

#TRENDY THURSDAY

DIGITAL

Second report on the State of the Digital Decade calls for strengthened collective action to propel the EU's digital transformation

On Tuesday EC published the second report on the State of the Digital Decade, providing an overview of the progress made to achieve the digital objectives and targets set by the Digital Decade Policy Programme (DDPP). This year, for the first time, the report is accompanied by an analysis of the national strategic roadmaps presented by Member States. EC's analysis shows that collective efforts of Member States will fall short of the EU's level of ambition. The identified gaps include the need for additional investments, both at EU and national levels, uptake of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics by enterprises, semiconductor production and start-up ecosystems.

ENERGY

Iberian leaders agree to negotiate energy interconnections with France

Portugal and Spain have agreed to participate jointly in meetings with France on energy interconnections, arguing that the issue is a "European one and not just one between the Iberian peninsula and France", Envi ministers announced on Wednesday. Ribera highlighted how weak interconnections between Iberian countries and the rest of the EU were the main obstacle during the energy crisis, taking into account the help that both countries could have provided to their associates. Both countries are currently involved in several projects aiming to enhance interconnectivity, such as the project to increase interconnection capacity between the northern regions of Portugal and Galicia, allowing the Iberian electricity market (Mibel) to function more efficiently.

EUROPEAN UNION

Canada joins Horizon Europe programme

Canada is joining the growing group of non-EU countries who have associated to the EU's R&D programme, Horizon Europe, and will work jointly on large-scale projects tackling our biggest challenges. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the conclusion of negotiations for Canada's association to Pillar II of Horizon Europe at the EU-Canada Summit on 24 November 2023. On Wednesday, they welcomed the announcement through a joint statement. Horizon Europe is the main R&D tool for financing, covering topics such as climate, energy, digital economy and health. Canadian entities currently participate as partners in 155 Projects under Horizon Europe. Canadian institutions have received over €6 million from Horizon Europe so far.



CONSUMER PROTECTION

Commission sends preliminary findings to Meta over its "Pay or Consent" model for breach of the Digital Markets Act

On Monday, the Commission informed Meta of its preliminary findings that its "pay or consent" advertising model fails to comply with the Digital Markets Act. This binary choice forces users to consent to the combination of their personal data and fails to provide them a less personalised but equivalent version of Meta's social networks. Findings, inform Meta of its preliminary view that the company is in breach of the DMA. This is without prejudice to the outcome of the investigation. Meta now has the possibility to exercise its rights of defence by examining the documents in the Commission's investigation file and replying in writing to the Commission's preliminary findings. Then the Commission will conclude its investigation within 12 months.

ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

Commission approves €10.82 billion French State aid scheme to support offshore wind energy to foster the transition to a net-zero economy

Commission has approved a €10.82 billion French scheme to support the deployment of offshore wind energy, which will help foster the transition towards a net-zero economy. The scheme was approved under the State aid Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework (TCTF) and it will run for 20 years. In particular, the measure will support the construction and operation of two bottom-fixed offshore wind farms. The aid will be organised to select one beneficiary per offshore zone. Adopting and developing innovative technologies is crucial for Europe's competitiveness, particularly in the current geopolitical landscape and due to increasing cybersecurity threats, demanding enhanced resilience and robust security measures.

ECONOMY & TRADE

Ambitious EU-Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement enters into force

Last Monday, the EU-Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) entered into force. It will focus on the boosting of bilateral trade in goods, increase investment flows, strengthen the ties between reliable partners, and facilitate mutually advantageous economic relations sustainably. It is the most ambitious deal negotiated with an African country in terms of sustainability, and can serve as a template for others. It will cover several aspects of the ESG criteria, rather than only focusing on the Environment, such as guaranteeing gender equality, and fighting against climate change. It also reinforces Kenya's position inside East Africa relations, unlocking new economic opportunities for Kenyan businesses as it will fully open them the EU Market.