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## Regaining Europe's Digital Sovereignty: Ten Immediate Actions for 2025

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Europe has drifted into a dangerous over-reliance on foreign digital infrastructure and platforms. What we all see and what Mario Draghi, Enrico Letta, and others have shown is that the risks of this development are systemic; yet until today, the European Union moves too slowly to address it. Attempts to cut red tape or remove regulation are so far ineffective, last too long and do not give digital creatives the freedom they need for innovation. The 2025 State of the European Union Speech fell short of any solutions and Draghi's latest assessment was devastating. Instead of discussions, we need immediate decisions to regain a digitally competitive and sovereign EU. Eurostack, deregulation, venture capital, chips, energy, access to quality data and a flourishing environment for Start Ups and creators are crucial for our sovereignty.

The following ten actions are needed to regain control, cut strategic dependencies, and boost Europe's competitiveness – it is decisive for our future and our digital survival:

- 1. Digital Special Economic Zones:** Create Digital Special Economic Zones with fast-track permitting, limited bureaucracy and regulation, special tax rules and regulatory sandboxes to test innovative ideas. Create Tech Sovereignty Zones that allow testing of sovereign digital infrastructure. Launch a first wave in Q4 2025.
- 2. Cut dependencies to 40% by 2030:** Amend the Digital Decade Policy Programme by introducing a 2030 target that cuts today's excessive unilateral dependencies from digital products and services from 80% to 40%. Support with a Digital Independency Dashboard (i.e. cloud, data, chips, core software) as well as sectorial roadmaps. Delivery levers should be, among others, procurement, open standards, interoperability, and targeted industrial policy.

**3. Only EU tools inside EU Institutions:** Adopt an inter-institutional decision that European/open-standards solutions are the default option for email, documents, storage, collaboration, electronic identity, and search. Support that decision by portability rules and binding exit-plans. Use a comply-or-explain exception for non-EU tools. Start migrations in core services (e.g. video calls, file-sharing, search engine) across EU institutions and national public administration in 2025.

**4. Fast-track EU Cloud & AI pilots:** Run cross-border pilots that combine EuroHPC compute, edge nodes and data spaces under joint procurement and open standards. Publish a migration playbook for EU institutions and agencies. Use the pilots to set uptake milestones for 2026–2028 and feed concrete clauses into forthcoming cloud/AI legislative initiatives.

**5. Open-Standards & Interoperability:** Adopt a Commission Decision making open formats, open APIs, portability and migration toolchains mandatory in all EU-funded and EU-run systems, building on the Interoperable Europe Act. Introduce an “open-source-considered” test in every procurement and publish switch-cost KPIs for all major platforms.

**6. Technology Change Vouchers:** Create EU-funded migration vouchers for administrations to exit proprietary lock-ins and move to European/open-source alternatives, covering discovery, data migration and staff retraining. Prioritise productivity suites, identity, storage, and collaboration stacks to unlock immediate demand for EU vendors.

**7. Digital Sovereignty Fund:** Create a temporary fund to bridge the time until the new MFF 2028-35 kicks in, by reallocating underperforming lines in DEP/Horizon Europe but also by leveraging EIB capacities. Attract private capital for EU cloud/AI, edge, cybersecurity, and chips, while creating joint framework contracts for EU institutions and willing Member States. Launch first calls and tenders before December.

**8. Public Procurement:** Integrate „Buy and deploy European Tech“ clauses in upcoming legislative proposals such as the 'Cloud and AI Development Act' with clear eligibility criteria (i.e. EU ownership/control, R&D/jobs in the EU, data locality) and annual targets. Pair it with open-standards, multi-vendor lots and vendor-diversity obligations in the EU Procurement Directives.

**9. Update the competition toolbox:** Replace the withdrawn 2021 Article 22 guidance of the Merger Regulation with a refreshed EU merger-control approach that systematically captures below-threshold deals by serial acquirers in strategic layers (cloud/AI/data). Add ex-post enforceability of remedies, closer

DMA/Foreign-Subsidies coordination, and publish a watch-list of repeat acquirers in gatekeeper ecosystems.

**10. Trusted Partners:** Publish an EU list of Trusted International Partners for critical tech and apply sovereignty/security vetting to vendors in sensitive domains; default to trusted suppliers with a transparent comply-or-explain exception. Align the list with trade policy, standards and cybersecurity certification to reduce authoritarian-risk exposure.

#### **Delivery & Governance:**

➤ ***Quarter-by-quarter plan:***

**Q4 2025** - Launch first TSZ cohort; adopt EU-by-default decision; publish Buy-European clause draft; open Sovereignty Fund call #1; start 2 cross-border pilots.

**Q1–Q2 2026** - Interoperability Decision in force; migration vouchers live; Trusted-Partner list v1; merger-control update and watch-list; expand joint framework contracts.

**Q3–Q4 2026** - First procurement lots awarded; dashboard baseline published; institutional migrations reach 30–40%; pilots scale to 8–10 Member States.

➤ ***Measurement:*** Publish quarterly KPIs on dependency ratios, share of EU vendors in public IT, switching costs, and pilot uptake. Tie Fund disbursements to outcomes.

**Why this works:** These actions would immediately shift demand toward European providers, lower switching costs through interoperability, and tighten competition policy where the market is most vulnerable. They also convert today's political will into practical tools - procurement, standards, and pilots - so we can build and buy European technology at scale.