for the benefit of start-ups and SMEs sector. This includes the taxing policy, which according to Digital V4 Group „should not harm the development of digital and advanced technologies sector, serving as a source of innovative products and services”. Initiating cooperation between start-ups, industry companies and universities is also mandatory. Polish governmental programme GovTech Polska is provided as a perfect example of such collaboration.

Building strong digital Europe

Digital V4 believes that in the face of crisis, we must also care about Europe's strong digital. *“We believe that while developing technological robustness, it is in the best interests of individual Member States, and the EU as a whole, to build the digital infrastructure and R&D potential which will allow innovative ideas to grow in fields such as AI and robotics. It is crucial to have the know-how and ready products developed right here, in the European Union. Only in that way do we stand a chance of becoming a globally competitive market”* - the position states. It also mentions that the future of EU lays in data-driven economy and this makes it crucial to simplify regulations supporting the European business in migrating into the cloud and introducing best data analysis practice. *„We need a modern approach to processing data for the further development of innovative services. The free flow of data, in both the public and private domains, is much needed”* – members of Digital V4 Group write.

To prepare the society for digital revolution

In the assessment of digital industry of the Visegrad Group, European society must also be prepared for a new digital revolution. Therefore, in their statement presented to the European Commission, they postulate bringing changes to vocational training, so it better fits the modern requirements of the market. One of their suggestions is introduction of dedicated training vouchers for employees and employers, which could be used to cover the expenses on trainings and acquiring new skills. In organisations' opinion, motivational campaigns driving the community towards building digital skills are also a must.

- This way the European Union will build a digital, European society – Digital V4 states. The Group takes notice, that at all times we must guarantee coherence of security regulations and safety of users' personal data. It is their opinion that while designing such regulations, we must always consider the well-being of entities relying on processing personal and non-personal data in their activity. Solutions in that regard cannot hinder the development of innovative services and must remain consistent with the specifics of enterprises offering services based on AI and Internet of Things.