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Conseil de l'IA et du Numérique

REPORT

Digital sovereignty

An Agenda for Public-Private-Commons Cooperation



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Executive Summary

Digital technologies are increasingly controlled by a small number of dominant providers whose products and services have become deeply embedded in everyday life. This concentration of power exposes citizens, public authorities and businesses to a broad range of risks, including economic dependence, security and surveillance threats, political vulnerabilities and reduced resilience. The current geopolitical context serves as a stark reminder that digital technologies can readily be used as instruments of strategic leverage.

In response, France—alongside many other European countries and the European Union—is seeking to strengthen its capacity to choose, develop and deploy trusted digital alternatives while reducing critical technological dependencies. **The objective is not to achieve complete digital self-sufficiency, which would be unrealistic, but to establish a structured framework for cooperation between the State, the market and the digital commons in order to reduce strategic vulnerabilities**. The technical complexity of digital infrastructures, the scale of the investment required and the transnational nature of digital value chains call for coordinated demand, clearly defined responsibilities and a more open innovation ecosystem built around open source software and the digital commons—resources whose transformative potential remains significantly underexploited.

Within this framework, public authorities occupy a pivotal position. They act both as stewards of digital sovereignty, ensuring that citizens and organisations have access to trusted and controlled digital solutions, **and as major users and procurers of digital technologies**. Reconciling these two roles is essential and highlights the need for closer cooperation between public and private actors enabling them to **cooperate in developing sovereign solutions rather than competing against one another**.

Against this backdrop, this report examines **how public authorities, private initiatives and the digital commons can be brought together to overcome institutional and market fragmentation, develop sovereign, interoperable and sustainable digital alternatives, and reduce critical dependencies on foreign providers**.

The report is based on an extensive series of hearings involving around thirty representatives from public authorities in France and across Europe, private-sector organisations, the digital commons, the free and open source software community, professional associations and the research community. It aims first to **establish a shared diagnosis of the current situation (Part I) and then to set out a roadmap for coordinated, long-term action to strengthen digital sovereignty (Part II)**.

Part I analyses Europe's critical dependence on foreign digital providers and identifies a number of structural weaknesses. Public action remains constrained by governance arrangements that are still evolving and fragmented, as well as by insufficient and poorly coordinated investment. At the same time, companies developing sovereign digital technologies continue to struggle to achieve the scale necessary to compete effectively, while collaboration across the ecosystem remains limited. Finally, the report highlights the largely

untapped potential of the digital commons and free and open source software, despite their proven capacity to reduce dependencies and foster collaboration around open standards.

Drawing on lessons from previous initiatives and international experience, **Part II** identifies both the pitfalls to avoid and the practices that should be replicated. It proposes a **roadmap for stronger cooperation between the public sector, the private sector and the digital commons, structured around three strategic pillars**.

(1) First, the report proposes new governance arrangements designed to coordinate demand, prioritise shared technological standards and support long-term interoperability. Key recommendations include:

- → establishing a **Digital Commons Factory** to coordinate strategic initiatives;
- → prioritising **foundational digital infrastructures**;
- → creating a **public certification** scheme for trusted off-the-shelf digital solutions;
- → developing and maintaining a **national map** of existing digital building blocks and strategic dependencies;
- → supporting **active participation in the governance** of open source communities; and
- → **strengthening education and skills** development relating to the digital commons.

(2) Secondly, the report identifies the financial and legal instruments required to ensure that strategic projects can be developed and maintained over time. It recommends:

- → **improving the visibility and accessibility of existing legal structures suited to digital commons** through dedicated support programmes for public and private project leaders;
- → **establishing a dedicated public fund for strategic digital commons**, hosted by Ariane, to provide stable funding for the development, maintenance and continuous improvement of priority projects; and
- → **using public procurement as a strategic lever** to support identified priority projects and structured public-private consortia, guided by the principle: "public money, public code and public governance."

(3) Finally, the report argues that digital sovereignty can only be achieved at the European scale and therefore proposes to:

- → **strengthen and expand the mandate of the EDIC Digital Commons** so that it becomes Europe's central coordination platform for the digital commons;
- → **establish a dedicated European fund for strategic digital commons**;
- → **require the systematic adoption of open standards** across European public policies and make compliance with those standards a condition for public funding; and
- → **introduce a European Open Standard certification label** to recognise projects and solutions that comply with open standards.

The French AI and Digital Council is an independent body under the authority of the Minister Delegate for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Affairs. Its mission is to examine all issues related to the development of digital technology and artificial intelligence, as well as their impact on society, the economy, and territories. The Council is governed by a decree of December 8, 2017, amended by a decree of September 4, 2025.

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