

TRACKING THE RISE OF TECHNOLOGY SOVEREIGNTY: THE BEST WAY FORWARD FOR EUROPEAN R&D?

A Science | Business campaign to discuss the implications of technology sovereignty and what it will take for Europe to lead the way in R&D

The coronavirus crisis has highlighted how our highly interdependent world economy is prone to disruption. Interruptions in production in one part of the world can have immediate and deep effects on the availability of critical goods and services in regions thousands of miles away. This has prompted a growing political debate about how to ensure greater resilience and better protection, and this has direct consequences for multinationals operating in Europe.

Milestones in 'tech sovereignty':

- At an EU Council meeting 29 May, discussing the EU's proposed €1.85 trillion budget, "many ministers stressed the need to ensure Europe's technological and strategic sovereignty in critical fields," according to the official Council [statement](#).
- On 7 June, the German and French industry ministers billed the [launch](#) of GAIA-X, a European cloud computing initiative, as a response to US dominance in the market.
- On 9 June, the German government announced a €20 million programme to boost [home-grown electronics](#) production. "Germany is a country of innovation and wants to remain so. It is important that we assert ourselves in international competition with key technologies and are technologically sovereign," said German Research Minister Anja Karliczek.

While it is difficult to argue against policies that on the surface seem to strengthen European R&D and increase resilience for citizens, there is a very real danger that these 'Europe first' policies could go too far and risk damaging the very asset they're meant to protect: the competitiveness and business prospects of European-based companies. Non-European companies looking to maintain or develop their business footprint in Europe may also raise the flag over these developments.

It is paramount, therefore, that the most-affected stakeholders, private or public, weigh in on this debate by detailing risks and opportunities and suggesting the right kind of action where needed. To assist this, Science|Business is launching a communications project to enable the stakeholders to highlight their positions and discuss the way forward.

The impact of the project will be to find consensus around:

- A common definition of technology sovereignty
- The purpose of technology sovereignty.
- What problem will it solve, and is it the right solution?
- Who will benefit, and who may lose out?
- What the definition means at the operational level, and any sector-specific variations in infrastructure, key enablers or capabilities that need to be in place
- The short-, medium- and long-term priorities
- Potential pitfalls and how to avoid them
- Who needs to hear these messages?
- Further work that may be required

This will be achieved by the following outputs:

- Launch at 8 September conference *Industrial R&D: Europe First?*
- Formation of a cross-sector, cross-border coalition of public and private experts to steer the initiative and select key topics to be addressed
- A professional communications campaign (through the Science|Business twice-weekly newsletters and social media channels) for the duration of the project
- Closed-door roundtables (at least two in the fall/winter 2020-2021)
- White papers summarising agreed perspective and way forward
- Public conference and CEO/CTO dinner to discuss next steps for industry

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since our founding by senior journalists as Brussels- and London-based media and networking company focused on R&D policy and investment



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in the Science|Business Network. In conferences and roundtables, we provide a forum for debate on the EU's Horizon R&D programme, health data technologies, science cloud services, digital skills and other ongoing policy issues



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