Canada – European Union Digital Partnership

Section I. Background

1. The EU and Canada have established deepened cooperation through a Strategic Partnership Agreement and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), provisionally applied since 2017. They have developed a long-standing dialogue on digital matters. The acceleration of the digital transformation and its growing impact on all aspects of economy and society, combined with increased geopolitical tensions also affecting the digital area call for reinforcing the digital cooperation between the EU and Canada. Such cooperation has also a potential to increase EU and Canada economic security, including by increasing cooperation on supply chain resilience and digital emerging and critical technologies and to create a shared understanding of risks.

2. The EU and Canada share common views on the importance of information and communication technology for their economy and society. Both sides support a positive, inclusive, and human-centric vision of the digital economy and society where the design, development, governance, and use of technology are guided by democratic values and respect for fundamental rights, and consider that both sides' joint efforts and their synergies with other like-minded partners can contribute to implementing this vision.

3. Both sides share the ambition to improve the functioning of the global digital economy. In this context both sides intend to work jointly in building on respective bilateral and multilateral cooperation fora such as the G7, G20, OECD, UN and WTO. They also recognise that results of their bilateral cooperation could feed into multilateral cooperation.

4. At the EU-Canada Summit in June 2021, the Leaders of both sides committed to work together - for the benefit of Europeans, Canadians and the global community - on harnessing the potential of trade, technology and innovation for a brighter, greener and more sustainable future for all.

5. At their meeting on 7 March 2023, the Leaders of both sides emphasised the role of the digital economy and emerging technologies in advancing sustainable economic growth. As part of their commitment to further digital cooperation, the Leaders of both sides committed to pursuing an EU-Canada Digital Partnership with a focus on, but not limited to, artificial intelligence, research and innovation on next-generation networks, as well as greater cooperation on international connectivity and cyber security.

6. This Digital Partnership builds on the already strong foundation of cooperation under the e-commerce chapter of the CETA and the EU-Canada Digital Dialogue, where the EU and Canada are collaborating on digital policies and on emerging digital technologies and issues related to research, development, innovation, and standardisation of these technologies.

Section II. Structure

7. The Digital Partnership establishes a framework for voluntary bilateral cooperation in the digital area and does not create any legal rights and obligations, and does not have any financial implication on either side. It aims at delivering concrete joint results in the areas identified, building on existing cooperation mechanisms. In particular, it does not intend to duplicate cooperation mechanisms under the EU-Canada Strategic Partnership Agreement, the EU--Canada CETA and the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement or the Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the European Community and Canada, but to undertake cooperation using existing frameworks, where available, such as those under the EU-Canada- Strategic Partnership Agreement, the Science and Technology Agreement and CETA's Committees and Dialogues, including the Regulatory Cooperation Forum.

8. Both sides intend to continue working jointly in building on multilateral work such as the G7, G20, OECD, UN and WTO. The Digital Partnership will allow the EU and Canada to have a stronger common voice in multilateral fora, where appropriate, and bring jointly developed solutions to international partners and advance our joint strategic priorities.

9. The Digital Partnership is a flexible mechanism that allows both sides to address new challenges in view of the dynamics of digital transformation impacting research, industry, their economies, and broader society.

10. The Digital Partnership will be steered and monitored by a Digital Partnership Council at the ministerial level. The Council will meet alternately in the capitals of each side or online on a yearly basis. The Digital Partnership Council is expected to take stock of deliverables in the areas identified, building on existing cooperation mechanisms. It aims to leverage existing cooperation activities, not to replace them, and it should not result in additional bureaucratic burdens or heavy coordination efforts. Further cooperation tasks and related activities in new areas may be initiated and terminated by the Digital Partnership Council in the future.

11. The Council meetings would be prepared at technical level, in multiple formats corresponding to the needs and the areas to be covered. These formats could include workshops, information exchange, webinars or others as deemed appropriate at every given stage. The EU-Canada Digital Dialogue will be maintained to steer the work at technical level.

12. The various streams will be integrated in the yearly cycle of the Digital Partnership, so that synergies can be clearly identified and implemented between the various areas, and service-level or sector-specific discussions can form a holistic political dialogue about digital technologies, policies and cooperation.

13. The deliverables of the Digital Partnership would feed into the EU-Canada Summits.

14. The European Commission services (DG CONNECT) and the Department of Industry of Canada, acting as the informal Digital Partnership secretariat, will coordinate activities on their respective sides, involving all relevant services.

15. Each side will bear its own costs arising from the activities of this Digital Partnership and concrete actions will be carried out taking account of respective resources available.

16. Regular stakeholder participation and involvement are key to the Partnership's success, and exchanges are expected to be organised as part of existing cooperation mechanisms and joint Digital Partnership dialogues with stakeholders, including, but not limited to, other levels of government, academia, companies, industry associations and not-for-profits where applicable.

17. Both sides intend to work with like-minded partners, in particular G7 members, to develop multilateral initiatives in a number of areas covered in this Partnership and contribute jointly to promoting the positive and human-centric vision of the digital economy and society in multilateral fora and standardisation organisations.

Section III. Scope

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

19. Both sides intend to support secure international connectivity between them and with other world regions. In line with the G7 Action Plan for Building a Secure and Resilient Digital Infrastructure, they intend to explore new routes of international communication infrastructure to strengthen network resilience. For example, potential new routes in the Arctic or the North Atlantic may have the potential to improve resiliency and access to high-speed Internet, reduce data latency and stimulate data flows between Europe, Canada and other regions. Both sides intend to jointly promote the deployment of secure, trusted digital connectivity in third countries.

20. Both sides intend to exchange information on their respective digital identity and digital credentials as well as trust services frameworks and develop concrete pilot projects towards their interoperability, paving the way for their possible mutual recognition. Both sides could cooperate in international standard setting to support the development of human-centric digital identity and digital credentials.

21. Both sides intend to exchange information on their respective data governance frameworks and discuss the interoperability of EU and Canadian Data Spaces.

22. Regarding artificial intelligence (AI), both sides intend to continue closely following the development and deployment of AI systems, including foundation models and generative AI systems, especially as both sides are actively working towards the adoption of regulatory frameworks for AI to address the potential risks associated with AI systems in a balanced way, acknowledging the significant potential benefits that safe and trustworthy AI can bring when developed and used responsibly.

23. Both sides intend to have targeted bilateral exchanges to better understand the benefits and risks of foundation models and generative AI and the range of implications they could have. These exchanges could lead to coordination of their respective efforts to develop international approaches to AI governance. The EU and Canada intend to actively participate in multilateral forums such as the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence and G7 discussions on AI.

24. In the face of increasing geostrategic concerns on semiconductor technologies, the EU and Canada intend to enhance cooperation to strengthen the resilience of their semiconductor

supply chains. In particular, they will aim to work towards achieving cooperation on supply chain monitoring and effective early warning mechanisms with a view to addressing disruptions to the semiconductor supply chain. Both sides intend to explore opportunities for cooperation in research and innovation in the next generation of semiconductor technologies.

25. Both sides intend to make full use of instruments such as Horizon Europe to continuously seek to provide collaborative research opportunities in cutting-edge technologies.

26. Both sides intend to cooperate on and promote the utilisation of their respective quantum technologies in their broader economies in key areas such as computing, sensing, and communications among their research and development communities and foster enhanced cooperation, such as High-Performance Computing (HPC) and/or quantum computing applications of common interest. They could promote the exchange of researchers, engineers, experts and students between Canada and the EU and support research, development and innovation cooperation on quantum technologies, including future generations of supercomputing and quantum computing architectures, building on existing cooperation.

27. Both sides intend to cooperate on and exchange best practice approaches in Earth System Modelling initiatives, for improving their capabilities to fight and adapt to climate change and extreme weather events, and support the development of smart agriculture and smart cities.

28. Both sides intend to exchange good practice to achieve digital language equality, building on the European Language Equality project and the Canadian work on Indigenous Language technologies to preserve and support low-resourced languages in the digital space.

29. The EU and Canada both face similar cyber security risks and pursue a common objective of protecting their people, critical infrastructures, public institutions and businesses from disruptive cyber security campaigns. In order to mutually reinforce their resilience to cyber threats in an increasingly challenging environment, both sides intend to promote information exchange and cooperation in the field of cyber security. Furthermore, both sides intend to collaborate on the implementation of cyber security regulatory frameworks, including in the areas of critical infrastructure and cyber security of products, and work towards cooperating in the area of cyber security certifications and cyber security standards.

30. Both sides intend to pursue cooperation and information-sharing in the area of platform regulation. This cooperation could include exploring procedures and tools, which can support the EU's and Canada's respective platform policies.

31. Taking into consideration the ongoing cooperation on foreign information manipulation and interference, including in the context of the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, both sides could enhance cooperation to share and develop best practices on addressing foreign information manipulation and disinformation, for example, centring on knowledge mobilisation, digital media and science literacy, building trust in government communications and institutions, programmatic approaches, and exchanges between researchers and academics of the two jurisdictions. Both sides could reinforce their joint efforts towards the protection and promotion of information integrity online, both in terms of tools and mechanisms, as well as international best practices, including on foreign information manipulation and interference. Both sides could benefit from information-sharing around remuneration and fairness in the digital news marketplace.

32. Both the EU and Canada face similar challenges in terms of the digital skills gap and intend to share best practices, content, and courses, and to continue dialogue in the field of digital skills and training, with a particular emphasis on promoting inclusion.

33. Both sides intend to develop closer cooperation through respective digital research and deployment programmes in order to address challenges of the digital transformation in the following key areas: supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cyber security, advanced digital skills, and digital identity and digital credentials, ensuring the wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society.

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

Annex – Initial set of joint actions

The EU and Canada identified the following initial set of possible joint actions they could jointly carry out:

Secure international connectivity

- Together with other G7 members, promote concerted actions to develop secure and high-quality connectivity between Europe, North America and Asia, for example potential routes in the Arctic or North Atlantic. This could include the following actions:
    - Raise awareness about priority projects, with the view to encouraging the participation of trusted providers and potential customers.
    - Explore opportunities to provide financial support to priority projects, taking into account the benefits of smart cables that can enhance environmental protection, security, and connectivity.
    - Support efforts to consolidate demand for secure sub-marine cable connectivity, including from government services, research communities and private partners.
    - Facilitate relevant administrative processes including permitting for the deployment of submarine cables where feasible.
- Share information on respective approaches to develop secure and trusted connectivity infrastructures internationally and in third countries, on priority projects and opportunities for cooperation.
- Work towards facilitating effective and efficient installation, maintenance, and repair of submarine telecommunications cables.

Digital identity, digital credentials and trust services

- Based notably on the recommendations from the workshops for advancing interoperability and mutual support for digital identity and digital credentials across Canada and the EU, the following actions could be carried out:
    - Develop joint use cases and pilot projects towards interoperability of digital identity and digital credentials and trust services, building notably on the EU and Canada's respective frameworks.
    - Create shared knowledge repositories for digital identity and digital credentials and trust services technologies.
    - Cooperate on the development of human-centric digital identity and digital credentials and trust services standards and certifications.
    - Build adoption, awareness and support through concrete digital identity and digital credentials and trust services demonstrations.

Artificial Intelligence

- Compare respective regulatory approaches to address the potential risks associated with AI systems in a balanced way and explore possible cooperation on their implementation.
- Exchange information on the benefits and risks of foundation models and generative AI and the range of implications that they could have for a human-centric approach to AI.
- Pursue exchange of information and possible coordination of positions on AI including on generative AI in international fora, such as the G7, G20, OECD, ITU, and UNESCO. [possibility to adapt the language after the UK AI Summit on 1-2 November]
- Pursue cooperation in practical initiatives in the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) and explore the opportunity of GPAI-led projects to inform respective AI approaches and to provide common ground for future actions.
- Cooperate on AI international standards and work towards coordinating positions in international standards development organizations.
- Share information between Governments and relevant authorities on the implementation and enforcement of AI legal and policy frameworks.
- Explore the mutual recognition of conformity assessment procedures and outcomes via CETA's Conformity Assessment Protocol.

Semiconductors

- Explore collaborative research opportunities in cutting-edge semiconductor technologies.
- Establish an early warning mechanism to prepare for disruptions in the semiconductor supply chain and at a later stage consider extending this cooperation to a multilateral initiative with like-minded partners and with close involvement of the private sector.
- Exchange information on public support to the semiconductor sector.

- Share information on respective skills and workforce development initiatives in the area of semiconductors, exploring enhanced cooperation with involvement from academic, research and technology organisations, as well as key industry actors.

Quantum technologies

- Promote the utilisation of respective quantum technologies across the broader economy including research and development communities.
- Foster enhanced cooperation in quantum technologies, such as High-Performance Computing and/or quantum computing applications of common interest.
- Explore opportunities for exchange of researchers, engineers, experts and students between the EU and Canada to support research and innovation cooperation on quantum technologies.
- Explore opportunities to deepen collaboration in quantum research, development and innovation in areas of interest including quantum computing and simulation, quantum networking and communication, quantum sensing and metrology, building on ongoing collaboration in the MIRAQLS, FoQaCiA and HYPERSPACE projects.

Earth System Modelling

- Explore collaboration on the development of global and regional Digital Twins of Earth Systems that are seamless across physical domains (i.e., atmosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere, biosphere, and geosphere), as well as space and time, to support adaptations to climate change and extreme weather events. Collaboration could cover the necessary exchanges of non-confidential data, AI model developments and the use of these Digital Twins to provide more powerful tools to support policy makers and local decision makers.

Language technologies

- Connect and support the development of Language Data Spaces, like the European Language Data Space, to support the creation, distribution and uptake of innovative language data and technologies.

Cyber security and corresponding standards

- Work towards enhancing information exchange and cooperation among EU and Canadian cyber security agencies. Explore the possibility of concluding a working arrangement between respective cyber security agencies.
- Exchange on the development of cyber security strategies and explore collaboration on the implementation of cyber security regulatory frameworks, including in the areas of critical infrastructure and cyber security of products.
- Work towards cooperating in cyber security certifications and cyber security standards, including international standards as well as best practices and guidelines.
- Share best practices on cyber security skills, including on recruitment, training, professional development and retention.
- Share lessons learnt on formalising relationships with industry to enhance cyber security.

Platform cooperation

- Continue cooperation and information sharing on respective platform policies, with a focus on illegal and harmful content online, including the issues of hate speech and disinformation, algorithmic amplification and news media remuneration.

- Subject to available resources, organise joint expert workshops and regular exchanges on emerging issues including content moderation and work on common reporting templates ensuring transparency and accountability and common procedures.

- Continue to promote the principles in the Declaration for the Future of the Internet.

- Share information on effective, population-level strategies to strengthen science communications, counter science-related misinformation, and build trust in science.

- In terms of broadcasting frameworks, both sides could benefit from sharing information on regulatory tools available to improve discoverability.

Digital skills

- In order to enhance digital skills for all, especially among the workforce and ICT professionals with a special focus on women, explore cooperation on capability and capacity building programmes, for instance the EU Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition.

- Explore the possibility of developing a cross-border talent network to support exchanges of tech talent.