



## Statement of the participants of the 36<sup>th</sup> NEC Forum, Cyprus

### **Towards a Sovereign European Union of Values and Trustworthy Innovation**

The European Union is entering a period of profound transformation shaped by rapid technological changes, geopolitical instability, demographical challenges, environmental pressures and evolving societal needs.

European sovereignty must be grounded in the Union's foundational values among which there are: respect for human dignity, human rights, democracy, freedom, justice and equality the rule of law, as well as solidarity. These principles shape the European social model and guide the Union's approach to responsible innovation, ensuring that technological progress contributes to societal well-being, economic resilience, and social cohesion.

#### **Key guidelines**

Participants reaffirm the following guiding principles as central to Europe's approach to innovation and technological development:

#### **1. Human-centred innovation**

Technological progress must serve human flourishing, strengthen democratic institutions, and support the well-being of individuals and communities. Innovation should empower people and contribute to a more just and inclusive society. A robust ethical governance is needed to ensure that emerging technologies are aligned at every stage with fundamental rights, and European values.

#### **2. Innovation and emerging technologies as drivers of empowerment, especially for young people**

Digital technologies increasingly shape how younger generations learn, communicate, and participate in society. Online environments should therefore promote curiosity, creativity, and healthy development while protecting young people from manipulation, exploitation, and harmful digital practices.

#### **3. Academic freedom and research integrity as part of scientific excellence**

Research integrity, educational equality and academic freedom are fundamental pillars of Europe's research and innovation ecosystem, enabling knowledge creation, public trust, research accountability.

#### **4. Building a strategic technological capacity and digital sovereignty**

Europe must strengthen its ability to develop, deploy, and govern key technologies in accordance with its values. Digital sovereignty enhances Europe's resilience, supports democratic oversight of technological systems, and enables the development of trustworthy European digital solutions.

## **5. Climate sensitive and sustainable innovation**

Digital and green transitions must be pursued in ways that promote fairness, reduce inequalities, and support sustainable development, especially in the context of climate change. Innovation policies should ensure that the benefits of technological progress are shared across regions, generations, and social groups.

## **6. Promoting equity for All**

Europe must continue to counteract inequalities and to promote inclusivity. In a democratic society all people are equal regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

## **7. Social justice and solidarity**

Innovation and innovation policies should promote individual and common good, social and intergenerational justice, social cohesion, and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens, while avoiding all forms of unjust discrimination. Specific measures should be implemented to prevent and address the digital gap and the social discrimination and stigmatization of people of advanced age, as well as those from disadvantaged, marginalised, or displaced groups. Access to and exploitation of the innovation benefits should be enriched by genuine European solidarity among the Member States, different regions, and people of various national and ethnic communities.

## **Shared Commitments**

In light of these guidelines, we support initiatives that:

- promote ethical frameworks for emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and advanced data systems,
- strengthen European research and innovation ecosystems while safeguarding academic freedom, research integrity, and interdisciplinary collaboration,
- enhance Europe's technological capabilities and digital infrastructures in ways that reflect European values and support democratic governance,
- promote transparency, accountability, and explainability in the development and deployment of digital technologies,
- support digital literacy, education, fair information and public engagement to enable people to understand and actively shape their use according to their needs,
- foster the development of trustworthy European technological solutions that respect privacy, human rights, and societal well-being,
- ensure that innovation policies contribute to sustainable development, social cohesion, and inclusive participation across the European Union.

In a rapidly changing and increasingly fragmented world, technological leadership must be combined with ethical responsibility and democratic governance. By strengthening a human-centred approach to innovation and reinforcing its scientific and technological capacities, the European Union can serve as a global model for trustworthy and value-based innovation.