[DE] German digital strategy adopted

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The German federal government adopted a new digital strategy on 31 August 2022. The strategy is designed to boost the digital transformation in Germany, where many sectors of state government and administration, civil society, industry, education and science are lagging behind with digital technology and hampered by an outdated analogue infrastructure and especially slow data transfer networks. The digital strategy therefore contains objectives and proposals for a "digital awakening" in various policy areas that are divided into three categories: (1) connected society and digital sovereignty, (2) innovative business, work, science and research, and (3) digital state. In the first of these categories, an entire chapter is devoted to culture and media.

In relation to the media ecosystem, the chapter begins by pointing out that the media sector is undergoing profound transformation processes as a result of digitisation. It needs new business ideas and models in order to achieve lasting success in an increasingly diverse and constantly changing battle for attention and advertising revenue. Fair competition, separation from the state and a functioning market (free of monopolies) are all prerequisites for its long-term survival. At the same time, the availability of high-quality media (including digital media) is indispensable for effectively combating Internet disinformation and guiding the public through the flood of information.

In the negotiations for the European Media Freedom Act, the federal government also wants to stand up for media independence and separation from the state in the context of European regulation of digital transformation processes and media market requirements. A support programme to boost news literacy will be launched by the end of 2023, helping to increase digital literacy in society, identify high-quality media and, in particular, fight disinformation on the Internet. A robust and fair competitive framework will be established by 2025, at the latest, to "facilitate the required transformation of media services and ensure the survival of diverse, independent, high-quality journalism after the digital transformation".

In the government's view, full participation, gender equality and digital accessibility are signs of quality for a modern country and benefit everyone. Digital innovation has enormous potential to offer guidance, transfer knowledge and make daily life easier and more sustainable, secure, accessible and social.

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Digitisation should particularly be designed to prevent exploitation of disadvantaged people and vulnerable groups such as children and young people, women, the elderly, disabled people, the LGBTQI+ community and people from an immigrant background. The government will therefore ensure, *inter alia*, that – with the help of the restructured *Bundeszentrale für Kinder- und Jugendmedienschutz* (Federal Office for the protection of children and young people in the media) – children and adolescents can participate in a safe digital environment and take advantage of the opportunities it offers. Through the "*Gutes Aufwachsen mit Medien*" (Good media upbringing) programme, digital skills will be promoted from early childhood with the help of parents and experts.

The digital strategy also contains specific ideas for a data economy that are especially relevant in the context of the proposed EU Data Act. These include creating AI service centres to strengthen AI use, including in medium-sized businesses. Digital consumer protection will also be improved, especially through the fair, neutral and user-friendly design of user interfaces and the curbing of misleading and deceptive web design. Digital services and offerings will need to be safe, user-friendly and "privacy-friendly" from the outset, making consumer rights easier to enforce.

On the whole, although the data strategy proposes a number of initiatives in various sectors of society and law, critics claim that it is too vague. The timescale for its implementation is ambitious, with most objectives to be met by 2025.

Digitalstrategie der deutschen Bundesregierung im Volltext

https://www.digitalstrategie-deutschland.de/static/1a7bee26afd1570d3f0e5950b215abac/220830_Digitalstrategie_fin-barrierefrei.pdf

Digital strategy of the German federal government

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