

POSITION YOURSELF ON DIGITAL RIGHTS!



Technology now permeates every aspect of our lives; the 'digital' angle has become relevant to all domains - whether health, security, democracy, migration, justice, gender and personal identity⁶, international relations, or of course personal communications⁸. Digital rights are therefore increasingly important, as they shape what is possible and what is necessary, the structure & dynamics of our lives.

There is growing awareness from the public of potential infringements on our digital rights. However, for the most part, political parties have not yet picked up digital rights as a key priority, despite it having become a core aspect of our lives and integral to the Green politics. It is not clear for the public - and the youth particularly - what a 'proper digital society' is for the different parties within their framework of values (or at least that is not made clear enough to the general public). Yet, it is both strategic and logical for greens across Europe to claim the (currently rather unoccupied) spot of defenders of digital rights, as it is in the continuity of the greens' values and the fights they picked so far - ambitious and forward-looking.

We also acknowledge that the extension and usability of digital technologies is happening unequally across Europe, as often excludes some population groups from this right and creating a digital gap that particularly affects those less educated, rural communities and older people. The reasons for this digital gap can be due to geographical, economic, cultural, cognitive, or generational issues. Therefore, political efforts need to be done consequently to contribute to reducing the source of inequalities and ensuring equity across Europe.

It is particularly strategic as there are many recent and forthcoming laws that are relevant from a digital rights perspective both at national level (e.g. in Belgium: data retention) and at EU level (Digital Services Act, Data Act, Artificial Intelligence Act, Child Sexual Abuse Regulation, Advance Passenger Information Regulation, the European Health Data Space, etc.). More will come, and hence the importance of the theme 'digital' is here to stay. Many rights & interests are at stake with these laws - among others our rights to anonymity in the public space, to freedom of speech, to freedom of information, to privacy, to the secrecy of our personal communications, to freedom of movement, to fairness & non-discrimination. Algorithms, on the other side, raise concerns about key principles for individual and communal life - such as the principles of transparency, accountability, fairness & non-discrimination, freedom of movement & speech.

Digital technology and tools are constantly developing, which adds a whole new dimension to how these rights can be broken as well. How this affects us, and ensuring to include digital spaces as part of these rights need to be fundamental to the development of digital rights. Green parties already support and defend them, but 'digital' still remains a marginal topic politically - there is little political positioning through it despite its importance.

We need to think ahead together: what is a sustainable digital society? What principles & interests should prevail? What is our ambitious Green vision for a digital society (beyond the more 'traditional' green digital angles of sustainability, right to repair & digital divide), and how much of prominence should it have in a political program?

This is why The Federation of Young European Greens calls for: Green parties to position themselves more clearly on digital rights. Green parties to take the lead on the topic of digital rights, working to create a sustainable digital society. National governments and European institutions to make sure the tech lobby is not able to control, influence, and negatively impact our digital rights, and thus to ensure the relevant laws and regulations are in the people's best interest. National governments and European institutions to consider developments and changes to digital spaces and technologies in how it would impact new legislation, as well as the modernisation of relevant outdated legislation or policies to address these spaces.


References:

1. [1] Digitisation of patients' health records and its forced sharing: what space for choice and autonomy? Opt-in vs opt-out. [2] Covid-19: technosolutionism in contact-tracing apps and combined databases
2. [1] Facial recognition: the Greens/EFA's position on the AI Act; the petition to ban it in Bruxelles. [2] Mass surveillance of citizens in 'democratic' countries: data retention (in all Member States - DE, BE, NL, IE, LU, SE, PT,...)
3. [1] Advertising is key to the free internet - targeted advertising isn't; about the internet' business model, how we are constantly tracked and profiled on the net, and how it harms consumers and publishers alike. [2] Targeted political advertising as a threat to democracies (Cambridge Analytica).
4. The increasingly 'connected' databases of the police & migration authorities.
5. SyRI (System Risk Indicator) - the algorithmic risk profiling method employed by the Dutch government (and others) to detect individual risks of welfare, tax and other types of fraud.
6. [1] Reproductive Privacy Requires Data Privacy- Roe v Wade. [2] The digital euro: will all our transactions be tracked or not? [3] Orwell's Wallet: European electronic identity system leads us straight into surveillance capitalism. Should we be tracked all over the web, or should we have a right to anonymity?
7. Sovereignty and surveillance - diplomatic transatlantic politics of data transfers with Schrems II. Techno-solutionism & the privacy of communications: the CSA Regulation.



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