



## **The Danish Government's response to the public consultation on a set of European Digital Principles**

### **General comments**

The Danish Government welcomes the broad and inclusive debate concerning a set of European Digital Principles. The acceleration of digitalization is vital for our economic and societal development, security and safety which Covid-19 has further underlined. At the same time, digitalization and disruptive technologies also give rise to new risks and scenarios, which challenge or can even undermine our democratic rights and societies. These cannot be left unaddressed, as we otherwise risk that the digitalization does not work in our favor and that trust and security will decrease. Therefore, we must address those risks and scenarios in order to achieve a human-centric, responsible and secure digital society.

With the digital principles, we can establish a common understanding of our European way in our digital single market. A European way where we form the digital society in our favor, so that it protects and empowers citizens and businesses, underpins innovation and progress in our society as well as respects our values and rights.

In this context, it is imperative to emphasize that existing rights are valid offline as well as online. Therefore, the establishment of a set of European digital principles should not replace existing rights nor create new rights, as this could question the validity of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights as well as other international human rights. Instead, the sole objective of the European digital principles should be to identify the new challenges stemming from digitalization and to ensure and to promote how existing rights can be fully exercised and enforced in the digital sphere.

The principles should steer the overall direction in this long-term quest; meaning that the principles should give direction both here in 2021 as well as in 2031. This calls for principles which are forward-looking, technology neutral and descriptive. They should concisely describe the end goal, but not the specific technique, measure nor method as to achieve such goal. The selection of concrete policy choices to implement and integrate such principles should entirely be carried out through legislative procedures.

Overall, the initial themes identified by the Commission cover important components of our digital society and economy. At the same time, it is essential that we set out our overall vision, meaning how we want to develop innovative and secure digitalization and what we want to achieve before addressing these specific components.

### **Specific comments**

### *Clear reflection of the green transition*

The transition to a sustainable and climate-neutral society is – together with the digital transformation – a key priority for the EU. Therefore, it is paramount that this aspect is clearly reflected in the principles – both in terms of a digital transformation, which itself is energy-efficient, but also to promote the development and usage of technologies to reduce pollution, to improve energy efficiency, facilitate the circular economy etc.

### *Cybersecurity as a prerequisite to digitalization*

A digital society is a vulnerable society unless cybersecurity is made an integral and active part of digitalization. It is only a question of time before the next serious cyberattack targets us. The expected increased uptake of modern technologies will at the same time increase the attack surface against our democracies, companies and citizens. Therefore, we must ensure that a high level of cybersecurity underpins our digital society.

### *Universal service is already part of existing law*

All European citizens and businesses should have access to an internet service and the internet should be free and open in accordance with the principle of net neutrality. Roll-out of connectivity should be market driven and regulation should be technology neutral. However, these principles are already part of EU law such as the Electronic Communications Code and the regulation on net neutrality. Therefore, we are not immediately convinced of the added value of also including them in a set of European Digital Principles.

### *Paving the way for innovation and new business models*

The transformation to a data-based economy with the use of digital technologies and services is an important driving force for future growth and sustainable development. To facilitate such transformation, we must establish a genuinely digital single market with framework conditions which are innovation-friendly, digital by default as well as technology neutral. Thereby, we can encourage new cross-border development as well as a scaling-up of new business models.

### *The digital transformation of SMEs*

It is crucial that SMEs are able to take advantage of this transformation. Amongst other things, this implies better access to public and private data and better opportunities to share their business data relevant actors in a secure, simple and transparent manner. Therefore, it is important that the principle on human-centric digital public services contributes to promote more accessible, interoperable and user-driven digital services, thereby, making life easier for the SMEs.

### *Accessible and human-centric digital public services and administration*

As society becomes increasingly digitized, it is important to ensure that no citizens are left behind. This includes designing digital public services to be accessible to citizens with special needs, in close collaboration with relevant interest organisations. However, we also encourage the Commission to bear in mind that accessibility also entails making sure that non-digital citizens have the right to be exempt from the use of digital public solutions and are presented with alternative or analogue solutions.

With these points, we stand ready to engage in the discussions actively and constructively on a set of European Digital Principles. Furthermore, we reserve the right to submit further comments at a later stage.