Council of the European Union

Brussels, 17 December 2020
(OR. en)

14169/20

ENV 822
CLIMA 358
TELECOM 274
DIGIT 156
ENER 504
COMPET 650
RECH 535
MI 589

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	17 December 2020
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	13957/20
Subject:	Digitalisation for the Benefit of the Environment
	- Council conclusions

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council conclusions on the abovementioned subject, as approved by the Council at its 3782nd meeting held on 17 December 2020.

Digitalisation for the Benefit of the Environment

- Council conclusions -

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

– The European Council conclusions of 21 July on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the European Union Recovery Instrument "Next Generation EU" (NGEU)[1]

– The European Council conclusions of 2 October 2020 the digital transformation[2]

The Commission's Communications on

– The European Green Deal[3]

– Shaping Europe's digital future[4]

– A European strategy for data[5]

– White Paper on Artificial Intelligence: a European approach to excellence and trust[6]

– A new Circular Economy Action Plan For a cleaner and more competitive Europe[7]

– EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – Bringing nature back into our lives[8]

– A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system[9]

– Secure 5G deployment in the EU – Implementing the EU toolbox[10]

– A New Industrial Strategy for Europe[11]

---

[1] EUCO 10/20.
[2] EUCO 13/20.
[3] 15051/19 + ADD 1 - COM(2019) 640 final + Annex.
[4] 6237/20 - COM(2020) 67 final.
[5] 6250/20 - COM(2020) 66 final.
[6] 6266/20 - COM(2020) 65 final.
[7] 6766/20 + ADD 1 - COM(2020) 98 final.
[8] 8219/20 + ADD 1 - COM(2020) 380 final + Annex.
[9] 8280/20 + ADD 1 - COM(2020) 381 final.
[10] 5664/20 - COM(2020) 50 final.
[11] 6782/20 - COM(2020) 102 final.

- SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe[12]

- Powering a climate-neutral economy: An EU Strategy for Energy System Integration[13]

- Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability – Towards a Toxic-Free Environment[14]

The Commission proposals for:

- A Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030[15]

- A Regulation on European data governance (Data Governance Act)[16]

- A Regulation concerning batteries and waste batteries[17]

The Council conclusions on:

- Shaping Europe's digital future[18]

- More circularity – Transition to a sustainable society[19]

- Future of a highly digitised Europe beyond 2020: Boosting digital and economic competitiveness across the Union and digital cohesion[20]

- Building a sustainable Europe by 2030 – Progress thus far and next steps[21]

- Biodiversity – the need for urgent action[22]

- Making the Recovery Circular and Green[23]

---

[12]   6783/20 - COM(2020) 103 final.
[13]   9389/20 - COM(2020) 299 final.
[14]   11976/20 - COM(2020) 667 final.
[15]   11987/20 - COM(2020) 652 final.
[16]   13351/20 - COM(2020) 767 final.
[17]   13944/20 + ADD 1 - COM(2020) 798 final + Annexes.
[18]   8711/20.
[19]   12791/19.
[20]   10102/19.
[21]   14835/19.
[22]   12210/20.
[23]   14167/20.

STRESSING the importance of the European Union Recovery Instrument Next Generation EU (NGEU), the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and national reform and investment packages in putting the Union firmly on the path to a sustainable and resilient recovery whilst supporting the Union's green and digital priorities; REITERATING that the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) should effectively contribute to the green transition and the digital transformation; WELCOMING the European Council conclusions of 2 October 2020, which state that at least 20% of the funds under the Recovery and Resilience Facility will be made available for the digital transition, inter alia to unleash the full potential of digital technologies to reach the ambitious environmental and climate action objectives;

SUPPORTING the Commission's identification of the "twin challenge" of the green transition and the digital transformation; STRESSING that finding solutions for this twin challenge requires policy coherence and close cooperation of different policy areas; UNDERLINING the potential of the twin transition to create new green and digital jobs necessary for the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic; EMPHASISING that the digital component will be key in reaching the ambitions of the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as set out in the EU digital strategy "Shaping Europe's digital future"; RECALLING the importance of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including as a means to ensure policy coherence, in tackling the twin challenge in a holistic and systemic way;

HIGHLIGHTING that targeted initiatives are needed to address the interplay between the European Digital Strategy and the objectives of the European Green Deal and thus to exploit the opportunities of digitalisation for environmental protection, climate action and nature conservation as well as to limit the adverse environmental impacts of digital technologies and infrastructures;

ENCOURAGING the Commission and the Member States to deepen the understanding of the potential contribution of digital technologies to sustainability and to analyse how policies could maximise this potential, inter alia through foresight actions;

ACKNOWLEDGING that digital applications and technologies can be powerful tools for advancing environmental protection, nature and biodiversity conservation, circularity, and climate action; UNDERLINING that digitalisation can also increase prosperity and competitiveness, foster social justice, and improve opportunities for participation; nevertheless RECOGNISING possible rebound effects of digitalisation and STRESSING that data processing, as well as digital infrastructures and devices increasingly consume valuable raw materials and energy along global value and supply chains during design, development, manufacturing and use, and thus can contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, degradation of nature, biodiversity loss and waste generation; hence POINTING OUT that a conducive policy framework is needed to enable the positive effects of digitalisation to be exploited whilst limiting its ecological downsides;

HIGHLIGHTING that the fast roll-out of high-performance digital infrastructures including 5G and future broadband networks is a prerequisite for the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the EU; in this regard EMPHASISING the digital needs of rural, mountain, remote and less populated areas and islands;

RECOGNISING the necessity to foster a fair and inclusive digital transformation that leaves no one behind, social cohesion and competitiveness and the importance of investing in people's digital capacities to prevent the risk of a digital divide and therefore WELCOMING the Member States' joint Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government of December 2020;

RECOGNISING the importance of taking into account the international dimension of digital policy, including the concerns and interests of emerging and developing countries through collaboration with multilateral institutions;

HIGHLIGHTING that reliable, accessible, comparable, linked, high-quality and up-to-date data related to environmental policies is required for fact-based EU environmental policy and data-driven solutions for environmental protection, education for sustainable development, and environmental and climate research as well as user-friendly implementation of EU environmental law and effective monitoring of its progress and results;

RECOGNISING that the use and acceptance of digital technologies for sustainability require digital skills and literacy and a culture of innovation; STRESSING the need to strengthen and better link EU research and innovation policy to environmental, economic and social sustainability and digitalisation in order to consistently incorporate research findings into practical innovation processes and systems and to direct relevant support programmes to this effect;

A European data space for the European Green Deal

1. UNDERLINES that collecting, facilitating access to, processing, using, sharing and analysing data form the basis to support evidence-based policy making for knowledge, research and innovation and the implementation of measures that contribute to achieving the goals of the European Green Deal as well as to Europe's recovery and long-term competitiveness; SUPPORTS the establishment of European data spaces in strategic areas as presented in the European Strategy for Data, as well as of common rules for minimum data content, formats, quality and procedures for data access and exchange; SUPPORTS in particular the establishment of a European Green Deal data space involving public and private actors to facilitate the exchange of all kinds of relevant data including Copernicus data, high value public datasets and private sector data on relevant sectors;

2. EMPHASISES that a sustainable high-performance European cloud infrastructure and related services are crucial for strengthening the EU's digital sovereignty and competitiveness, and a prerequisite to benefit fully from the data economy; WELCOMES the Member States' joint declaration "Building the next generation cloud for businesses and the public sector in the EU"; REAFFIRMS that this infrastructure should aim for the highest standards in terms of cybersecurity, data protection, energy efficiency, interoperability and transparency that contribute to sustainability and CALLS on relevant actors to also take into account resource and material efficiency;

3. CALLS on the Commission together with the Member States and other relevant stakeholders to examine to what extent environment-related data of businesses, research, administrations, consumers and citizens is or can be made available and usable for environmental policy development and implementation by public authorities; UNDERLINES the need to ensure the primacy of public interest, including a high level of protection of the environment, whilst protecting business and trade secrets and ensuring privacy, data protection and intellectual property rights in conformity with the EU's and the Member States' own regulatory data sharing obligations and data protection rules;

4. UNDERLINES the potential of the European Earth Observation programme Copernicus and remote sensing data as instruments for implementing the European Green Deal, monitoring environmental indicators and strengthening compliance with environmental policies; and therefore ENCOURAGES the Commission to further develop the content, governance and functions of the Destination Earth project (digital twin of the Earth) in order to better visualise, observe, predict and manage developments on the planet;

5. EMPHASISES the importance of strengthening the European Environment Agency (EEA) as one of the key providers of timely, targeted, relevant, reliable and comparable environmental information, using inter alia the data made available by the Member States in the context of INSPIRE, to policymakers and the public while taking into account data consistency and synergies with information provided by the European Statistical System and other competent authorities as far as possible;

6. ACKNOWLEDGES the need to optimise and standardise the access, use and processing of data related to environmental policies in line with the Open Data and INSPIRE Directives[24] as well as intellectual property rights; URGES the Commission to further develop, together with Member States and stakeholders, requirements for interoperable and machine-readable data and service formats, application programming interfaces and bulk downloads across sector boundaries and administrative levels in order to harness innovation potential; EMPHASISES the importance of facilitating data exchange within and between Member States and the interoperability of data within and between data spaces across different sectors as set out in the European Interoperability Framework (EIF); EMPHASISES the need to increase focus on data relevance and to promote the use of citizen science and advanced digital technologies, such as sensors or Artificial Intelligence (AI);

7. ENCOURAGES the Member States to use existing European programmes to create exemplary and easy-to-replicate applications and services for collecting, processing and analysing relevant data to support compliance with European environmental provisions and the enforcement of EU environmental law, also with a view to the priorities of the European Green Deal;

8. RECOGNISES the need to harmonise access and re-use conditions for environmental data while respecting the EU data protection standards and intellectual property rights in order to resolve issues of different licensing models, legal uncertainties and additional effort for users;

---

[24] Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on open data and the re-use of public sector information, OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 56, and Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE), OJ L 108, 25.4.2007, p. 1.

9. ENCOURAGES the Commission and Member States to support the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in developing a global environmental data strategy and in setting up a "World Environment Situation Room", and to support also emerging and developing countries in setting up an infrastructure to register environment-related data and to integrate these countries into the above-mentioned efforts to collect, analyse, access and exchange environment-related data;

Leveraging digital solutions to enhance environmental protection, climate action, nature conservation and circularity

10. RECOGNISES that digitalisation is an excellent lever to accelerate the transition to a climate-neutral, circular and more resilient economy; ENCOURAGES the Commission, the Member States and stakeholders to further explore and harness the enormous potential of digitalisation to help the EU achieve the goals of the European Green Deal and to the transition to climate neutrality by 2050; RECOGNISES that digitalisation has the potential to facilitate greenhouse gas emissions reduction across different sectors and to enhance adaptation to climate change, inter alia by boosting the EU's ability to predict and manage climate-related disasters;

11. CALLS on the Commission to start working with relevant stakeholders to develop consistent and transparent assessment and monitoring methodologies to estimate and maximise the contribution of the information and communication technology (ICT) to the green transition; ASKS the Commission and relevant stakeholders to draw up guidelines and recommendations for different sectors to enable a climate- and environmentally friendly use of digital solutions while simultaneously increasing resource, material and energy efficiency and avoiding rebound effects;

12. ACKNOWLEDGES that the effective deployment of digital technologies can help decouple growth from resource use and its negative environmental impacts; HIGHLIGHTS in this respect the potential of digital and data-driven technologies to enhance circularity through better design of products and processes, value chain coordination, reduced transaction costs, improved reverse logistics, brokerage, sharing and collaborative systems, better product information for producers, consumers, repairers and recyclers, and better waste management; RECOGNISES that ICT can also enable more circular business models that facilitate optimal asset use, servitisation, virtualisation and dematerialisation, functioning of platforms for ~~and~~ tracking, sharing and re-use of products and materials, and which deliver more efficient materials handling, and reduce waste;

13. ACKNOWLEDGES the potential of digital solutions to trace, monitor and analyse stocks and flows of resources, including secondary raw materials and enhance their allocation and optimal use, and to create transparency along global supply and value chains for all stakeholders, as a means to contribute to conserving and sustainably using natural resources and biodiversity and promote responsible consumer decisions in a circular economy;

14. CALLS for EU initiatives to improve the availability and flow of information along global supply and value chains and to build a circular economy with ecologically sound, closed, clean, non-toxic and safe material cycles, to facilitate cooperation and agreement between market players on what information should be made available, whilst ensuring clear criteria for the use and protection of such information in accordance with EU legal frameworks; ENCOURAGES the Commission to both develop regulatory requirements on products information and to convene stakeholders to develop mutually agreed protocols, taxonomies and classifications to facilitate information-sharing along value chains; therefore WELCOMES the announcement of a common European data space for smart circular applications which will provide the architecture and governance system to drive applications and services such as product passports, resource mapping and consumer information and URGES Member States, relevant economic actors and other trusted third parties to contribute to it;

14169/20   SH/iw   10
ANNEX   TREE 1.A   **EN**
www.parlament.gv.at

15. URGES the Commission to bring forward a proposal on a digital product passport, in the context of the Sustainable Product Policy framework, that enables tracking and tracing and that ensures access to information about products and their components concerning origin and composition including substances of concern, their reuse, repair, dismantling and recycling possibilities, and end-of-life handling, as well as their environmental footprint and performance, in order to facilitate sustainable production and consumption; ASKS the Commission to use existing datasets as a starting point; CALLS on the Commission to launch pilot projects, involving relevant stakeholders, for the development of digital product passports for the key product value chains in the Circular Economy Action Plan, starting with electric-vehicle batteries in 2021;

16. ACKNOWLEDGES the potential of digital solutions to achieve the ambitious objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030; WELCOMES the Commission's launch of the European Biodiversity Knowledge Centre in October 2020; ENCOURAGES the Commission to improve the collection, monitoring and exchange of environmental data and data from other relevant sectors; CALLS on the Commission to promote the optimisation of data management and the responsible use of digital technologies such as AI, remote sensing, big data analysis and robotics, in order to improve the EU's and its Member States' knowledge on species and their habitats, to become a pioneer in monitoring, conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity and thus helping to combat its decline; INVITES the Commission to develop assessment tools for biodiversity based on reliable data and digital technologies to better implement and monitor the post-2020 Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

17. ENCOURAGES the Commission to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and cooperation on the use of digital technologies and innovative methods for monitoring biodiversity, ecosystems and general environmental monitoring and reporting, through a dedicated technical forum between Member States and the Commission, also REALISES the possible need to adjust the legal monitoring and reporting requirements to embrace new technologies and PROMOTES the development, maintenance, upgrade and use of electronic information tools and digital environmental information systems for active dissemination of environmental information at European and national level to get the right information in the right form at the right time and to minimize administrative burden;

18. ENCOURAGES the Commission to develop an ambitious policy agenda for using digital solutions to achieve the zero pollution ambition and to promote data collection, analysis, management and reporting concerning all kinds of pollution; STRESSES the importance of supporting and engaging with regional and local authorities and other stakeholders to support local strategies for green and digital transformation;

Investments in digital solutions for a sustainable transformation of the economy and society

19. EMPHASISES that the EU and its Member States should use and potentially increase their capacities to deploy adequate financing for key enabling technologies (including the necessary hardware developments and a secure data infrastructure), such as, but not limited to, AI, blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and high-performance computing in order to contribute to the achievement of environmental and climate goals, to inclusive, socially just and sustainable economic growth and to the enhancement of competitiveness and prosperity;

20. REITERATES that the MFF and the NGEU, including the RRF, as well as national Recovery and Resilience Plans should be used to stimulate public and private investments; UNDERLINES the need to focus on synergies between digitalisation and sustainability in EU funding programmes and the need for synergistic initiatives towards the digital and green transition in Recovery and Resilience Plans; CALLS on the Commission and Member States to ensure that funding for the purpose of digitalisation and sustainability will be better aligned so as to incentivise sustainable digital solutions and to use funding from the EU, Member States and the private sector in order to increase access to equity finance for early-stage and scale-up of start-ups and SMEs that focus on the deployment of disruptive digital technologies for clean tech solutions;

21. URGES Member States to mobilise public and private investments, including via Recovery and Resilience Plans, in digital technologies that contribute to achieving environmental objectives, as well as in environmentally friendly ICT, and to raise awareness within the economy, in particular the financial sector, of sustainable investments, notably through the swift completion and adequate use of the taxonomy on sustainable finance as a reference;

22. RECOGNISES the need for systematic and long-term support for sustainable innovations; NOTES that ambitious environmental and climate policy needs continuous input from research, based on robust research and innovation structures; STRESSES that digital innovative capacity at the interface of environmental protection and climate action has to be strengthened through targeted support and incentive instruments; ENCOURAGES Member States to share experiences and lessons learnt on the development and uptake of innovative solutions and technologies and INVITES the Commission to facilitate such exchange;

More environmentally friendly information and communication technology

23. RECOGNISES the urgent need to expand digital infrastructures, and at the same time EMPHASISES the need to ensure the environmentally sound design and deployment of digital technologies, with improved energy, resource and material efficiency and increased usage of secondary raw materials; NOTES the lack of comprehensive information regarding the net environmental impacts of digitalisation; therefore CALLS on the Commission to examine overall energy, resource and water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, emissions into environmental media, nature degradation and waste generation in different areas of ICT; furthermore CALLS on the Commission to immediately start work on developing consistent indicators and standards in order to effectively focus actions on reducing the negative impacts of digitalisation on the environment and to agree upon such standards globally in the long term in order to facilitate evidence- and data-based approaches and to monitor and analyse those impacts;

24. ACKNOWLEDGES that the environmentally sound design, production and use of European ICT can help tap market opportunities and increase the competitiveness of the European ICT sector and enable positive environmental contributions from digital solutions (e.g. dematerialisation, efficiency gains);

25. WELCOMES the Commission's goal of climate-neutral, highly resource-, energy- and material-efficient data centres by 2030 and hence CALLS on the Commission to propose without delay regulatory or non-regulatory measures, in line with the results of a detailed impact assessment, and to implement governance and market instruments to support the standardised documentation, the transparency and the reduction of the environmental footprint of data centres and communication networks. Those measures and instruments should also contribute to building a more circular energy system as set out in the EU Strategy for Energy System Integration; ENCOURAGES the Member States to use the Commission's new green public procurement criteria for data centres and cloud services in their national public procurement action plans;

26. HIGHLIGHTS the necessity to define standards and set incentives for the design, development and operation of durable, climate-compatible, resource-, energy- and material-efficient ICT and services, both in Europe and globally; ACKNOWLEDGES that emerging and developing countries are particularly affected by the exploitation of raw materials and the production, use and disposal of ICT products; ENCOURAGES the Commission to examine ways to provide increased transparency about the carbon, resource, energy and material and environmental footprint of ICT products and services for consumers in order to foster informed choices; SUPPORTS the Commission's proposal to present the Circular Electronics Initiative announced in the Circular Economy Action Plan;

27. URGES the Commission to establish or adjust existing eco-design requirements for energy-efficient ICT systems, electricals and electronic devices to increase reusability, durability, repairability and recyclability, to improve the ease of updates, to facilitate the extraction and the reuse of critical materials from electronic waste, and to restrict hazardous substances; ENCOURAGES the Commission to investigate instruments to promote such standards also internationally; ENCOURAGES the Commission to also discuss savings of raw materials through the uptake of recycled material content in ICT products; REQUESTS the Commission to put forward by 2021 a proposal to improve the repairability of ICT products, including updates for software, as envisaged in the Circular Economy Action Plan; ACKNOWLEDGES that the transition to 5G will call for a new generation of devices using 5G, and therefore STRESSES the need for ambitious action to collect and recycle outdated or obsolete devices;

28. ASKS the Commission to cooperate with relevant stakeholders to jointly develop solutions which take better account of energy-, resource and material-efficiency as well as end-of-life recyclability, reusability and reparability criteria during the rapid innovation cycles in high-tech product categories; in this regard ASKS the Commission to develop instruments and incentives within the framework of the Circular Electronics Initiative to incorporate the dynamic of pro-active market actors and to present an action plan by the end of 2021 on how to significantly reduce the amount of disposed ICT products by 2025;

29. RECOGNISES that fast roll-out of fixed Gigabit networks as well as the fast and efficient deployment of 5G technology and future generations of cellular broadband networks and infrastructure is crucial for the long-term competitiveness of the European economy and the implementation of services to enhance sustainability; ENCOURAGES Member States to develop best practices to incentivise the deployment of new electronic communications networks and, in particular, very high capacity networks, with a reduced environmental footprint in line with the Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/1307 of 18 September 2020 while ensuring public health without decelerating network deployment;

30. UNDERLINES the importance of strengthening the demand for environmentally friendly ICT products, services and solutions in public procurement by taking into account environmental aspects while considering market conditions, as this will help disseminate sustainable digital solutions, and ENCOURAGES Member States to make full use of green public procurement to stimulate demand for all types of ICT products and services based on best practices;

Using artificial intelligence (AI) to advance environmental protection

31. ACKNOWLEDGES that the use of AI can significantly contribute to achieving the goals of the European Green Deal and help balance environmental and climate interests with the need to strengthen competitiveness; SUPPORTS the Commission's view that the European legislative framework on AI should be based on an opportunity- and risk-based approach; NOTES that such an approach needs to be further discussed; STRESSES that environmental and climate protection should also be recognised as matters of concern in order to fully harness the potential of the European approach to excellence and trust in AI for climate action and environmental protection, while also focusing on the potential direct and indirect negative environmental impacts of AI and exploring measures to reduce these impacts; ENCOURAGES Member States to share experiences and lessons learnt in the context of the development and application of AI in this field and ASKS the Commission to propose ways to facilitate such exchange;

32. URGES the Commission to emphasise high levels of social and ecological well-being as an important principle of AI in the updated Coordinated Plan, as proposed in the white paper on artificial intelligence; UNDERLINES that solving social and environmental challenges should be taken into consideration in the development of AI as early as possible ("sustainability by design"), for example by considering the use of combined data-driven and model-based approaches that rely less on large amounts of data;

33. STRESSES that ever more connected IoT devices will be needed to collect relevant machine and product-related data during their entire lifecycle to make full use of the potential of AI; ACKNOWLEDGES that such devices, particularly those with edge computing capability, have the potential to reduce latency, improve bandwidth and deliver energy savings by alleviating data transfers; CALLS on the Commission to undertake further investigation on the impacts of the growth in IoT-devices and the move towards edge computing while ensuring that the eco-design criteria for such devices safeguards high standards in terms of durability, as well as resource, material and energy efficiency;

Strengthening support for research and innovation

34. EMPHASISES that EU research policy and support for innovations under the Responsible Research and Innovation approach should contribute to the implementation of the SDGs; STRESSES in this context that the new EU research framework programme Horizon Europe needs to contribute to shaping both a digital and a sustainable transition, thus strengthening the transformation and transformative research;

35. HIGHLIGHTS that strengthening research and innovation is crucial to in order to support the development of sustainably designed ICT as well as the use and mainstreaming of digital solutions that promote sustainability; UNDERLINES the need for the Digital Europe Programme and the CEF2-Digital Programme to support innovation and the deployment of digital technologies, infrastructures and services in support of the objectives of the European Green Deal;

36. CALLS for integrating the interplay of sustainability and digitalisation into the ongoing development of the European Research Area in order to analyse future research needs and to develop strategic solutions through enhanced exchange between relevant stakeholders across the scientific community and beyond; ENCOURAGES the Commission to further develop the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) into a cooperative knowledge and innovation community of science, industry and society;

37. UNDERLINES the need for better cooperation and exchange of best practices on digital solutions for the environment between EU Member States through the promotion of EU-wide digital "ecosystems", following the priority areas put forward in the Digital Europe Programme; HIGHLIGHTS the need for testing grounds and experimental spaces for stimulating environmental innovations; CALLS on the Commission and Member States to set up cross-border pilot projects deploying enabling digital technologies to support circular economy, sustainability and efficiency goals in farming, mobility, construction, manufacturing, energy and other sectors.