

EU-SINGAPORE DIGITAL PARTNERSHIP

Section 1. Background

1. Digitalisation is shaping and changing every aspect of life. The EU and Singapore have set out strategies for empowering our citizens and businesses to seize the opportunities ahead, whilst protecting their safety and security in the digital space.

2. The European Commission's 2030 Digital Compass Communication sets the EU ambition of promoting a human-centred digital agenda evolving around the cardinal points of digital infrastructures, skills, the digital transformation of businesses and the digitalisation of public services. The European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade guides the EU international engagement in the digital field. The Trade Policy Review Communication calls upon the EU to support the recovery and fundamental transformation of the EU economy in line with its green and digital objectives. The Joint Communication on the Indo-Pacific Strategy calls on the EU to enhance its international digital partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, through the Global Gateway strategy, the EU is committed to working with like-minded partners to promote sustainable digital connectivity investments globally, and in particular in South-East Asia. Furthermore, by the adoption of EU Council Conclusions on Digital Diplomacy EU aims to connect all relevant internal and external digital initiatives in its cooperation with like-minded partners.

3. As for Singapore, the digital vision is to build a cyber-secure, economically vibrant, and socially stable future that promotes digital empowerment and wellness, and enables Singapore enterprises to thrive in the digital economy. To achieve this vision, the Singapore government has been working closely with local and international partners on various building blocks including digital infrastructures, regulations, security and capabilities. Singapore is also establishing Digital Economy Agreements with key partners to develop international frameworks that foster interoperability of systems, and support businesses engaging in digital trade and electronic commerce.

4. The EU and Singapore recognise that countries should work together to shape digital rules and standards, and facilitate interoperability in a trusted and secure manner. This is necessary in order to maximise opportunities presented by the digital economy for our people and to create commercially meaningful outcomes for businesses operating digitally across borders.

5. Our digital cooperation is also of strategic importance. It can serve as a pathfinder for EU-ASEAN initiatives to enhance region-to-region digital cooperation and connectivity. This supports the EU-ASEAN Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity of 1 December 2020, and the ASEAN Digital Masterplan to establish a frictionless ASEAN digital market. It can also contribute to the development of a global architecture of interoperable standards at regional and multilateral levels.

6. The EU and Singapore stress the importance of the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce, as a key platform to advance the global setting of rules governing digital trade and narrowing the digital divide. We are committed to promote a safer, human-centric online environment, build an open, free, and secure digital future for all, and continue cooperating in relevant international fora.

7. The Joint Declaration by the European Union, Singapore, and other countries on privacy and the protection of personal data, which was endorsed at the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in Paris on 22 February 2022, expresses a common vision of a human-centric approach to the digital transformation, where the effective protection of personal data plays a crucial role, and underlines the importance of data free flow with trust to facilitate cross-border data flows as key to harnessing the opportunities of the digital economy.

Section 2. Partnering for the development of a digital transformation that delivers solidarity, prosperity and sustainability

8. The EU and Singapore share many common interests, including support for multilateralism, free and open trade, and a rules-based international order. We have robust trade and investment links, as well as good bilateral cooperation, including between Singapore and EU Member States, in areas like climate change and cybersecurity. We have also been advancing trade and digital cooperation at bilateral, regional, and multilateral fora. Our robust economic partnership is underpinned by the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA) and the EU-Singapore Investment Protection Agreement (EUSIPA), which serve as strategic pathfinders towards closer region-to-region connectivity between the EU and ASEAN.

9. Building on joint work in the context of the EUSFTA, the EU and Singapore are establishing the EU-Singapore Digital Partnership to bring our strong bilateral trade partnership into the digital realm.

10. The Digital Partnership is an overarching framework to strengthen connectivity and interoperability of digital markets and policy frameworks, as well as to facilitate digital trade between the EU and Singapore. It aims to advance cooperation across the full spectrum of digital issues. This includes digital economy and trade, as well as key enablers for the successful digital transformation of our societies and economies, such as technology, infrastructures, skills, digital transformation of businesses, and digitalisation of public services.

11. In implementing the Digital Partnership, both sides share the goals of ensuring predictability and legal certainty for businesses and citizens, fostering a secure online environment for consumers who engage in digital transactions across borders, removing unjustified barriers to trade and preventing discrimination between online and offline activities. We also recognise the importance of emerging technologies for global prosperity and security, and are committed to collaborating on research and development in these areas.

12. Given the diversity of issues to be addressed, the Digital Partnership will adopt a flexible and living architecture that supports a range of cooperation modalities. The living architecture will allow the EU and Singapore to jointly address new areas as they emerge, which is important given the rapidly evolving nature of the digital space. In mature areas where businesses and citizens need legal certainty and clarity on how they can operate in the digital environment, the EU and Singapore may consider negotiating legally binding agreements in the future, in line with the relevant domestic procedures for their adoption.

13. Ultimately, the Digital Partnership should help citizens in Singapore and the EU to learn, work, explore, and fulfil their aspirations in a digital society. It should empower Singapore and EU workers and businesses to deploy new technologies and innovate. It should reinforce people, business and trade links between the EU and Singapore and maximise the benefits of the digital economy for our communities.

14. A strong Digital Partnership can also have benefits well beyond the digital domain, as digital solutions are also enablers for climate-resilient, resource-efficient development and a circular economy.

15. By joining our efforts, the EU and Singapore can better advance our shared goals in our respective activities and in our relations with international partners.

Section 3. Establishing a Digital Partnership between Singapore and the EU

16. The Digital Partnership intends to facilitate and organise joint work in areas of mutual interest, going beyond dialogue and exchange of information to deliver concrete results. To that end, it will prepare a joint workplan and deliverables, building on existing cooperation mechanisms such as the EUSFTA Committees and dedicated expert workshops. It aims to leverage existing cooperation activities, not to replace or duplicate them, and should not result in additional bureaucratic burdens or heavy coordination costs.

17. In addition, the Digital Partnership would provide for mechanisms to review progress on a yearly basis and identify areas for future collaboration and possible deliverables. We intend to establish an annual meeting at the ministerial level, the “EU-Singapore Digital Partnership Council”. The Council will take stock of progress in the Digital Partnership and provide political guidance on next steps. Its secretariat will be provided informally by Singapore’s Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Communication and Information, and the European Commission’s services (Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology). These members of the joint secretariat will coordinate activities on their respective sides, involving all relevant services and agencies.

18. Regular stakeholder participation and involvement are key to the success of the Digital Partnership, and exchanges are expected to be organised as part of existing cooperation mechanisms and joint Digital Partnership dialogues with stakeholders. EU Member States will be closely involved in the implementation of the Digital Partnership, seeking complementarity between actions at EU level and at Member States’ level.

19. These various working mechanisms and exchanges will be integrated into the yearly work cycle of the Digital Partnership. This way, synergies can be clearly identified and reinforced between the various areas, and service-level or sector-specific discussions can form a holistic political dialogue about digital technologies, policies and exchanges. We will make the Digital Partnership as efficient as possible, and use the EU-Singapore Digital Partnership Council to clearly define and communicate priorities.

20. The Digital Partnership is not intended to create any rights or obligations under international or domestic law. It does not have any financial implications on either side.

21. The Digital Partnership may continue until both sides confirm that the objectives of the Digital Partnership have been achieved or until one side discontinues its participation in the Digital Partnership.

Section 4. Achieving joint results in priority areas for enhanced digital cooperation

22. Both sides intend to work jointly on the following priority areas, and to launch an initial set of joint actions that are described in the Annex to this document.

23. Both sides share the necessity to deepen discussions on **digital trade**. Both sides intend to seek a cooperative relationship regarding digital trade facilitation, including working towards joint projects in the digitalisation and recognition of trade administration and commercial documents. In addition, both sides intend to seek a common understanding on a set of digital trade principles. Both sides aim at cooperating and coordinating our approaches for upholding open and connected digital markets around the world, and addressing unjustified barriers to digital trade and investment flows, while preserving their policy and regulatory autonomy.

24. In terms of **digital connectivity**, both sides intend to foster an enabling environment for the investments in, deployment, maintenance, and repair of secure, resilient, and sustainable digital infrastructures, including data centres and submarine telecommunications cables for connectivity between the EU and ASEAN.

25. On **5G and beyond 5G technologies**, both sides intend to have exchanges on the state of play of 5G service adoption. We also intend to explore use cases of common interest as well as possibly develop cooperation and exchanges on R&D pilots in the context of Singapore's Future Communications R&D programme for 5G/6G and other programmes in the EU.

26. On **data**, both sides envisage working towards strengthening data free flow with trust to facilitate cross-border data flows, and an open access to research data, including the use of open government data. Both sides endeavour to support cross-border data flows with trust through model data protection contracts and the use of emerging technologies. Both sides will also explore collaborations on the use of privacy enhancing technologies.

27. In order to build resilience to cyber threats in an increasingly challenging environment, both sides intend to promote information exchange and cooperation in the field of **cybersecurity**. Both sides recognise the importance of promoting cybersecurity information sharing. Both sides will work towards cooperating in the area of cybersecurity certifications and technology-neutral, objective, open, transparent, and interoperable cybersecurity standards, taking into consideration the framework of international standard setting organisations where relevant.

28. Both sides intend to enhance our cooperation to strengthen the resilience of the **global semiconductor supply chain**, including by exchanging best practices and exploring opportunities to develop new capabilities in research and innovation. Both sides share the aim of encouraging private investments that would contribute to our security and resilience, while avoiding a global subsidy race.

29. **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** governance systems are being developed on both sides and therefore both sides will consider enhancing cooperation on excellence and trust in AI to foster interoperability of AI governance systems. This may include exploring potential mutual recognition arrangements, where appropriate and where there are compatible approaches on both sides, with the objective to reduce administrative burden and compliance costs, and subject to the further specifications of those mutual recognition arrangements in an international agreement that may be considered in the future between the EU and Singapore. Both sides intend to cooperate and seek to align positions in practical initiatives that further the development of trustworthy and responsible AI within the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) and other international fora. Both sides also intend to exchange information on AI-related initiatives as well as research and industry practices related to AI technologies. Both sides will work towards promoting and sustaining the responsible use and adoption of AI technologies by businesses and across the community. Both sides intend to explore ways to facilitate AI companies' access to business opportunities in the EU and Singapore, such as

facilitating link-ups between relevant partners. Both sides also intend to encourage collaborations between researchers, civil society and industry, and explore opportunities for cooperation on AI test-beds.

30. In the field of **online platforms**, both sides share the objectives of keeping digital services safe for citizens, and contestable by businesses. Both sides intend to exchange information on our respective approaches to online platforms governance and regulation, with a view to fostering greater coordination around key principles and effective implementation.

31. Both sides intend to share best practices, frameworks, and content, as well as continue dialogues in the field of public sector interoperability. Both sides endeavour to continue to work on the basis of use cases and pilot projects towards interoperability of our **trust services**, such as digital signatures. Both sides intend to collaborate on digital identity solutions, including continued information exchange on digital signatures.

32. Both sides affirm the importance of promoting **digitalisation in the financial sector** to build an innovative and inclusive digital society. Both sides agree on the need to engage in exchange on digital finance in order to embrace mutually beneficial opportunities and manage risks.

33. Digital technologies are key enablers for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to innovate, grow and compete. Both sides will examine how they can cooperate on respective initiatives to promote **SMEs' digital transformation**.

34. Both sides intend to share best practices, content and courses and continue dialogues **in the field of digital education and training, including digital skills for the workforce, ICT specialists and women**. This would contribute to high quality, inclusive, and accessible education in Singapore and the EU taking into account a human-centric vision and approach to digital transformation.

35. Both sides recognise the importance of **standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures (STRACAP)** in increasing compatibility, interoperability, and reliability in the digital economy. Both sides further recognise the importance of cross-border recognition of conformity assessment results as well as information exchange and transparency between the EU and Singapore in applying STRACAP to the digital economy.

36. This list of priority topics builds on existing cooperation between both sides and on areas where we believe cooperation will lead to tangible benefits for both sides. It will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis through the EU-Singapore Digital Partnership Council.

Section 5. Strong leadership and execution for a successful Digital Partnership

37. Both sides intend to expand and deepen our Digital Partnership over time, to continually ensure that the actions and outcomes of the Digital Partnership brings concrete benefits to businesses and citizens and address forward-looking areas. The EUSFTA will also be important in this respect.

38. With the strategic guidance of the EU-Singapore Digital Partnership Council, the Digital Partnership intends to deliver commercially meaningful outcomes to businesses, empower citizens to maximise opportunities from the digital economy, and enhance interoperability across the global digital economy.

39. The EU-Singapore Digital Partnership Council should be provided with clear progress reports by its secretariat in order to take stock of the progress achieved and provide strategic guidance on the priorities and next steps.

Annex: Initial set of joint actions

Digital Trade

40. Both sides should seek a common understanding on digital trade principles building on the EUSFTA and covering issues relevant for digital trade such as paperless trading, electronic invoicing, electronic payments, electronic transactions framework, digital identities, digitalisation and recognition of trade documents, online consumer protection, protection against unsolicited electronic commercial messages, cybersecurity, protection of source code and cryptography.

41. Both sides intend to share best practices on the development of open frameworks for trade document digitalisation that are based on internationally-accepted standards, as well as to collaborate on new initiatives that will promote and advance the use of these open frameworks.

42. Both sides intend to share best practices and identify initiatives for e-invoicing and explore the use of the interoperable frameworks, particularly PEPPOL, to promote cross-border e-invoicing.

43. Both sides intend to discuss and, when relevant, share information, with a view to upholding open and connected digital markets and addressing unjustified barriers to digital trade, while preserving their policy and regulatory autonomy.

Digital connectivity

44. Both sides will foster an enabling environment for secure, resilient and sustainable digital infrastructure, which include data centres and submarine telecommunications cables. Efforts may include (a) information sharing of respective approaches to develop secure, resilient and sustainable digital infrastructures; (b) facilitating the expeditious and efficient installation, maintenance, and repair of submarine telecommunications cables; and (c) assessing the need for information-sharing frameworks with regards to network and submarine cable outages.

Beyond 5G

45. Both sides will work towards a shared global vision of 6G and towards the stimulation of global 6G ecosystems including standardisation of 6G.

Data and data free flow with trust

46. Both sides will work towards ensuring trusted cross-border data flows in compliance with data protection rules and other public policy objectives, including public security and public order. Efforts may include promoting cooperation through the application of model data protection contracts and guidance for their use.

47. Both sides intend to exchange information on the development of common data spaces¹, use of open government data and open access to scientific information, and data portability.

¹ Data spaces bring together relevant data infrastructures and governance frameworks in order to facilitate data pooling and sharing.

48. Both sides intend to advance cooperation with regards to privacy enhancing technologies, including identifying areas for industry and research collaboration.

Cybersecurity

49. Both sides intend to continue our activities towards enhancing information sharing on cybersecurity regulatory frameworks and technical standards development. Both sides also intend to continue cooperation in the area of cybersecurity certification and standards. This may include exploring potential mutual recognition arrangements, where appropriate and where there are compatible approaches on both sides, with the objective to reduce administrative burden and compliance costs.

50. Both sides will promote the development of an open, secure, stable, accessible, and peaceful ICT environment by working together on matters related to cyber-security in international fora, including at the United Nations.

51. Both sides have a shared vision to promote secure digital trade to achieve global prosperity. Both sides recognise that threats to cybersecurity undermine confidence in digital trade and that cybersecurity measures should not create unjustified barriers to trade.

Supply chain resilience: semiconductors

52. Both sides intend to work towards achieving cooperation on supply chain monitoring, exchange of information in anticipation of disruptions in the supply chain and effective early warning mechanisms, also taking advantage of Singapore's position as a logistics hub. Both sides should strive to extend this exercise within a multilateral initiative and with close involvement of the private sector. At the same time, both sides recall commitments in the EUSFTA chapter on competition and related matters.

53. Both sides intend to explore possibilities of advanced research (e.g. advanced packaging, specialty semiconductors) and cybersecurity testing in order to strengthen our resilience across the semiconductor value chain.

Artificial Intelligence

54. Both sides intend to exchange information and encourage interoperability on AI governance, AI standards and testing frameworks.

55. Both sides intend to cooperate and seek to align positions within GPAI and other fora.

56. Both sides intend to explore:

- a. cooperation on AI test-beds and testing;
- b. facilitation of cross-border access for AI technologies and solutions across Singapore, ASEAN and the EU;
- c. research collaboration on AI topics, including capabilities around trustworthiness, adoptability, and transparency of AI technologies.

Online Platforms

57. Both sides intend to further deepen our cooperation and information sharing in the area of platform governance and regulation.

58. As part of promoting a safer and human-centric online environment, the EU and Singapore will discuss the principle that actions that should be taken by governments, authorities and digital services including online platforms to reduce illegal and harmful content. Both sides will also discuss legal certainty, risk-based approaches and civil society empowerment as some of the key building blocks for online platform regulation.

59. Over the short to medium term, both sides should share information regarding fundamental trends in the evolution of our online environments.

Digital identity and electronic authentication

60. Both sides intend to identify a pilot project and timeline for use of electronic signatures.

61. Both sides should work towards future interoperability of SingPass and EU Digital Identity, which are key enablers for public administrations, business transactions and e-commerce.

62. Both sides intend to exchange knowledge and expertise on best practices relating to digital identity policies and regulations, technical implementation and security standards, and the promotion of the use of digital identities.

63. Both sides intend to identify and implement possible use cases for the mutual recognition of digital identities to promote compatibility and interoperability between our respective digital identity regimes.

Digital transformation of SMEs

64. Both sides should seek to cooperate on business match-making, including clusters cooperation, and exchange on respective best practices, such as Digital Innovation Hubs.

65. Both sides should explore cooperation on capability and capacity building for SMEs, including how SMEs can promote products, build cooperation, and increase market reach through platforms.

66. Both sides intend to exchange on how policy makers can effectively measure the digital transformation and digital maturity of SMEs.

67. Both sides plan to exchange information and share best practices in improving digital skills and leveraging digital tools and technology to improve access to capital and credit, participation in government procurement opportunities, and other areas that could help SMEs and start-ups adapt to digital trade.

Enhancing digital education and skills critical for the digital future

68. Both sides intend to promote digital education and enhance digital skills and competencies to ensure all can benefit from digitalisation and contribute to the digital transformation.

69. In order to enhance digital skills for all, especially among the workforce and ICT professionals, both sides intend to explore cooperation on capability and capacity building programmes, for instance the EU Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition.

70. Both sides may explore the development of cross-border mentorship network for young entrepreneurs.

71. Both sides will also explore the possibility of developing a cross-border talent network to support exchanges of tech talent.

Digitalisation in the financial sector

72. Both sides intend to exchange information and share best practices on digital finance developments, notably on regulatory and supervisory approaches to crypto-assets.

Standards, Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment Procedures

73. Both sides intend to encourage the adoption of international or internationally recognised standards relating to the digital economy and facilitate cross-border recognition of conformity assessment results in areas of mutual interest in the digital economy, through information exchanges and exploring projects to develop a greater understanding of STRACAP amongst our public and private sectors.

74. Both sides should continue and enhance our ongoing cooperation to: (a) promote common standards globally; (b) contributing to global goals and vision for 5G, beyond 5G/6G, Internet of Things (IoT), AI and digital identities; and (c) cooperating on standardisation from the early stages of research and innovation.

75. Both sides intend to discuss the methods for establishing standardised methods for estimating the net environmental impact of digital solutions in major sectors such as ICT, energy, transport, and smart cities.