



EUROPEAN MOVEMENT IN SCOTLAND: HOLYROOD 2021 ELECTIONS

DIGITAL

Manifesto commitments recommended by EMiS

- Recognise that the EU's broad approach to privacy, trust, transparency and human rights around data should be adopted by the Scottish Government. Ensure that public code generated by public money, e.g. in healthcare and the energy sector, is safeguarded in line with the EU's approach. Share the EU's approach to disinformation. Promote openness in use of Open Source Technology, including hardware interoperability.
- Recognise that Scotland's Digital Strategy should align with the EU's approach. It should include participation in the proposed European Cloud and GaiaX, and harmonisation with regulations arising from the EU's Digital Services Act package. Align Scotland's lifelong learning strategies with the EU's digital competence guidelines.
- Task Scottish Hubs in the EU to engage with best global digital age practice within the EU. Links between Scotland's areas of excellence with EU digital initiatives to be maintained and strengthened e.g. cybersecurity, open source, artificial intelligence, cloud and data infrastructure and the Space sector.
- Commit to lobby the UK Government to agree access to EU databases and networks that support the EU's area of freedom, security and justice, such as Schengen Information System (SIS II).

Background

The EU has majored on protections for its consumers, including dangers to privacy and even democracy and, playing to its experience in developing standards across member states, is now the acknowledged leader in setting these data standards globally, whether formally or de facto.

Similarly, it has been the EU, using the scale of its Single Market, which has challenged the US digital giants about anti-competitive practices, only now being acknowledged on both sides of the Atlantic. The EU's commitment to open standards allows technology to be shared, innovation to thrive, products to be sold more widely and competition to bring benefits to the consumer.

To best serve the interests, values and ambitions of Scotland's people and its organisations, the Scottish government must find ways to harmonise with these EU strategies and approach to maximise the benefits to Scotland in the digital age.

The European strategy for data aspires to a single market for data where personal as well as non-personal data are secure and where it is easier for businesses and public authorities to access high-quality data to boost growth and create value, while reducing the carbon footprint of the economy. The strategy has identified where development and future investment can build on the EU's position as data's global standard bearer concerning privacy, trust and transparency.

Currently the UK and Scottish governments are consulting on their own digital strategies. It is essential that these strategies pay attention to the EU approach to foster confidence, trust and innovation, ensure competitiveness in the global space and explore how wealth created by the digital market is distributed.

Whilst the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) does contain provisions aimed at facilitating digital trade, there are some gaping holes. Critically, an independent group of experts has pointed out that it contains no agreement on exchanges of data by companies and organisations between the UK and the EU. A temporary arrangement has been put in place, largely to give the EU time to decide whether the UK's data protection system is adequate. Whilst there is some room for confidence that the EU's adequacy decision will be positive, that outcome is not certain.

Continent-scale technological projects require complex supply chains and offer opportunities for specialist niche players – important for a highly skilled but small economy like Scotland. Our expertise in cyber security and space technologies are examples of growing of high-tech high value-add clusters whose European markets are impacted by Brexit.

We welcome the continued engagement of the UK in the Copernicus (Earth observation) programme, EU mechanisms for swift exchanges of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data, of DNA, fingerprints and vehicle registration data (Prüm), and of criminal record information, as well as the provision to support cybersecurity and prohibit data localisation requirements. We regret that the UK will no longer be shaping the strategy around these and similar initiatives, particularly in its areas of strength such as cybersecurity. However, we remain concerned with the UK's decision to exclude itself from the Galileo programme as well as the costs being incurred around an alternative UK satellite navigation system.

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