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The European Union Facing the 21st Century: The Digital Revolution

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Abstract: The European Union is a unique political process in the world. It continuously integrates different aspects creating a communality among its Member States. The process of integration responds to the necessities of the organization to adapt to the social, political, and economic reality and solving the dysfunctionalities arisen from the process. Currently, digitalization is a process required to adapt the European Union to the reality, to provide a common frame to an existing digital world. Therefore, the EU needs to respond the requirements of the society for the implementation of European standards in a new, but already relevant, area. In addition, the EU drag from the past dysfunctionalities that can be addressed thanks to the new possibilities generated by the digitalization of politics and economy. This research analyses both the necessity of adapting and solving previous obstacles under the prism of the available digital solutions.

Keywords: *digital market, digital transition, EU digital*

1. Digital challenges in Europe

The European Commission's policy on Key Enabling Technologies (KETs), adopted in 2009, includes cutting-edge technologies as diverse as micro- and nano-electronics, industrial biotechnology, advanced materials, photonics, and other advanced technologies. The estimation is that the global market for THC currently exceeds one billion euros, which is why it already has a

significant impact on the European economy (Floridi, 2020). In addition, the development of new technologies, in all its scope, will radically change the way of life of the European citizens. Its impact will be felt in a short term, which is why the European Union must adapt to the change (Fundación Telefónica, 2020). Consequently, the European Union is prioritizing integration at the digital level within a broader social framework. Mapping the necessities of the EU from a digital solution perspective is the research aim of this article. The areas selected have been chosen by a multilayer approach, focusing on identifying the main priorities of the EU, its capacity for a spill-over effect according to neofunctionalism and the digital possibilities to achieve a successful response. Therefore, the methodology is based on digital implications on neofunctionalism in the European Union from a digital perspective.

Following these patterns, the citizens of modern societies constantly communicate digitally. Just to name some notorious examples, work and health services are increasingly becoming digitized in the life of the Europeans. These changes are not only social, but also economical. In the coming years, the way of conducting business and the operational system of companies will change enormously. The relation of European companies with design, production, marketing and generation of added value from products and services, is expected to be redefined (Bueno Campos, 2017). Digital economy is already a reality, with relevant potential development and significant progress. Consequently, the European Union must be attentive to economic progress in order to adapt and effectively assume a digital leadership. If Europe generates the right legal frame, it will stimulate the digital economy, promote development and safeguard the European way of life based on its intrinsic values in opposition to other international digital leaders.

The European Union digitization process built up great expectations in terms of economic development; it is estimated that intensifying the process could add 2.5 billion euros to the EU's GDP by 2025, a considerable amount for such a short period. In addition, taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic, the process of economic digitization has intensified in response to mobility problems generated by the restrictions imposed to curb the pandemic (Barnes, 2020). Parallel international developments have intensified the necessity of the European Union not only to lead the process, but also to adapt to it in the fastest and most effective way, to face alternative models promoted by the USA and the People's Republic of China (Puleri, 2020).

The private sector is not the only one affected by the digitization process,

the public sector will benefit greatly from a wider use of new digital tools. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) allow the sector to operate in a more transparent and efficient manner as it contributes to the reduction of corruption through clear control of public activities. In addition, the possibilities for civic political participation offered by the digitization process are also relevant as it will allow citizens, including minorities, inhabitants of rural areas, disabled persons, or any other group at risk of exclusion, to have digital access to information. This will foster their participation in the political spectrum, protecting them in situations of discrimination and promoting a more inclusive political vision (Schou & Hjelholt, 2018).

The concept of participation derived from the creation of a common political digital space is also of great importance for deepening the integration at the European level (Broka, 2015). The European Union is a communitarian project in constant making since the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. The progressive evolution of Europe has reached great levels of integration, but as any process of growth and deepening, progress has not been made homogeneously in all fields. At the political level, integration has encountered significant obstacles slowing down the process, and retarding this field compared to other common areas, such as economics (Hanschitz, 2017). Digital development will foster the creation of a more integrated European space at a political level because it reduces distances and facilitates the participation of all European citizens in the political development of the Union. The political future of Europe involves removing barriers to generate a common political frame.

Digital development combines the optimization of resources and the reduction of costs at a private and public level. Therefore, the European Union seeks to accelerate a process, already inevitable, to improve economic competitiveness and public spending. Europe is facing a fourth industrial revolution based on the technological development of recent years. Advanced technologies such as data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), automated systems, cloud computing, the internet of things (IoT), robots, 3D printing, or 5G, offer endless possibilities that will mark the future of Europe and the world at the level of public management, economic level and social impact.

1.1 The Digital Agenda

The Lisbon Strategy, and its revision, introduced in 2005, were outdated at the end of 2010; therefore, the European Commission introduced in May 2010 a new approach named the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE). The plan is the foundation for a digital revolution of the European Union in the coming years. One of its central pillars relies on the Digital Single Market, seeking a European digital economy without national borders, in which the free digital movement of goods, people, services and capital is guaranteed. This common digital space also seeks protection of the data of European users. Currently, data is in the hands of multinationals, escaping the controls of the States. A common management will definitely improve the situation because the Union has the political muscle to face the dominant position of multinationals that the Member States individually lack. Therefore, it is a clear example of subsidiarity and the benefits of communalization of a national policy bringing tangible benefits to all the participants.

The creation of a digital area where citizens and companies can easily access goods and services regardless of location within the European common area is a normalization of the current dysfunctionality of the market. The Single European Act (1986) entailed a real European market with some exceptions in terms of freedom of capitals. Obviously, it did not include any digital measure because the digital economy did not exist. The progressive development of the digital economy requires Europe's adaptation to the new conditions in order to abolish newly generated obstacles to trade in the European area. Therefore, the Digital Single Market is not just an improvement but a necessity to make the market adequate to the new economic instruments.

In addition, the DAE anticipates a better use of information technology tools (ICT), looking to promote employment, growth, competition, investment and innovation. The idea of the European Commission is eliminating the current barriers that prevent the rise of new opportunities for a more extensive use of the internet in the European Union. The EU Commission estimates that around 90% of all European companies are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and only 7% of them sell their products outside of their national borders. The digitization of the single market could change this anomalous situation and expand European economic activity to levels unimaginable just a few years ago. Therefore, the integration of the digital market will generate a more integrated area without the traditional impediments related to distance or landform.

The European Commission predicts that the creation of the Digital Single Market will generate an additional 415 billion euros to the EU economy. In addition, the community GDP will grow up to 1% per year, and approximately 2% in combination with other pillars of the DAE. The European Commission believes that the creating of a digital European frame would generate 1.3 million new jobs by 2025, at a time of a widespread crisis due to the pandemic that has greatly affected the European labor market (European Parliament, 2019). A truly digital single market will generate new business opportunities, promote innovation and encourage the creation of new companies.

The expectations generated are great as there are obvious benefits from the digital integration of Europe. Nevertheless, the executive branch of the European Union seeks to promote from a general perspective further integration in the EU, and presents an optimist vision of the impact of the process. It already happened with the creation of the Single European Market in 1986. The Cecchini Report, a document prepared by a group of experts, chaired by Paolo Cecchini, examined the benefits and costs of establishing a common market in the EU. Its estimations were proved to be too optimistic about the benefits of the economic integration. The economic benefits derived from integrating the European market were important, but did not reach the levels predicted by the European institution. Therefore, the estimations of the European Commission should be understood through the right prism of being an instrument to foster deeper integration.

The map defined by the Commission to achieve the *European Digital Market* is based on three fundamental supports on which the European digital structure will rest in the near future.

1. Digital access: It consists of such prominent elements as internet commerce, the distribution and logistics of products ordered through the network, the elimination of geo-blocking throughout the European territory, copyright laws that protect creators and encourage innovation through the creation of a regulatory framework at the European level and with global influence. It also includes a standard type of value added tax for all companies operating in the *European Digital Market* to avoid distortions affecting the competitiveness and thus eliminates tax barriers that affect equal conditions for all European operators.
2. Creation of a stable framework supporting the technological developments necessary for the implementation of the Digital Single Market: The European Commission seeks the development of a common regulatory frame for large telecommunications technology companies

and a common frame for digital information media. Objectives for the European Union are expected to provide a stable space for the European development. This objective includes actions for the promotion and creation of online platforms at a European level and aspects concerning security and personal data. The EU looks for the protection of its citizens from the pernicious effects of digital development with the creation of protective legislation with a vision of anticipation rather than correction. Anticipating problems will give more credibility to the EU's digital effort, but is a risky movement as the prediction capacity in terms of digital development is limited.

3. Digital economy and society: It includes several relevant aspects, such as the data market, one of the main fields of development both for the sale, as well as the production and implementation of technologies based on algorithms. It needs a large flow of data for their correct operation of applications such as AI. Regulating the access and distribution of data is essential for sustainable economic development in a *European Digital Market*. Other basic aspects are the introduction of European standards in the digital world. A market requires common rules for its correct operational functions, thus avoiding unfair competition, discrimination or artificial alterations of the free competition (Lips, 2020). The natural selection explained by Darwin can be perfectly applied to development of business technology, although the delicate initial stage needs some protection and direction to evolve in accordance with European social principles. At the political level, the EU efforts towards the development of digital government or electronic governance are noteworthy. It is the application of technology for the provision of government services, exchange of information, communication transactions, the integration of several independent systems between the government and the citizen, business management, labor management, as well as processes and interactions of the administrative part within the entire governmental framework. Through e-governance, the services of the European Union would be available to citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent way (Kerikmäe *et al*., 2019).

These three main target groups count with different levels of actuation, the administration and institutional development affecting citizens, businesses and interest groups. The foundations analyzed would allow the implementation of a digital market at a European level, strengthening the process of building Europe internally by creating common rules and a digital space without borders between the Member States. In addition, a strong

digital Europe will protect the European way of life and its citizens from foreign technology giants whose development parameters are at odds with the European vision of society.

1.2 Obstacles

The Digital Single Market presents numerous opportunities. Nevertheless, it faces significant challenges that can hamper its development and anchor European progress compared to other parts of the world. Adapting the European Union's Single Market to the digital age requires breaking down regulatory barriers and moving from national markets to a single area for the entire EU. The European market is a reality, but it does not include the digital aspects because the fast development has not been followed by the institutional actions. Therefore, it is just a matter of adjusting the legal frame to the real world. The Treaty of Rome and the Single European Act were crucial steps creating the European market after overcoming several aspects—primarily, nationalism and the conception of national market and the imbrication of economy and nation. The European Communities fought for a supranational market, a market based on economic premises rather than national aspects, looking for efficiency and profits. This strategy proved to be right, and satisfaction with the European market is very high among the European economic agents and citizens. It is logical that the creation of the digital market will face the opposition of nationalism advocating State autonomy against the unifying impulses that emanate from Brussels. The concept of national sovereignty plays a relevant role in the process of European construction from its beginnings to the present day, developing a game of balance between cooperation and integration, between intergovernmentalism and federalism, between a community of independent states and the creation of a common space (Iwabuchi, 2019).

Therefore, the European Union, currently highly integrated, has constantly evolved from cooperation to integration, in a process that is difficult to reverse, despite the constant tensions that, for example, have led to the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. The British Exit (BREXIT) may be the definitive boost for the creation of a common legislative framework in digital Europe, since the Anglo-Saxon country was the European paladin of cooperation, constantly showing its reluctance to increase the levels of integration at the European level (Troitiño *et al*., 2018). Nevertheless, nationalism is growing in some Member States of the Union, such as Poland or Hungary, to mention the most relevant, and still proves

to be a considerable enemy for the integration process. The strategy of the European Union should follow the same path than in Rome and Luxembourg because it already has proved to be effective in terms of economic integration against the cooperationist approach of the most nationalist members of the Union.

Another fundamental fact for the development of a digital community acquis is the clear inability of Member States to influence the digital world because they lack the proper instruments. Individual states are unable to control the large technological corporations that dominate the digital world, imposing their own laws without national restrictions. National governments are incapable of implementing effectively control standards because they lack the power to do it. Perhaps there are a few states able to control the digital economic activity in their market such as China or the USA. The former is not an example to the European Union because it has different cultural and social values not compatible with the European way of life. On the other hand, the United States of America shares similar cultural values with Europe, but their main difference is related to the welfare system and the state's role in economic matters. Americans defend a basic regulation of the market to secure free competence, trusting the efficiency of the market. Europe, without relevant exceptions such as the United Kingdom, regulates the economy deeper and the state's role is more active. Therefore, the digital development of the European Union should conform to the European needs and avoid alternative models generated to answer different needs. Nevertheless, China and the USA are an example in terms of influence on multinational corporations, as both countries have the capacity to bend the business interests of technologic giants in order to adapt to their national realities. The European Union could influence the economic agents similarly if it is granted with proper legal tools. Only the union of the common regulatory effort would result in a sufficiently relevant space to limit the actions of the internet giants within a stable framework that respects the European model of society. Therefore, the debate on national sovereignty in digital matters is futile because the only way to exercise some sovereignty effectively is through collaboration at the European level because the borders of the digital world exceed those of the European countries (Liaropoulos, 2017).

There are numerous, often uncoordinated, initiatives towards a clear legal strategy both at the EU and Member State level. The need to present a common strategy, backed by all the relevant agents involved, is a challenge that requires in-depth coordination. The digital world is in its infancy, consequently, the further the legislation advances at the national level,

the greater the divergences at the European level will be in the future. It generates obstacles for future integration because individual members will adopt divergent ways to tackle the same problems. To prevent this situation, the European Commission intends to advance integration before the proliferation of national obstacles slows down the process significantly in the future, leaving Europe behind at a global level in a key sector for the economy and society. It estimates that digital integration could contribute 415 billion euros a year to European economic growth, boost employment, competition, investment and innovation (Giovinazzi, 2020). In addition, it could establish Europe's international influence and protect Europeans from technology corporations that are under the influence of totalitarian governments or simply guided by the maximization of profits with neither social constraints nor basic contributions to the development of the societies in which they operate.

The new digital Europe requires a legal framework in which to settle and effectively and respectfully expand the principles that guide the European society. The European Union has worked in this regard by preparing a first annual report on the state of the rule of law in the European Union (Communication COM (2020) 580 final), which includes digital issues. The general concept of the European framework emphasizes the development of economic and labor market resilience with economic, social, environmental and institutional sustainability as the guiding principle of community policies in this regard. This approach is expected to foster upward convergence and equity in the transition to a climate-neutral economy while managing the challenges posed by digitalization and demographic change (Communication COM (2020) 580 final). Given the rapid evolution of this field, the EU foresees additional requirements to review the developments in the Member States.

2. Digital European institutions

Technological progress and the implementation of the Digital Single Market have advantages beyond the economic ones, which are already considerable, focused on the public service of citizens. The European Union is facing a great opportunity to improve the lives of its citizens and, therefore, to increase popular support for the European building project. Since the beginning of the integration process, the EU has faced the problem of the ability of a supranational entity to fully exercise the prerogatives of a

common sovereign entity. One of the repeat obstacles to integration has been the reluctance of certain countries and social agents to allow sovereignty to be exercised beyond the state level, which in many cases is at the same time the national level. The imbrication of two differentiated concepts, state and nation, is still strong in Europe and the world, with constant conflicts linked with the national domination of public affairs. The defenders of this position advocate a minimum transfer of sovereignty to a kind of European Union based on cooperation. However, in a certain way, they appropriate to themselves the sovereignty that actually resides in the citizens of their states (not in their nationals, nor in the state itself). The political subjects are those who, according to a social contract, cede the management of their freedom to the political framework for the creation of common rules that allow numerous individuals to coexist harmoniously in society. The acceptance of these rules by the members of the system, the individuals, is what is known as institutional loyalty from a political point of view, or patriotism from a political-cultural point of view. The set of rights ceded by citizens (political subjects) make up the sovereignty.

The Member State is not necessarily the last recipient of this assignment, neither is it the owner of the sovereignty, but its manager at the public level. The problem of sovereignty at European level could be solved, or at least mitigated, with the implementation of digital solutions to solve citizens' problems, attracting their loyalty to the European project. If the EU is more effective than national authorities when it comes to solving citizen problems (Jabko & Luhman, 2019), they will attract the attention of the citizens who will gradually transfer their loyalty to the European level. Therefore, digital solutions can increase support for the EU among Europeans who even today are confused facing the creation of a common European area. The dual nature of their institutional allegiance is based on two separate fields. First, an area dominated by rationality and based on effective management of the problems that concern them. Second, an approach predetermined by their emotions emanating from the concept of nation that is confused with politics due to the promotion of the nineteenth-century nation-state as a way to more effectively attract the loyalty of the members of society (Hamuľák, 2016). The EU cannot compete with emotions, but rationality has proved to be more successful in many cases. If the European Union shows itself to be effective in solving the citizens' problems, it will attract enough loyalty or support to advance in the integration process. At the same time, the current free movement of people and goods within the European Union has created road systems that transcend state borders and require common management

for their correct operation. The digitization of supervision would allow great advances and numerous benefits for citizens, such as models to predict problems with the quality of the road, traffic accidents, speed problems, profitability, etc. (Mihet-Popa & Saponara, 2018)

The impact of the Digital Single Market depends deeply on the ability to generate enough data for effective modelling. Dependence on reliable data is huge and critical, putting Europe ahead of other global players because the European industry is more developed compared to international competitors. This advantage is temporal, since the generation of data is a global priority and the investments are significant at a planetary level, confirming the saying that information is power. The European Union prioritizes the investment in the generation of data because of its potential and due to the inherent need. The idea behind the Europeanization is simple; the generation of data is more profitable and effective on a large scale. Consequently, it seems appropriate that the EU manages this crucial aspect for the future. The Member States are only capable of generating minor databases, being less efficient than the European level, again a clear link with subsidiarity. As an illustrative example, we see how the Common Agricultural Policy, dependent on the European Union, needs a large amount of data to increase its effectiveness and protect the European rural environment in all its dimensions. Analysis to determine the status and quality of land used for farming and ranching is most effectively done by satellite, so it would be wiser to use a single European satellite than one satellite for each Member State.

Generation of data is also essential for an effective management of the health system and the possibility of analyzing the medical needs of a patient and where they can be best served according to the available resources. The implementation of a digital coordination system on the health level will be of utmost importance for the European Union due to its clear benefit for citizens, the improvement of their health, the optimization of resources and rational planning (Padrón, 2018). Even though the obstacles are numerous due to the strong identification of Member States with their national health systems as a transcendent part of their common identity, of their collective imagination. In any case, all these examples point in the same direction: Europe faces great challenges in terms of digital integration, but offers great possibilities to advance positively in the communalization process due to the potential benefits it can offer its citizens.

3. Challenges of the digital European economy

Digital economy is a new phenomenon that is reflected in the exponential growth of online platforms that are used by workers who do not have a full-time job or work flexible hours. Some of them are collaborative economy platforms specializing in purely digital tasks that do not require physical presence or proximity between workers and their clients—online labor markets. All sectors (from information technology (IT) specialists to taxi drivers or food deliverers, including all age groups) show a growing and cross-border trend. This supra-state nature of the digital economy creates numerous problems of control by the authorities of individual Member States, a dysfunctionality that can be solved with common management. Therefore, management at the European level does not entail any undermining of the sovereignty of the Member States, since they lack the necessary power to make such sovereignty effective in the context of the digital economy (Joamets & Chochia, 2020). European leadership in the control and regulation of the digital economy is not only recommended but a basic necessity for the proper functioning of the political and social system of its members.

The employment situation of workers in the digital economy in the EU has been analyzed by the European Commission, providing data that reinforces the need for common action. The study has focused on the restrictions applicable to ride-sharing and food delivery applications, revealing the myriad of impact factors and stakeholders. While some European countries favor strict labor regulations, others try to define "a third category of workers" and/or struggle to attract innovators. In countries such as Germany, Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Sweden and Switzerland, employees in the digital economy are considered employees of the company with all legal consequences. This implies the payment of social taxes, the state's control over labor relations that must be adapted to the relevant legislation without the existence of a third category of workers. Likewise, in this group of countries there is strong pressure from the trade unions to regulate these labor relations. The second group of countries includes the Benelux, Spain, Hungary, Italy, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, and the Czech Republic, where certain restrictions have been introduced on the digital economy in labor matters, with a trend towards the creation of common standards. Even though future judicial resolutions on the labor management of the digital economy are expected due to the number of cases presented before the courts. There is an emerging category of workers who have certain labor rights, for example, a maximum number of hours or health insurance, although there

is still a political/social debate about it. Finally, the third group of countries, which includes Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Slovakia, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania, do not have sufficiently defined legislation on the status of workers in the digital economy, being able to equate to the figure of self-employed workers. Therefore, social tax payments do not concern the digital platform that employs workers (Berg *et al*., 2018).

These divergences in the incipient digital market are creating an alteration of the current Single European Market, because despite the fact that there are specific labor rules in each country and it is not a European prerogative to legislate in this regard, these platforms work at European level. Consequently, firms produce a distortion in the system that can significantly alter the competitiveness of the economies of the member countries. European harmonization in this field is extremely unlikely due to the links between labor policy and the social system, but the current necessities can be fulfilled with the introduction of a common general position in the face of the challenge posed by the digital economy. It could only be implemented with the creation of a Common Digital Market at the European level. The common standards will serve to reduce divergences between the different economies and promote convergence at European level, while allowing significant differences depending on the needs and prevailing models in each country.

4. European democracy and Digital Europe

The European Parliament (EP) is a central institution of the European Union. Its evolution has been constant from the origins of the European Communities, when it was a mere consultative assembly, to a democratic parliament representing the citizens of the Union and actively participating in the approval of laws. Nevertheless, the evolutionary process of the Parliament presents several obstacles that could be easily solved from a digital perspective:

1. The seat of the European Parliament: It should be located in only one location, Brussels, the center of decision-making of the Union. Currently the EP services are divided between three cities, Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. The digitization of parliamentary bureaucracy and services would reduce these locations to two cities, greatly reducing the commuting of parliamentarians, their teams, and the transport of tons of reports between these three locations.

2. Elections to the European Parliament: European elections are currently governed according to the national rules, creating considerable divergences in the system, for example with regard to the voting age, which is 16 in Austria and is set to 18 in the rest of the Member States. There are some common rules, but national differences are still relevant. If the European Parliament is elected by European citizens, and represents the peoples of Europe, there should be a common procedure in its elections. The implementation of a single electoral system based on a digital voting system (following the example of countries like Estonia) would remedy this problem and promote integration by favoring equality among all European citizens. It will establish a comprehensive system all over the European Union, harmonizing electoral rules, such as minimum voting age.

3. Founding of European political parties: National political parties dominate in European elections; therefore, the discussion during the campaign focuses on national problems rather than Europeans'. Digitalization of the political campaigns could foster the European dimension affecting the European citizens. As the Member States are already represented in the Council, the European Parliament should work according to European interests, and therefore European political parties are necessary. Only parties present in at least 40% of the Union's territory, or in areas where more than 40% of the European population resides, should be able to stand in the European elections, avoiding nationalism. The digital tools allow the founding of such political entities that have previously not been considered practical. This would force the creation of European political parties based on national ones, but their perspective would be European, focusing on European issues, and more independent from national issues. The current political geographic difficulties would be easily avoided with the creation of political digital platforms at the European level.

5. European referendums: EU issues under the control of the European Parliament could need the direct participation of the European citizens. It is odd that many measures are not discussed at the European level when they have a fundamental influence on the citizens of the Union. If the European Parliament could organize European referendums, people would feel the presence of this institution and their opinion represented more strongly. Since the EU is not a national state, European referendums should be more restrictive and respect the balance of power of the European institutions. Consequently, the approval of the Council should be mandatory. Logistics is another factor that negatively influences the development of referendums at a European level because the geographical

area to cover is substantial, something that can be easily overcome with the appropriate digital structure.

6. Curbing corruption: Mismanagement at European level have been seen as a negative factor of European integration. The digital reform of the EP would mean greater clarity and a lower rate of malpractice because all the information will be accessible publicly on the online platforms of the European Union.

It seems reasonable that the European Parliament undertakes a profound digital transformation to efficiently face the challenges of the 21st century and thus meet the expectations generated by the process of European construction in its most political aspect (Floridi, 2020).

Regarding the regulatory development of Digital Europe, the EP has a great influence due to its weight in the European legislative process. The co-decision procedure was first established in 1992 and its use was extended in 1999. The adoption of the Lisbon Treaty included relevant reforms, co-decision was renamed as the ordinary legislative procedure and became the main decision-making procedure for the adoption of EU legislation. It applies in some 85 policy areas and the final responsibility lies within the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. If a legislative proposal is rejected at any stage of the procedure, or if the European Parliament and the Council cannot reach a compromise, the proposal is not adopted and the procedure is terminated (Frosio, 2017). Europe's digital revolution requires the agreement between European interests and those of Member States through this system, because it defends the interests of Europe through the EP and protects the interests of the Member States with the participation of the Council of the EU.

5. Conclusions

The European Union faces an unprecedented challenge in terms of evolution marked by technological development. The organization fights powerful obstacles that threaten a joint development and execution that would maximize common actions and give Europe international relevance, economic well-being, and internal independence.

The EU has a potent scientific and industrial base to build on, with leading research laboratories and world-class universities, as well as numerous

innovative companies. It has a comprehensive legal framework that protects consumers while promoting innovation and is making progress in creating a Digital Single Market. The main ingredients are there for the EU to become a leader in the global technological revolution, in its own understanding and based on its values. The digital approach described in this article shows the path that Europe wants to follow, and the need to join forces at European level to guarantee homogeneous digital transformation, without winners or losers, dedicating adequate resources to the Digital Single Market and its culmination. It is important to highlight the EU's commitment to digital development and its convergence with the Union's values. The European Union has the instruments to become a world leader in a new international equilibrium, where new technologies will play a relevant role. The inability of nationalism to share more national sovereignty at European level can be offset by the complexity of the digital world, which will distance the convenience of common management from the populist debate, even though logic is not everything in social relations and the EU has to stick to its current strategy.

The international connectivity of the Digital Single Market is a basic premise for its maximization and that is where digital relations with other parts of the world are essential. To foster this connection, the EU must promote interdisciplinary projects and innovation (online medicine, AI in the labor market) with international partners, support cross-border training on GDPR and GovTech, facilitate joint publication in highly indexed journals and invite each other to (online) forums and expert groups for further development of digital relations between both areas.

The future is digital, and Europe counts with the proper means to enjoy it, but requires a decisive action from the European Union providing a common frame for a common development.

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