

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE**Henna VIRKKUNEN****Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and
Democracy****1. General competence, European commitment and personal independence**

What aspects of your personal qualifications and experience are particularly relevant for becoming Commissioner and promoting the European general interest, particularly in the area you would be responsible for? How will you contribute to implementing the political guidelines of the Commission? How will you implement gender mainstreaming and integrate a gender perspective into all policy areas of your portfolio? How will you implement youth mainstreaming?

What guarantees of independence are you able to give Parliament, and how would you make sure that any past, current or future activities you carry out could not cast doubt on the performance of your duties within the Commission?

The referendum on Finland's membership in the European Union was held 30 years ago. It was a defining moment for me, as joining the "Yes to membership" movement was the reason why I entered politics. Those of us who worked for membership wanted Finland to belong to the group of European, open societies that respect inviolable human dignity, democracy, equality, human rights, rule of law and freedom. Promoting the common European idea and project is what made me a politician.

The fundamental values of the European Union are now being challenged in an unprecedented way. If confirmed by the European Parliament, as Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, I will act for these same values even more decisively. There are dark clouds over our societies, but I firmly believe that these difficulties can be overcome. We need more dialogue and a desire to understand. We need solutions, firm steps and a common direction for the future. As stated in the political guidelines of President-elect Ursula von der Leyen, we now need to go much faster and further to ensure our security, competitiveness and prosperity, as well as social fairness. This requires the ability to listen and dialogue, the art of compromise and determination to reconcile often very different views. To ensure a prosperous and secure Europe, we must enhance productivity through digital innovation. At the same time, staying true to our values of democracy, human rights, and individual freedoms means placing people and their needs at the heart of technology. While my focus would be on enforcing and implementing the digital laws enacted by co-legislators so far, we should work together to secure Europe's digital sovereignty and leadership. This will not only strengthen our security, but also bolster our societies and economies as a whole and strengthen the resilience of our democracies.

I have worked for more than ten years as a Member of the European Parliament and before that for six years as a Minister and as a Member of the Finnish Parliament. Often my work has focused on industry, digital and innovation policies relevant to the proposed Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy portfolio. Most recently as a Member of the European Parliament, I have had the opportunity to advance digital transition through my various Rapporteur and Shadow Rapporteur positions. Ensuring internal and external security, as well as promoting digital and frontier technologies have played a central role in my political activities. If confirmed by the Parliament, I will exert myself to create a coherent approach on how to use technology to strengthen the EU's security and competitiveness, whilst fully respecting data protection requirements and ensuring that tools such as AI are used in a safe and secure way.

As a politician, I am driven forward by a strong sense of fairness and the idea that every person should be treated equally. I strongly believe that achieving equality requires actions across different sectors of society. As a concrete example, in the portfolio presented to me by the President-elect of the Commission, a key mission is to put Europe

at the forefront of new technologies. This is simply not possible unless we succeed in attracting girls and women to STEM-fields. We need to harness the best of all talents to support European technological sovereignty. Similarly, I would pay particular attention to the gender dimension in the other areas of what would be my portfolio: mainstreaming gender perspectives in security and democracy-related policies is crucial for creating more inclusive, effective, and sustainable solutions. Gender-sensitive policies help address the diverse impacts of security threats and democratic challenges on different groups, ensuring that women's voices and needs are considered.

In practical terms, I have advanced the participation of women in all sectors of life by serving as the President of the National Coalition Party's Women's Association and as the President of the women's baseball club Jyväskylän Kirittäret. Advancing gender equality and respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities will continue to be key motivators for my public engagement.

Similarly, it is crucial that we pay special attention to the perspective of young people who will live tomorrow with the decisions that we take today. As a Member of the European Parliament, I have frequently engaged in dialogue with young audiences in different types of schools and educational institutions. A topic that has come up in almost every meeting relates to the worries and pressures experienced by young people about the direction of their future. We as decision-makers should aim to create a future where young generations are supported and see opportunities. I want Europe to be a place where young people can build their life and pursue their dreams. If confirmed, I will carry out annual Youth Policy Dialogues with young Europeans; integrating both gender and youth mainstreaming thoroughly into the work of the European Commission would be a task close to my heart. I would also make it my high priority to regularly visit Member States. The Commission should work with the EU citizens and for the EU citizens.

I respect the foundations on which we have built Europe: the fundamental respect for our democratic authorities and institutions, the Rule of law, equal treatment, proportionality and prosperity. I commit to comply with the highest ethical standards and the obligations set out in Articles 17.3, 245 and 339 TFEU and the Code of Conduct for Commissioners.

My declaration of interests is complete and accessible to the public and will be updated should there be changes. For me, independence is non-negotiable. I will avoid any situation where my impartiality and independence could be questioned. I will inform the President of the Commission of any situation, which might involve a conflict of interest.

2. Management of the portfolio and cooperation with the European Parliament

Can you commit to duly informing Parliament about your actions and those of your departments? In what respect do you consider yourself accountable to Parliament?

What specific commitments are you prepared to make in terms of your engagement with and presence in Parliament, both in committee and in plenary, transparency, cooperation and effective follow-up to Parliament's positions and requests for legislative initiatives? In relation to planned initiatives or ongoing procedures, are you ready to provide Parliament with timely information and documents on an equal footing with the Council?

I have been honoured to serve for more than ten years as a Member of the European Parliament. I have great respect for my colleagues and the democratic force of the institution, and I firmly believe that by strengthening the relationship between the European Parliament and the European Commission we can achieve more for the good of the European citizens.

I am committed to an open and systematic dialogue with the European Parliament to ensure that the Parliament can exercise its legislative powers and democratic oversight effectively. This requires transparent flow of information on key events and key stages of negotiations. Providing the European Parliament with relevant and timely information improves the quality and efficiency of decision-making processes. If confirmed as a Member of the College, I will do my utmost to take part in plenary debates, Committee meetings and trilogues linked to my proposed portfolio. Overall, the status of the European Parliament as equal co-legislator with the Council should always be clearly embedded in the work of the College. I will ensure that any Article 225 Resolutions adopted by the Parliament calling for legislative proposals in areas under my responsibility are treated as high priority on the Commission agenda and followed up with a structured dialogue with the responsible Parliamentary Committee.

I am also looking forward to engage with the European Parliament to help ensure that citizens and businesses can enjoy the benefits of EU laws and policies. Supporting the Commission in its role of driving forward implementation would be very useful because political decisions, statements or even the strictest legislation will not move us forward, unless we make sure that our common rules are also followed.

I consider it very important to have an open, honest and continuous communication with the European Parliament and its Members. I aim for transparency in the preparation of new initiatives and it is important for me that also our stakeholders and citizens with different points of view are listened to.

If confirmed, as Executive Vice-President I would continue to apply high transparency standards for meetings with interest representatives, as I have done in my role as a Member of the European Parliament.

Before engaging in politics, my previous profession was journalist. I find it fundamentally important, also considering the threats of mis- and disinformation, to participate in public debate and offer timely and accurate information to citizens also through the media. If I am confirmed by the Parliament, as the Executive Vice-President of the Commission I will do my best to engage also with larger audiences and actively communicate the Commission's actions and decisions to EU citizens.

Questions from the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

3. What is your vision for your portfolio over and above your mission letter and what would you like your legacy to be? What legislative proposals and other initiatives will you suggest to the College of Commissioners for adoption in the next five years and in particular in the first 100 days? How will you ensure that these proposals, as well as the implementation of existing legislation, would strengthen European competitiveness? Do you intend to base those legislative proposals on dedicated impact assessments? What are your plans in particular for the Digital Networks Act, the EU Cloud and AI Development Act, the single EU-wide Cloud policy and the European Data Union Strategy? What concrete measures will you propose in order to ensure that Europe reaches its 2030 Digital Decade targets, including in relation to digital skills? What are your views on the European Cybersecurity Certification Scheme for Cloud Services (EUCS) and the recommendations in the Draghi report related to cloud services?

Fuelled by new technologies, the world is changing faster than ever before, and even bigger changes are coming with AI, quantum and biotechnologies. We have a choice: we can either adapt, embrace new technologies and thrive, or we can risk falling behind, remaining dependent on others. The latter path would leave us unable to maintain our current level of welfare, to protect the environment or simply keep ourselves safe. The competitiveness gap between the EU and the US is in large part explained by the thriving US tech sector and tech take-up. Filling this gap will be an important priority for my coming mandate, if I am confirmed by the European Parliament. Technology must not become a vulnerability while it could be an asset. We need to take the future in our hands.

We are at a crossroads too, for Europe's security. I want to work in Europe and with our allies to ensure we are equipped to face the challenges of the current geopolitical context. Protecting Europe's economy and society means above all defending our key values of rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights. Our digital policy has a crucial part to play in countering disinformation and encouraging a vigorous, independent and free media sector.

Technological sovereignty, security and democracy are the foundations on which we can – working together - build the future of Europe, and ensure this remains the best place in the world for our children to live in. These would be the central objectives of my mandate.

With you, I want to shape a Union that innovates, produces and, when necessary, also regulates in a future-proof way. A Union that cuts red tape, a Union that puts innovation at the centre of a radical shift towards productivity that invests in internal and external security and maintains the highest standards in the world on democracy and rule of law. At the same time, I believe the EU should continue to play a leading role in global digital governance, promoting globally our human-centric vision and common European values, on which our rules are based.

If confirmed, I will review our current policies and propose concrete new future-proof actions with clear and measurable outputs, including those mentioned in my mission letter, to reach the policy objectives and targets that

we have set in the Digital Decade as we approach 2030. We need a paradigm shift based on five strands of action to be able to strengthen European competitiveness:

first, supporting the innovation capacity of European companies, and in particular SMEs, working across sectors, and lowering the threshold for our businesses to adopt innovative technologies such as AI.

Second, I would support effective implementation, enforcement and simplification of rules and regulations and cutting bureaucracy, using technology to decrease the compliance burden for our businesses.

Third, we should focus on skills, so that everyone has a chance to be involved in the digital revolution. We must step up work to close the gap in advanced digital skills, in particular working to raise the number of women ICT specialists in Europe.

Fourth, harnessing the potential of digital and frontier technologies to improve our lives, making our living environments greener, more secure, and more inclusive. I would also ensure that the energy efficiency of the ICT sector is properly addressed and that we take advantage of AI in this respect.

Lastly, I want to improve the way the public sector delivers for our citizens in sectors like health. The public sector, including the Commission, should embrace innovative solutions to better serve citizens' needs.

To achieve all this and to reap the benefits for European competitiveness, we need to act quickly. This means firstly fully implementing existing legislation – we must always ask ourselves if the result can be achieved by better enforcing or implementing existing rules. But in a rapidly-moving world, we should also propose new innovation-friendly legislation when necessary – with proper impact assessment involving all relevant stakeholders and robust cost-benefit analysis. New rules should be simpler, targeted and accessible.

Europe should become the AI continent. That is why, if confirmed, I will concentrate on the **AI Factories Initiative** in our first 100 days. Whereas the AI Factories focus on ensuring access to top-notch high-performance computing by AI start-ups and industry, the **Cloud and AI Development Act** (more information in my response to question 6) will tackle the acute gap in generalised data processing and computational capacity that currently holds European companies back from developing and deploying AI. That is why the **EU Cloud and AI Development Act** will contain measures to stimulate innovation, boost investment, cut red tape and promote technologies that can meet ambitious energy efficiency targets.

More specifically on cloud, it is important to remain open to third-country providers, ensuring our supply chain security, while also accounting for the legitimate interest for “sovereign cloud” solutions in particularly sensitive applications. Thanks to the Data Act’s shielding provisions, we have ensured that the data stored in Europe by cloud service providers remain safe from illegitimate access or transfers by non-EU governments, but we must do more for more sensitive applications. Therefore, following Professor Draghi’s advice, if confirmed, I will put forward a single **EU-wide cloud policy** for public administrations and public procurement. When offering their services to public administrations, cloud providers often face different requirements in different Member States, and even between different departments of the same public administration. This is especially burdensome for smaller providers. At the same time, it is difficult for public administrations to identify the services that best meet their needs in terms of security and sovereignty. I would propose a common EU-wide approach to tender specifications, a common data security framework and an EU-curated marketplace for secure and innovative cloud-based services. Such services could also be attractive for more sensitive commercial uses.

I welcome the voluntary **EU Cybersecurity Certification Scheme for Cloud Services (EUCS)**, as it will increase transparency on the security level of cloud services. Once in place, it will address the current fragmentation in certification and lower the financial barriers for providers to offer secure cloud solutions across the EU. At the same time, besides technical requirements, I am conscious of security challenges posed in the current geopolitical context. These challenges would have my attention when working on the different cloud initiatives under my tenure.

In addition, if confirmed by the European Parliament, I will soon launch a consultation of stakeholders for an **Apply AI Strategy** (more on this under Question 4) because we also need to look at the demand side in private and public sectors. This will be complemented by the **European Data Union Strategy**, linked to the Cloud and AI Development Act, to further unlock the potential of data. Privacy needs to be protected at all times, and we will have to ensure the EU’s data protection framework remains in line with the digital transformation, responding to commercial and law enforcement needs, while maintaining the same high standard of data protection.

As part of efforts to bolster the cybersecurity of our most critical entities, we will prepare an **action plan on the cybersecurity of hospitals and healthcare providers** for adoption in the first 100 days.

Reaching our ambitious goals will not be possible without improved access to secure, fast and reliable connectivity, as part of our broader strategy for connected collaborative computing. We need to incentivise investment in digital infrastructure and complete the Single Market. This will put Europe at the forefront of the next generation of smart digital and secure infrastructure, including 6G, as part of the clean industrial transformation. Therefore, if confirmed, I would prepare a **Digital Networks Act** to boost secure high-speed broadband, both fixed and wireless. The digital connectivity landscape is changing rapidly with convergence of telecom, cloud and edge technology, driven by virtualisation and AI. We therefore need a regulatory framework that incentivises the development of integrated connectivity and computing infrastructures and ensures a level playing field for providers of similar infrastructure and services. The new initiative would be prepared taking into account stakeholders' feedback on the Commission's White Paper of February 2024 on the future of electronic communications, building on the planned review of the existing framework, as well as the Letta and Draghi reports. My goal would be completing the single market for connectivity, for which reform of spectrum policies, respecting shared competences, is a necessity.

All these initiatives can only succeed if they are flanked by investment in Europe's most valuable asset: its people. As underlined in the Political Guidelines, the Commission intends to put a particular emphasis on the creation, development and deployment of the skills we need, today and tomorrow, most obviously those needed for the twin transitions. I look forward to working with the Executive Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness and other colleagues in the College to take this forward if confirmed by the Parliament.

4. How do you define EU tech sovereignty and competitiveness? How can the EU achieve it? In that regard, what targets and indicators will you set to ensure that substantial progress has been made by the end of your mandate? How will you reinforce the position of the EU tech sector in both hardware and software, using a holistic approach, and what immediate measures will you take to ensure tech sovereignty and promote the competitiveness of European platforms? What are your plans with respect to digital and frontier technologies, such as AI, supercomputing, quantum computing and technologies, semiconductors, space tech and the Internet of Things? What measures do you envisage to ensure a safe, trustworthy and human-centric use of digital technologies? How do you plan to ensure effective implementation of the Chips Act and strengthen EU's semiconductors supply chains? What are your plans for the expansion of the Chips Act, including support for strategic industry segments and adjacent industries, and for the long-term EU Quantum Chips plan? How will you enhance EU coordination and participation in international ICT standard-setting bodies and promote EU digital norms and standards internationally?

Reducing our dependence and strengthening Europe's capacity in critical technologies is central to providing the sustainable competitiveness needed for the welfare and prosperity of citizens. EU technological sovereignty and competitiveness give us the opportunity to act independently in a globalised environment, while de-risking from actors that do not adhere to European values. We, together with the Member States, should therefore step up our R&D funding, increase our support to innovative start-ups and SMEs – for example through growth funding and agile procurement – and promote the use of EU-based technologies.

If confirmed, my objective will be to substantially reduce our technological dependencies. Based on the thorough assessment of our critical dependencies and technological gaps already launched last year, and of critical supply chains for EU strategic assets and infrastructures, supported by the EU Observatory of Critical Technologies, I would propose measures to plug these gaps. I would ensure that the risk assessments of critical technologies remain part of economic security considerations, including those already initiated on advanced semiconductors, AI, quantum and biotechnologies, and lead to concrete measures prioritising collaboration with our like-minded partners.

From a cybersecurity angle, EU tech sovereignty means having a strong, reliable European cybersecurity and cyber defence industry that can provide security solutions for our critical digital infrastructure. This means avoiding critical dependencies on single suppliers and de-risking our supply chain from high-risk suppliers based on Union-wide agreed security risk assessments, including by working with Member States to effectively enforce the implementation of the 5G toolbox. It also means that all our connected devices in the Internet of Things should have no known vulnerabilities when they enter the market, and are secure for businesses and consumers. And we now have a solid and comprehensive cybersecurity framework to achieve this.

EU tech sovereignty encompasses the whole development cycle of technologies, from fundamental research to commercialisation by industry, developing key technologies with our own R&D, development and deployment

capacities, as well as access to and recycling of key raw materials. If confirmed, I will work notably with the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy to secure key supplies.

Both the EU Digital Decade 2030 objectives (notably towards “digital sovereignty”) and targets (notably on gigabit connectivity, production of semiconductors, number of edge nodes, uptake of AI and cloud, number of ICT specialists or digitalisation of healthcare or public administration) already contribute to the achievement of EU tech sovereignty and competitiveness. The monitoring of progress will be reported in the State of the Digital Decade 2025 and 2026 reports and discussed with the European Parliament and the Member States. The review of the Digital Decade targets due at the latest by 30 June 2026 will be an opportunity to complete or revise the set of objectives, targets and key performance indicators so that they also capture the achievement of EU tech sovereignty.

We need to develop stronger capacities in a number of frontier technologies such as AI, advanced semiconductors, quantum, supercomputing, cloud and edge computing, space technologies, cybersecurity, Internet of Things and genomics.

AI can be the centrepiece of our future competitiveness. If confirmed by the Parliament, I will develop **the Apply AI Strategy**, which would focus on rapid deployment of new AI solutions across our leading industrial sectors and public administrations. This would cater for AI-driven innovation, supporting the development of AI models and their deployment across Europe’s industrial sectors such as health, energy, robotics and manufacturing, space and defence as well as the public sector.

In parallel, I would promote investment in top-notch supercomputing capacity with the **AI Factories initiative**. Under this initiative, I would aim to create conditions for our AI start-ups and SMEs and the broader ecosystem to develop European large AI models. The AI Factories would build on our existing world-leading network of supercomputers. My goal would be to launch at least five AI Factories in Europe within the first 100 days of the Commission’s mandate and continue this effort throughout my term. Lastly, I would work with the Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation to establish the **European AI Research Council**, as a key element of the broader strategy on AI.

Similarly, **semiconductors** require ambitious investments and, to be less dependent on external players, we need to build factories and produce in Europe. The European Chips Act has already attracted around EUR 80 billion in projects, which are “first of a kind” in Europe, i.e., projects that meet a series of security of supply conditions and deliver positive spillovers across the EU. However, Europe needs to step up efforts to reach its 20% market share target, to position itself in advanced semiconductors technologies. My aim would be to help our companies bridge the gap from “the lab to the fab” by investing in advanced pilot production lines that bring together research and industrial players across the supply chain – from materials, through equipment, to production and packaging. I will also launch a cloud-based design platform to make sure that our startups have all the tools necessary to design innovative chips. Finally, strong and balanced international cooperation will be essential to attract further investments and to ensure our security of supply. I would aim to ensure effective implementation of the Chips Act to support the development of semiconductor process capabilities and pilot lines in the EU that meet the specific requirements of strategic sectors, including the EU space flagships and the EU space and defence industries.

Quantum has reached a level of maturity allowing for practical application in computing, sensing and secure communication with applications from medical diagnosis, unhackable communication networks, and fast training of large AI models, to super-sensitive sensing devices. It is of strategic importance to the EU’s sovereignty, competitiveness and defence capacities. If I am confirmed, I will work with Member States and key industry players to accelerate the development of the EU’s quantum ecosystem and attract investment to industrialise quantum. To this end, I would also work on quantum chips – a crucial component of quantum technologies and of the fast-growing quantum market – and would present **a long-term EU Quantum Chips plan**.

If confirmed, I will also focus on improving connectivity in Europe. It is at the heart of our competitiveness and a crucial enabler for technologies mentioned above. Connectivity allows us to make meaningful use of data, for example to train AI-models. In this respect, I will work to ensure that Internet-of-Things is widely used as an essential tool to make industry and mobility more competitive in Europe. I will also ensure that IoT is deployed for the benefit of the environment, notably for resource efficiency in areas such as water distribution and precision farming. To get the best out of IoT, the EU needs to fully embrace 6G.

The need for Europe to be autonomous on connectivity is shown by the rising geopolitical tensions in general and Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine in particular. If confirmed, I will work to boost European strategic autonomy

in space, including on the critical suppliers for the security, integrity and resilience of the IRIS² satellite services, which are critical for Member States' secure governmental communications. IRIS² will support the competitiveness of European industry by developing state-of-the-art satellite technologies, benefitting the entire sector, in particular SMEs. This will allow Europe to maintain its lead in the space sector.

Beyond investments, coherent and complementary implementation of our existing rules is key to open up new opportunities. Working with other Commissioners, I would aim to facilitate compliance with our Digital Rulebook, paying particular attention to the impact on start-ups and scale-ups.

Our goal is to develop technologies that empower and enhance human capabilities and deliver on European values. This can be a competitive advantage for 'Made in EU' digital products and services. We need to invest in safe, trustworthy and human-centric technologies that reflect European values and safeguard the European social model, and the safety of our citizens. As technologies continue to evolve at a rapid pace, it is crucial to maintain a strong focus on human-centricity. This, along with sustainability and resilience, should be at the core of our digital innovations and the rules we put in place.

I would coordinate with Member States and stakeholders and work closely with the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy to promote a strategic approach towards international standardisation, to ensure EU competitiveness, security, strategic autonomy and our ability to promote EU values. I would do this bilaterally through digital partnerships and multilaterally through the G7, G20 and international organisations such as the OECD and the UN. I would actively work with like-minded partners to promote both EU digital standards internationally, and international digital standards that respect our shared values and interests (e.g. privacy, data protection, or human rights).

I would seek to accelerate investments in cross-border projects and technologies to strengthen interoperability across Member States for digital public services, ensuring their seamless and secure operation. We would use instruments like Regulatory Sandboxes and Multi-Country Projects to develop, test and deploy innovative solutions in Europe, making public administrations fit for the digital age.

I would work with other Commissioners to attract foreign investments, to provide the right regulatory environment, to prioritise the development of a skilled workforce and technical expertise, to improve access to private capital, and to promote innovation.

To conclude, achieving tech sovereignty and competitiveness requires cohesive efforts with the Member States. EU-level coordination, pooling of resources, large-scale investments and a common will to move forward are crucial.

5. What are your plans regarding digital infrastructure and access to quality connectivity across geographical areas? How do you intend to implement the proposals set out in the White Paper on Europe's digital infrastructure needs? What is your view on the recommendations of the White Paper and of the Draghi report on network fees? What measures do you envisage to improve gigabit connectivity, expand the roll-out of 5G, ensure a complete shift from copper to fibre by 2030 and incentivise investments from the private sector into network development? How do you plan to address the energy related aspects of digital infrastructure? What measures do you consider necessary to reinforce cyber resilience and security in all fields across the EU? How will you enhance security and defence industrial competitiveness in the context of a European Defence Union?

We are lagging behind our competitors on very high capacity fixed and wireless network coverage. To address this, we need coordinated action at the EU level, including on investment. There is a particular challenge with "5G stand alone" network architecture which is key for industrial use cases, and a significant digital divide remains between urban and rural areas in the EU. We need to step up investments to reach the Digital Decade connectivity targets by 2030 and to develop the networks required for the digital services of tomorrow. If confirmed by the European Parliament, my commitment is clear: to do my utmost for the EU to achieve the 2030 connectivity targets and ensure secure, fast and reliable connectivity as the backbone of our economy and society.

If confirmed, one of my key priorities will be to work on a Digital Networks Act to help boost secure high-speed broadband, both fixed and wireless, supporting competitiveness and affordable quality services for consumers. This would follow up on the technological trends and security aspects described in the Commission's White Paper "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?". Basing any policy choice on a solid impact assessment, the future Act should reduce the administrative burden for operators and create incentives for investments in

infrastructure and for new business activities, for instance in edge cloud computing. The interests of consumers must also be defended, and the individual situations of Member States taken into account.

Following the recommendations of the Draghi report, I would actively discuss how to complete the single electronic communications market. I would seek solutions for a more integrated governance at Union level for spectrum for the next generation networks. The delays in 5G auctioning have had a negative effect on Europe's competitiveness, and we must avoid this happening again. There is a growing number of actors in the network economy and a lively debate. This debate should not be simply reduced to a discussion on network fees. It should be about how different actors contribute to a vibrant and innovative communication ecosystem, based on a fair level playing field. There have been interesting proposals including the approach suggested in Draghi's report and in the White Paper on Europe's digital infrastructure needs. Also, the public consultation that followed the publication of the White Paper has resulted in a very rich number of contributions, which I will study attentively, and I will engage with all the stakeholders. My guiding principles in making any proposal would be to safeguard the interests of EU citizens and to promote competitiveness and investments.

We also need to advance on the copper switch-off. This would be an incentive to deploy fibre and would ensure more resources are available to roll out 5G. It would be in line with the Digital Decade targets for 2030, in particular gigabit connectivity for all, and would respond to long-term sustainability goals, as fibre is less energy-intensive and allows the uptake of more efficient, greener services. However, there must be safeguards to ensure vulnerable end-users stay connected.

I would also want to pay special attention to exploring ways to incentivise research into low-energy digital infrastructure solutions, including for cooling, energy-efficient processors, and sustainable network infrastructure. AI solutions can be a great asset in achieving a more energy efficient ICT sector. In 2022 the Commission adopted an action plan for digitalising the energy system, which is in full implementation and has seen significant successes. For example, the Commission has implemented a scheme for data centres to disclose their energy and water consumption. If confirmed, I would support the Commissioner for Energy and Housing in establishing a rating and labelling system for data centres, as well as introducing minimum performance standards for new data centres. We would also work together to improve the integration of data centres with the energy system, focusing on heat reuse and providing flexibility services to the electricity grid.

If I am confirmed, I will also work towards establishing a Code of Conduct for the sustainability of telecommunications networks and I will support my colleagues in developing an energy labelling scheme for computers and revising the ecodesign requirements for computers and servers.

On **cybersecurity**, which lies at the heart of the broader security portfolio, I would aim to promote a whole-of-society cyber security-by-design agenda. I would focus on the implementation and enforcement of the new laws both for cybersecurity of critical entities (NIS2) and product security (Cyber Resilience Act) in an innovation and business-friendly way. I would work with authorities and industry to raise the cybersecurity maturity and invest in strengthening detection and response capabilities. We need to take concerted and decisive action against cyber criminals and ransomware gangs.

The **Cyber Resilience Act (CRA)** will be a global game changer for cybersecurity, and will significantly reduce the vulnerabilities of connected products that are exploited by malicious actors for espionage, prepositioning and disruption purposes. I would continue to advance our critical entities and product security vision in Europe and beyond, and work to develop global leadership on **cybersecurity standards**.

If confirmed by the Parliament, I will aim to simplify and expand the key European cybersecurity infrastructures and capabilities to enhance situational awareness and response capacities. I would do this with a strong focus on dual use items and civilian-military cooperation, and in particular security issues in our supply chains, starting with an appropriate certification framework. We need to ensure that the rapid technological evolution in cyberspace is swiftly addressed by the defence sector, drawing on the Roadmap for Critical Cyber Technologies currently under development. I would like to work towards an environment in which entrepreneurs and innovators can develop and market much-needed cyber defence tools, recognising that most cybersecurity innovations in the EU are developed by start-ups and small companies. I would also develop an integrated innovation path for European cyber start-ups to support their development and foster a dynamic and disruptive civil-military cyber ecosystem.

If confirmed, I will continue the efforts to upgrade existing, and create new secure trans-European networks, interconnecting Member States, European institutions agencies and bodies, and other stakeholders, thus increasing interoperability and cyber resilience in digital cross-border interactions for the European public sector.

On operations and threat detection, I would build on the civilian Cybersecurity Alert System to be constructed under the Cyber Solidarity Act. With the AI-powered EU infrastructure of Cyber Hubs, we can enhance the ability of Europe to detect low signals of attacks, to boost the preparedness of our civilian or defence critical infrastructures. This should be pursued alongside the work of the Defence and Space Commissioner with Member States towards cyber defence.

Subsea cable infrastructures carry 99% of intercontinental traffic and are crucial for Europe's security and global competitiveness. I would work with Member States to identify risks and possible mitigation measures, including standards, and continue to support the roll-out of submarine cables.

With respect to enhancing security and defence industrial competitiveness, achieving European defence industrial readiness requires increased investment in our industrial base, research and development, as well as more cooperation and long-term commitment. As highlighted in the European Defence Industrial Strategy, we have underinvested in our defence industrial apparatus for decades. More than half of our defence acquisitions come from non-EU defence suppliers and intra-EU trade has only marginally increased in comparison to the significant EU defence market growth. The European Defence Industrial Strategy and the European Defence Industry Programme, complementing the European Defence Fund, propose a series of incentives to reverse these trends, and work towards the realisation of a true Single Market for defence. These measures pave the way to the European Defence Union. Member States need to work together more, and invest more, also cooperatively, in European industry. We also need to identify the remaining barriers to cross-border cooperation, serving both the competitiveness of the European defence technological and industrial base, and Member States armed forces' needs.

If confirmed, together with the Vice President / High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy as well as with the Commissioner for Defence and Space, I will guide the work to enhance our defence industrial competitiveness within the framework of a European Defence Union.

Questions from the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection

6. Artificial Intelligence, EU Cloud and AI Development Act

What will be the main principles and objectives of the announced proposal for a new "EU Cloud and AI Development Act", and how does the Commission plan to achieve these objectives? How will the Commission align the strategic objective of boosting AI innovation and competitiveness with the need to ensure the trustworthiness and safety of AI to the benefits of consumers and businesses? How do you intend to promote the harmonised application of EU digital norms and standards in the Single Market and internationally and ensure EU's global leadership in digital governance?

Currently, only 8% of EU businesses use AI, only 33% of our companies use cloud, and the data centre footprint in Europe is one third of that in the US. This leads to an enormous productivity gap for the EU, because our industry needs computing power to innovate, especially on AI. Once AI models are trained (by means of supercomputers), conventional cloud infrastructure is central to adapting them to specific use cases. However, the European cloud market is dominated by a handful of hyperscale providers often located overseas, which are also key players in the nascent AI market, thanks to their massive infrastructure, and dominant AI software tools.

To address this industrial challenge, if confirmed, I will prepare an **AI and Cloud Development Act**, based on a full-scale impact assessment involving all relevant stakeholders. This should be part of a broader strategy. Together with the **AI Factories Act**, it would bring much needed computing power to Europe's AI innovators. The other components of the strategy would be the **Apply AI Strategy**, to accelerate the AI-driven transformation of Europe's industrial sectors and the delivery of public services; and the **Digital Networks Act**, to optimally integrate state-of-the art digital connectivity solutions into the overall ecosystem.

The AI and Cloud Development Act should in my view replicate the ambition of the EU Chips Act. Just as the Chips Act addressed R&I, investment in manufacturing facilities in Europe and the security of supply of chips, the AI and Cloud Development Act should address how to sustain a vibrant ecosystem of AI training models and

attract investment in computing infrastructure and data storage throughout Europe, that should be available to every start-up, SME and other industrial player.

The first objective of the **AI and Cloud Development Act** would be to promote the development of energy efficient computing architectures and breakthrough solutions to minimise the use of natural resources. Sustainable technologies for cloud and data centres are a necessity for Europe and a potential source of competitive advantage. If confirmed, I will also promote the use of collaborative AI training models involving key stakeholders in strategic industrial sectors, especially in the pre-competitive stage. Many more European actors should be entering the market.

Second, the Act should give priority to large-scale investments in cloud and AI facilities which can be considered “first-of-a-kind”, for example with respect to sustainability and innovative forms of cloud computing such as telco-edge cloud. It is important also to see the cloud as a true infrastructure continuum, where centralised traditional cloud infrastructures are interlinked with our network of supercomputers and complemented with distributed edge nodes and telecommunication infrastructure.

Third, we need to address the security of supply and the cybersecurity of cloud services. Collectively, we are entrusting much of our data to the cloud. Applications running on cloud infrastructures are often an entry point to business IT systems and data. That is why, if confirmed, I will make sure that cloud services offered in Europe meet a high level of cybersecurity. Our citizens and businesses should be able to trust that their data is safe when stored in the cloud.

As regards aligning AI-driven innovation with trustworthiness and safety of AI, this is not a contradiction: trust and excellence in AI are two sides of the same coin. The AI Act introduces guardrails to ensure that AI in Europe is human-centric, trustworthy and safe. At the same time, it follows a targeted risk-based approach and creates one clear set of rules across Member States. By offering exceptions for research and support tools like regulatory sandboxes, it leaves room for innovation in AI. I would prioritise timely and predictable implementation to allow the AI Act to deliver on these twin objectives.

The EU is well-placed to lead on global digital governance, as we were the first globally to adopt a comprehensive set of rules, not just on AI but also on digital services and platforms. If confirmed, I intend to continue actively promoting the EU approach to human-centric and trustworthy AI, advocating for responsible stewardship of AI in global fora and in bilateral partnerships with key international partners. I believe the EU should continue to play a leading role in global digital governance, promoting globally our rules, based on our human-centric vision and our common European values, on which our rules are based.

To achieve results on this, I would seek to further enhance coordination between EU Member States in the UN, within the Internet Governance Forum, other relevant international fora and technical organisations, such as the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

Lastly, we have no time to lose on setting standards. European and non-European companies which will operate in the Single Market under the new legal provisions of the AI Act will need technical standards. I would carefully assess how the Commission can deliver these, preferably within the existing standardisation system. Once we have technical standards supporting the AI Act, I am also convinced that this will shape digital governance globally.

7. Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act and negative impacts of online platforms

What will be your enforcement priorities for the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA), and how will you ensure effective, transparent, and rapid enforcement mechanisms? How will the Commission address the call for simplification and reducing administrative burdens? Will the Commission be able to dedicate sufficient resources to enforcement? How do you plan to tackle harmful practices online such as dark patterns or addictive design, which impact individuals, in particular children and minors, and their mental health? Finally, what concrete actions will you take to fight cyberbullying?

The Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act are powerful new instruments for platform regulation. After the first year of their enforcement, I consider that they are functioning relatively smoothly, the work on the necessary secondary legislation is progressing well, the teams are in place and several investigations are open or have already led to decisions that have an impact on how online platforms operate in the EU. If confirmed, I want to build on this and ensure that the Commission develops into a first call regulatory authority in this area, that

listens carefully and acts speedily, in line with our rules, with full respect of due process rights and in a transparent way for all stakeholders.

As regards the Digital Services Act enforcement, I would focus on four areas: 1) protection of minors online; 2) e-commerce and non-compliant goods on online marketplaces; 3) illegal content online, including algorithmic amplification of such content; and 4) the wider issue of information integrity in the context of elections, ensuring synergies with the new Democracy Shield.

For the Digital Markets Act, aiming at ensuring a level playing field and fair competition, I would prioritise three important dimensions, working closely with the Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition: 1) to open up closed ecosystems, be it in operating systems, web browsers or online marketplaces; 2) to give consumers choice and the ability to take back control in an environment where they feel large digital companies are powerful, and 3) to ensure that data belongs to those who generate it and not to those who can best exploit it.

If confirmed, my approach to enforcing the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act would be rigorous, evidence-based, and determined. I would use all enforcement powers given to the Commission by the co-legislators. When a violation poses an immediate danger to our citizens, I would not shy away from taking forceful measures. I would also cooperate with civil society, researchers and whistle-blowers. Evidence has shown that in some cases, a serious dialogue between regulated companies and enforcers can lead to quick and effective results. Online platforms have to follow EU legislation – without delaying tactics. If confirmed, I will commit to an open and systematic dialogue with the European Parliament, notably through the well-established Working Groups on the Implementation of the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act as well as with the relevant Committees.

In order for the Commission to be an effective and credible regulatory authority, I would seek to ensure that sufficient resources are devoted to this, drawing on the fees collected under the Digital Services Act.

If confirmed by the European Parliament, I will work in close coordination with the responsible Commissioners on dark patterns, addictive design and other negative impacts of social media, in particular on minors. The Digital Services Act is a powerful legal tool to help address these issues here and now, for economic operators that fall within its scope. The recent enforcement success against TikTok Lite for its suspected addictive design is a good example of what the Digital Services Act can deliver for the whole EU, in record time. The EU, companies and experts must work together to ensure that social media companies apply a safety-first approach that allows all users to operate safely online. The recently opened investigations against TikTok, X, Facebook and Instagram on addictive design, dark patterns and protection of minors need to be vigorously pursued so as to deliver real and swift change and should inform future work on the impact of social media on minors. Where evidence of systemic harm emerges in other designated services, the Commission should take decisive enforcement action. I would also work with the Commissioner for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law on a Digital Fairness Act, to ensure practices such as dark patterns, addictive design and online profiling are adequately tackled.

Protecting minors is a top priority to me. If confirmed, I would be closely cooperating with law enforcement authorities to collect necessary evidence. I would also spearhead the work on guidelines on the protection of minors under the Digital Services Act, aiming to finalise them before summer 2025. The guidelines should set out how online platforms will ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors, in line with the Digital Services Act rules. They should be accompanied by the introduction of a privacy-preserving age verification system.

I would also contribute to the EU-wide inquiry on the impacts of social media on well-being and mental health being steered by the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare. The inquiry should build on engagement with children and teachers and the knowledge from top level experts from across the EU, so that we build together the safe and healthy digital environment that our children deserve.

Regarding the action plan against cyberbullying announced in the Political Guidelines, I would contribute to the work of the Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport to ensure it provides the clear measures needed. The Better internet for kids (BIK+) strategy adopted in 2022 can provide a valuable basis for the action plan. I would also encourage Member States to appoint Digital Services Act trusted flaggers with proven expertise on the protection of minors, including cyberbullying.

If confirmed, I would be firmly committed to ensuring the Commission delivers on simplification and reduces administrative burden in this area. This is part of the mission for all members of the new College and is necessary to improve regulatory quality and ensure full implementation. I have clearly heard the calls from our SMEs and

businesses and I would aim to simplify our Digital Rulebook wherever we identify such opportunities. I would take a careful look at whether legal simplification is possible at the time of the review of the Digital Services Act in November 2025 and the Digital Markets Act in May 2026. Any new legislation in this area would need to be clear and not create unnecessary burdens. I would also ensure that national laws do not create additional red tape and “goldplate” these tools, which have full harmonisation impact. I would pay particular attention to the impact of the Digital Rulebook on start-ups and scale-ups, making sure that it is implemented in a manner that helps our economy to thrive. I would also look at all possible digitalisation tools to make compliance with EU rules easier for the business community.

8. E-commerce platforms

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von den Leyen, entrusted you with a task to lead the work to tackle challenges with e-commerce platforms, especially from third countries, to ensure consumers and business benefit from a level playing field based on effective customs, tax and safety and sustainability rules. How do you intend to achieve these objectives and in particular what have you identified as the main issues and what are the tools and measures to address them, especially when the main actors are established in third countries? How will this contribute to improving the functioning of the Single Market and the protection of EU consumers' rights? How do you plan to cooperate on this task with other Members of the College and with enforcement authorities in the Member States?

We need to act on the health and safety risks and environmental harm caused by the fact that billions of small packages are shipped directly to the EU consumers through intermediation of third-country e-commerce online platforms and the frequent non-compliance of such products with EU rules, notably in terms of authenticity and safety. The Political Guidelines include a clear commitment to tackle challenges with e-commerce platforms. If confirmed, I would lead work to deliver on this, taking a holistic approach looking at effective customs, tax and safety controls and other monitoring, sustainability standards, enhancing safety and compliance of products sold online by third-country sellers, support for efficient and coordinated enforcement, and ensuring fair competition and a level playing field. The EU should make full use of the toolbox it has available to tackle challenges of e-commerce platforms.

The implementation of the Digital Services Act, Market Surveillance Regulation and the General Product Safety Regulation will play a vital role in ensuring that products offered for sale for European consumers online comply with all applicable EU rules. Strong and effective enforcement against players not complying is the key, and under the Digital Services Act companies risk fines up to 6% of their global turnover. Online marketplaces and consumer protection online are one of the Digital Services Act enforcement priorities. The Commission is currently gathering evidence of systemic issues on online marketplaces and has already taken investigative action in relation to a number of e-commerce platforms that fall under its remit, including on suspicions related to rogue traders and to the risk of dissemination of illegal products with negative impact on consumers. If confirmed, I would follow up forcefully and swiftly on this.

Good enforcement must be supported by civil society and notably by consumer associations and NGOs. The EU should have zero tolerance for rogue traders in unsafe products and for products manufactured with forced labour.

Identifying and preventing unsafe or non-compliant products from entering the Single Market also requires enhanced cooperation between customs authorities and market surveillance authorities. I would ensure that the Commission supports this as part of its continued engagement with national authorities to ensure that EU and national enforcement are effectively linked. Thanks to the extensive transparency and information obligations set out in the Digital Services Act in relation to the identification of traders, and the complementary new traceability rules under the General Product Safety Regulation, different authorities are now able to see who is behind the sale of a particular product online. This and other types of information must be used for effective, coordinated enforcement. National market surveillance authorities should also be supported in organising joint sampling and testing activities and product safety sweeps to check and improve the compliance of e-commerce players.

I would work in close cooperation with the Commissioner for Justice, Democracy and the Rule of Law to ensure that European consumers can benefit from the opportunities of digital technologies protected from unethical practices thanks to an effective consumer enforcement framework, including vis-à-vis traders established outside the Union.

If confirmed, I would ensure that our work on e-commerce also builds on the proposed customs reform. The volume of parcels valued up to EUR 150, currently exempt from paying customs duties, directly shipped from third countries, has quadrupled in the last four years. The expected volume over 2024 is 4 billion items, with authorities in just seven Member States (the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, Spain and Germany) responsible for supervising over 90% of these imports into the EU. Current customs processes and tools are no longer fit for purpose. The ambitious EU Customs Reform proposed in 2023 would abolish the EUR 150 duty exemption threshold and bring structural reinforcement of control capabilities by enabling an EU-level risk management in the new EU customs authority and its EU Customs Data Hub. The reform would significantly improve EU capacity to respond to threats posed by illicit and non-compliant e-commerce traffic, and I would work with the Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security towards its rapid adoption. If the business model is deemed to exploit the structural difficulty to apply sufficient compliance checks to the enormous volumes of items individually packaged and sent from abroad, we should also be open to other measures.

I would also work to ensure that smaller EU online marketplaces can grow and compete with non-EU marketplaces. This can only be done through joint effort, and an enhanced multidisciplinary team approach inside the Commission would help to identify and implement the best solutions to this challenge.

Question from the Committee on Foreign Affairs / Question from the Subcommittee on Security and Defence

9. The EU is facing the most complex set of threats and a deteriorating security environment since the end of the Cold War, with threats emanating from outside as well as inside the Union. You have been tasked with working with the Commissioner for Defence and Space and the Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) in bringing the Defence Union to life and to drive our defence industrial consolidation, reduce fragmentation, duplication and inefficiencies. A key element in this will be harnessing new and innovative technologies to ensure we have the defence technological edge, as Executive Vice-President, how do you intend to support innovation and digital development in Defence industry, as well as its dual-use and civil-military potential as well as ensure that efforts to regulate dual-use technologies like AI do not fall behind the rapid pace of development in military applications, both within and beyond EU borders? In addition, how do you plan to engage with Member States, the VP/HR, international partners to establish governance frameworks for the responsible development and use of dual-use technologies including military application of AI that guarantees meaningful human control? How do you intend to enhance security of critical infrastructures in the EU?

If confirmed, I would guide, together with the Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) and the Commissioner for Defence and Space the work to bring the **European Defence Union** to life in ways that strengthen our security and deterrence capacity and drive our industrial competitiveness.

Innovation is crucial for ensuring state-of-the-art defence capabilities and minimising strategic dependences, notably when it comes to digital and AI components. I would step up our ambition to foster defence innovation both for the competitiveness of our industry and the technological superiority of Member States' armed forces. The European Defence Fund has introduced new initiatives to integrate civil technologies into defence systems and support start-ups and small companies. With the launch of the European Defence Innovation Scheme, the EU aims to invest €1.5 billion by 2027, providing much needed funding for defence innovation. However, we need to unlock capital and potential by reviewing our regulatory framework to address restrictive barriers to investments in innovation.

The Commission and the European Investment Fund have joined forces to create the Defence Equity Facility, which aims to encourage the development of an ecosystem of private funds investing in defence innovation. Small deep tech companies can bring real disruptive effect to the battlefield, but they remain underfunded, have difficulties to finance their growth and enter defence supply chains. Europe cannot afford to subsidise R&D projects whilst at the same time preventing companies from growing the business stemming from the project results.

Concretely, I would (1) support the scale-up of emerging and disruptive technologies with dual use and civil-military potential; (2) seek new ways to finance innovation and start-ups; (3) promote research security measures and (4) remove unnecessary regulatory hurdles. Overall, my goals would be more flexible, faster and leaner funding cycles, with lower barriers to cross-border cooperation and better connection to military end-users and investors.

Existing research programmes have historically focused exclusively either on ‘civilian’ or ‘defence’ applications. However, most of the critical technologies of tomorrow are dual use. If confirmed, I would work together with the other Commissioners involved to harness the EU's dual use and civil-military potential. This would build on the results of the White Paper presented in January 2024 with options to support R&D on dual use technologies. Synergies can bring advantages also for civilian applications. I would work with the European Investment Bank Group to bring our work in line with its dual use programmes and to de-risk investments aimed at dual use and defence developments. I would also aim to further expand our cooperation with NATO innovation tools.

Recent developments in AI have highlighted the significant potential of the technology to increase defence capability including improving performance, removing humans from high-threat environments, reducing capability costs and achieving asymmetric advantage. If confirmed, I will make sure that, in order to reduce dependencies and address the existing gap in AI development for defence, we continue to take action through the European Defence Fund, promoting European cooperation and investment in AI for defence, in collaboration with Member States and relevant stakeholders.

Concerning dual-use technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, the AI Act already provides mechanisms for the development of trustworthy technologies. In addition, I will work with the HRVP in all relevant international fora to reach binding agreements on meaningful human control over the critical functions of systems deployed in defence. European defence industrial funding will not support the development of autonomous lethal systems lacking substantial human oversight in selecting and engaging human targets. However, AI can provide valuable decision support in analysing and reacting to complex combat situations, as well as underpinning defensive technologies such as early warning systems and countermeasures. In this process, I will work closely with the European Parliament and involve all relevant stakeholders.

I am firmly committed to enhancing the security and resilience of critical infrastructure and entities operating such infrastructure across the EU. If confirmed, I will work together with all relevant stakeholders working on the physical and cybersecurity of our critical infrastructure. In close cooperation with the Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, I will focus on ensuring the full and timely implementation of the NIS2 and CER Directives. The combined application of the two Directives will allow us to tackle both cyber and physical threats in a more integrated and holistic manner. My priority in this regard would be to follow-up on the results of the stress tests of critical energy infrastructure, and the coordinated EU cyber risk assessment of the electricity sector, as well as the cyber risk assessment of wind power. These would be my starting point to further assess additional solutions, for instance to reinforce the protection of submarine energy infrastructure or to enhance secured exchanges of sensitive information between Member States and operators of critical energy entities.

I would also ensure the Commission works through EU Protective Security Advisors to support Member States with vulnerability assessments during high-risk events and at critical infrastructures.

EU space services (Galileo and Copernicus) are a major contributor to ensuring the security of critical infrastructure enabling the functioning of several economic sectors and providing essential services for security and defence. At the same time, space is a critical infrastructure in itself. I would work with the Commissioner for Defence and Space to ensure that the future proposal for EU Space Law addresses emerging risks to the security of space infrastructure and enhances the protection and resilience of the space assets.

Finally, with IRIS², I would aim to provide Member States with secure connectivity services with the highest level of protection against all potential threats.

Question from the Committee on Culture and Education

10. Considering the large scope of your portfolio, how will you work towards making sure that the media and audiovisual sectors receive the priority, focus and adequate budgetary resources in line with their cultural, societal and economic role as well as the current digital transformation challenges? In particular, how do you intend to continue ensuring the coherent implementation and monitoring of the complex EU legal framework that has an impact on the media, audiovisual and creative sectors, notably when it comes to the implementation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)?

As a former journalist and in line with my mission letter, I would pursue an approach to the media which recognises its unique place in our democracies and culture, while also supporting its commercial development. I would make sure that, whenever the EU is involved, regulation, funding and policy effectively support each other in building a stronger audiovisual and media sector, which plays its role in facilitating democratic debate, enriching our culture, and driving the digital transformation with strong media players.

The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) is one of the cornerstones of our media policy. Its sector-specific rules promote European content and media pluralism and protect consumers as well as our society at large. The rules aim at levelling the playing field between new and traditional media players. They also strengthen the protection of viewers, including minors, on video-sharing platforms and foster cultural diversity through quotas, prominence rules and allowed investment obligations. They require Member States to have independent audiovisual regulators, sufficiently staffed and resourced. If confirmed, I would pay close attention to the practical implementation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and related digital laws. In promoting Member States' compliance, I would make full use of all instruments of implementation and enforcement, including infringement proceedings.

If confirmed, I would closely engage with the Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education as part of the upcoming Audiovisual Media Services Directive evaluation process, to be completed by 2026. The evaluation should identify the shortcomings of the existing framework, taking into account new challenges to the visibility of European content, the evolution of the market and the emergence of new technologies and players such as influencers. Particular attention should be given to defending European content creation, to the framework for financial contribution obligations, the definition of European works and independent productions. These issues are key for promoting truly European content and making sure that the corresponding intellectual property rights remain protected in the Single Market.

I would also, from the start of my mandate, and together with the Commissioner for Intergenerational fairness, youth, culture and sport engage with relevant stakeholders, creators and media producers, associations and the Member State authorities. My guiding objectives in this work would be to further enhance the level playing field, better protect viewers, particularly minors, and boost the competitiveness and cultural diversity of the European audiovisual sector. To this end, I would identify and exploit potential synergies between the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and digital laws and seek to simplify and streamline the regulatory framework.

The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive are closely linked and complementary. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Commissioner for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law to ensure the European Media Freedom Act is implemented and delivers on the ground. With media freedom so important for the rule of law and for the Democracy Shield, I would also coordinate with other Members of the College in charge of competitiveness and other policy areas relevant for the audiovisual and media sector. In this context, setting up the new European Board for Media Services and its secretariat should be the immediate priority. It is of the utmost importance that the Board becomes operational quickly and can deliver on its important tasks to promote independent and sustainable media, which are also key in the fight against disinformation.

If confirmed by the European Parliament, I would ensure that the Commission works with all the Member States so that the implementation of the Regulation is on track ahead of the August 2025 deadline, in particular for its rules on public broadcasters, protection of journalists and media editorial independence.

Europe's media sector includes a number of critical and strategic industries for the EU, in cultural, societal and financial terms. These industries are diverse in nature and range from audiovisual to news, media and videogames. The EU has made significant efforts to support the resilience and transformation of these industries, but more needs to be done to help them face increasing challenges, such as the ongoing digital transformation and unprecedented global competition. In this regard, I take note of the call from the European Parliament for action in relation to the videogames industry, which I also see as an increasingly important part of the media sector.

As regards financial support, the Media Programme is currently the financial bedrock of our media policy, and its objectives of promoting cultural diversity and competitiveness are crucial.

Question from the Committee on Legal Affairs

11. Copyright

In your mission letter, you are invited to “consider the need to further improve the copyright framework to address new challenges raised by market and technology developments” and to “help combat unethical techniques online, such as dark patterns”.

Such a framework will play a crucial role in the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technologies in the future. The relationship between AI and copyright and related rights is a vast and complex area of exploration. The recently adopted AI Act, whose aim is to improve the functioning of the internal market and promote the uptake of human-centric and trustworthy AI while at the same time ensuring a high level of protection (of health, safety, personal data and fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights), addressed partly the issue of the use of copyright-protected content by the training of general-purpose AI models. It stresses that general-purpose AI systems must meet certain transparency requirements with the publication of detailed summaries of the content used for training of AI and the need to comply with EU copyright law, and in particular the text-and-data mining exceptions as laid down in the 2019 Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market (CDSM). Now, it remains to be seen how, in practice, those rules and related codes will be efficiently implemented. While the AI Act began to address the relationship between Generative AI and copyright, other areas of that relationship would need to be clarified. Generative AI poses new challenges to the copyright legal framework that still remain unaddressed and that may have potential effects on creativity, innovation and on the EU’s competitiveness, such as the possible copyright protection of AI generated output, the appropriate remuneration of authors for the use of their works by Generative AI or the infringement of copyright within the context of Generative AI. At the same time, the unethical techniques employed online are not only at the intersection of consumers protection but also of the very ethical questions that relate to the use of modern technologies and to intellectual property rights, in particular copyright, where the dark patterns may lead to the copyright’s frustration.

In light of the above, firstly - what would be your strategy to make sure that the copyright framework fully addresses all the challenges raised by AI and new technologies, continues to boost creativity, innovation and the EU’s competitiveness in the digital age, including any legislative initiatives you may intend to put forward in this regards, secondly - how would you coordinate work with the Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport to develop a strategy for cultural and creative industries addressing the challenges posed by AI and - thirdly - how would you ensure that the risks posed by dark patterns online are tackled at the intersection of ethics, IP law and consumer protection?

A robust copyright framework remains essential to support the production and distribution of creative content in the age of AI, and especially generative AI. The EU is at the forefront of the regulation of AI and copyright – thanks to the rules on text and data mining in the Copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive and the recently adopted AI Act. These rules aim to strike a balance between innovation and the protection of rightsholders. Their effective application should provide legal certainty, not only for creators and creative industries, but also for AI developers. It is essential to make sure that these rules work in practice, particularly when rightsholders have reserved their rights under the text and data mining exception rule. Under the AI Act, developers of generative AI models will have to disclose a summary of which content data was used to train the model in a publicly available summary. This should bring more transparency on the use of protected content for AI training. These new rules are currently being translated into action through the multi-stakeholder Code of Practice (CoP) on general-purpose AI, chaired by leading AI and Copyright academics. The AI Act will further strengthen transparency around generative AI with an obligation for developers to ensure that AI-generated content is machine-detectable and deep fakes are visibly labelled.

Building on these key provisions, if confirmed by the European Parliament, I would consider the need to further improve the EU copyright framework to address new challenges raised by market and technology developments. Supporting the development of a well-functioning market for licensing copyright-protected works for AI purposes, with balanced terms for different actors involved, is essential for ensuring appropriate remuneration for creators and creative industries while ensuring competitive access to high quality data for AI providers, particularly smaller EU providers. The Commission should investigate if specific licensing and mediation mechanisms can be envisaged to facilitate the conclusion of licenses between creative industries and AI companies and avoid any risks of lock-out.

The roll-out of AI-generated content services also raises complex questions related to the legal status of the content autonomously generated by AI and to the liability for possible copyright infringements. I would work to ensure that the Commission thoroughly examines these issues in light of market and technological developments.

In addressing these questions, I would make sure that any new measures proposed to improve the EU copyright framework strike a balance between stimulating human creativity and supporting the development of emerging technologies, without creating undue regulatory complexity.

If confirmed, I would work closely with the Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport to develop a strategy which responds specifically to the opportunities and challenges posed by AI for cultural and creative industries. This strategy can build on the AI Act and on the EU copyright framework and propose a set of targeted actions to foster innovation in the cultural and creative industries, promote fair business models and enhance cultural and linguistic diversity online.

Dark patterns may infringe IP rights, including trademarks and copyright, with the objective to mislead users in the online environment. Dark patterns are already expressly prohibited on online platforms by the Digital Services Act, but may also feature in other online activities. I would work closely with the Commissioner responsible for Democracy, Justice and Rule of Law in addressing these issues.

The AI Act prohibits practices, including systems that deploy subliminal techniques or deceptive techniques which manipulate people in harmful ways. This covers dark patterns and other manipulative techniques. I would ensure that the Commission provides guidelines on these prohibitions, making sure that we monitor the effective implementation from 2 February 2025 onwards, when it becomes applicable.

Question from the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

12. Your portfolio encompasses a broad range of policy areas for which the LIBE Committee is competent, from border management, asylum and migration, freedom, security and justice, and the rule of law, to artificial intelligence and digital policy.

On the one hand, therefore, you will be in charge of overseeing the Commission's work on external borders and the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, as well as strengthening the rule of law – including in areas such as judicial independence, anticorruption and media freedom – in cooperation with the Commissioners responsible. In each of these areas, how will you guide that work and what will be your priorities?

On the other hand, you will be responsible for the implementation and enforcement of all major digital policy legislation adopted in the past years to address data-driven technological advances, such as the Digital Services Act, the Digital Markets Act and the Artificial Intelligence Act, all having a significant impact on the fundamental rights to data protection and privacy. How will you ensure that these different laws co-exist harmoniously and are implemented and enforced while preserving the EU standards for fundamental rights compliance? And how can competent authorities responsible for enforcing digital laws, but also the GDPR and the e-Privacy Directive, collaborate effectively?

Defending our democracy, strengthening our security, and boosting our digital transformation will be central to my mandate if I am confirmed by the Parliament. I am convinced that this work can only succeed when we have our fundamental values at the core.

The evolving nature of threats to our security and to our democracy can only be tackled with the clear and overarching vision of strategies like the Democracy Shield, the Internal Security Strategy, and the European Defence Union, integrating this work fully into our digital policies and cyber security. Tackling the challenges of migration means staying true to the balance between solidarity and responsibility that underlies the Pact. Driving ahead with our digital transition means showing that this will not jeopardise the security, the privacy or the well-being of our citizens.

We need to achieve results that show our principles in action. This requires cooperation and dialogue. We need to work together to prevent shortcomings in the rule of law from emerging and developing. No Member State should be left alone to face the challenges posed by migration. We need to work out solutions with our digital pioneers to ensure that the rights and protections of citizens are maintained in the digital environment. Continuous exchange with the European Parliament is essential to build the strong and coherent approach needed to ensure that the EU is responding to citizens' concerns.

As I work with my fellow Commissioners to deliver the priorities set out in the Political Guidelines, I will follow the guiding principles of cooperation, of our values, and with a focus on delivery. I would like to use the points raised in the question as examples of how this will work in practice.

In the area of migration, intensive work on all strands of a comprehensive approach needs to continue. I would work closely with the Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration to make the Pact on Migration and Asylum a reality on the ground. We need to ensure that we draw on all the tools at our disposal to support

Member States in turning legal commitments into practice. The need for EU budget support has been recognised by the budgetary authority in the revision of the multiannual financial framework and additional funds will be available to support the implementation of the Pact. The implementation of the Pact must be complemented by building up Frontex with personnel, state-of-the-art technology, strong governance, and a continued commitment to fully respecting fundamental rights. We should also continue to strengthen our framework, with a new common approach on the return of people without the right to stay in the EU, and a new EU Visa Policy Strategy. If confirmed, I would support the Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration in proposing a new legislative proposal designing a new effective policy in the area of return. A strong dynamic for migration policy at home is the best foundation for safeguarding the Schengen area and ensuring that internal border controls are an exceptional event. At the same time, we should show no tolerance for those who threaten the security of our borders and our citizens through hybrid operations instrumentalising migrants for political purposes.

I will also work closely with other members of the College on the broader work on the external dimension of migration, as only with well-functioning partnerships can we achieve cooperation on preventing irregular departures, fighting migrant smuggling, and preventing the loss of life, as well as smooth return and readmission. Embedding cooperation in migration in wide-ranging partnerships of mutual interest is the best way to build genuine exchanges where we can tackle difficult issues, including the need for human rights to be protected in full. This also feeds into our competitiveness agenda, with an effective approach to legal pathways both reducing incentives for irregular migration and offering the skills that our labour market needs.

The rule of law is essential for the functioning of our democracies, societies and economies. I am strongly committed to the priority given by the Political Guidelines to the rule of law. If confirmed by the European Parliament, I will work closely with the Commissioner for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law, and with the other Members of the College, to make sure our rule of law toolbox is up to date, effectively used and delivering results for the benefit of all, citizens and businesses alike. It also includes continuing the process of using the rule of law reports to encourage further progress in enlargement countries ahead of accession. We need to build a closer link between the Rule of Law report and its recommendations and financial support. If confirmed, I would work closely with the Commissioner for Budget to this end.

A wide variety of EU policies are closely linked to the rule of law. The rule of law is critically important to the Single Market, with the risk of impinging on the level playing field and stifling our competitiveness. Media and civil society play an indispensable role as watchdogs for the rule of law. The EU can support public administration to be resilient against corruption. More generally, the implementation agenda set out in the Political Guidelines depends heavily on EU law being fairly and effectively applied. An important role for an Executive Vice-President is to maximise the impact of these connections.

The examples of recent digital legislation cited in the question also show how our digital policy is deeply embedded in societal choices. All of this legislation has required a close examination of the implications of digital change for our democracies and our fundamental rights. The EU has been a pioneer in thinking through how to ensure that a vibrant digital sector retains the confidence of citizens and consumers. If confirmed, I would ensure that coordination inside the Commission allows us to focus both on ensuring that the major digital policy legislation recently adopted is effectively implemented, and on maintaining this broader perspective as our digital policy continues to evolve.

This approach should be fully reflected through a consistency between legislation and compliance with fundamental rights and privacy. As set out in my reply to question 7, I would be committed to implement a coherent digital rulebook, which maintains the highest standards for respect of fundamental rights. The new digital legislation has extended the landscape of the different authorities responsible for implementation, with bodies such as the High-Level Group of the Digital Markets Act, the European Board for Digital Services, and the European AI Board joining the data protection authorities and bodies overseeing the e-privacy legislation. These bodies share a common vocation to exchange on common issues and offer advice and expertise in order to promote a consistent regulatory approach, but we need to ensure that responsibilities are clear, while also promoting mutual learning and effective communication between the different bodies involved. The Commission has an important role in providing a proactive approach to support coordination.

I would uphold EU fundamental rights to the highest standards in enforcing legislation. For example, though the Digital Services Act does not regulate online content, but rather the responsibility of online platforms for the systems they have in place, it contains safeguards to protect freedom of expression. Very Large Online Platforms have additional obligations, to assess and mitigate serious risks such as for disinformation, as well as taking measures to ensure that content cannot easily go viral. As mentioned in my reply to question 7, the Digital

Services Act has the potential to make the internet safer for EU citizens: it gives greater agency and transparency to citizens and provides civil society and researchers with the possibility to identify and flag systemic risks. In the case of the AI Act, all public authorities who deploy AI in ways that can pose risks have to assess the possible impact on fundamental rights. If such use of AI entails the processing of personal data, these authorities will also have to conduct a data protection impact assessment under the GDPR, if the processing is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of natural persons. Again, the role of the Commission should be to support the effective implementation of these rules through practical coordination and effective guidance.

Finding the right balance between the right to privacy and data protection and the public interests of security and justice is pressing. We have to ensure that law enforcement and judicial authorities can work effectively in the digital age. There can be difficulties in holding offenders accountable, where offenders use online services designed to ensure privacy to hide criminal activities. I would examine how to equip law enforcement and the judiciary with the right tools, while safeguarding fundamental rights, and without introducing new vulnerabilities for cybersecurity. I would ensure that any legal or technical solutions for lawful access to data would be carefully developed with all relevant stakeholders.