PRESS RELEASE

The future of Internet: From digital sovereignty to strategic autonomy

The European Commission's Next Generation Internet Forum discusses the next steps for an open, inclusive, and trustworthy digital landscape in Europe

Brussels – 20 June 2025

The European Commission's flagship event for discussing the future of internet technologies took place in Brussels on 19-20 June 2025. The event gathered high-level EU officials, Members of the European Parliament, innovators, researchers and citizens exchanging on how to shape an Internet that is open, inclusive, trustworthy and sustainable, enabling European digital sovereignty and users' empowerment.

Under the theme **"**Building an Open Internet Stack for European Digital Sovereignty", the NGI Forum 2025 addressed four key topics: digital sovereignty and Europe's autonomy in digital infrastructures, open-source and commons-based models to empower communities, data security and trust and the development of a European Open Web Index.

Main highlights of the NGI Forum 2025

The 2025 edition of the NGI Forum spotlighted the transition from successful experimentation under the NGI initiative towards a future anchored in a cohesive Open Internet Stack (OIS), designed to reinforce Europe's digital sovereignty. With over €140 million invested in more than 1,500 projects since 2018, NGI has catalysed vibrant open-source ecosystems across the continent. Yet, as discussions in Brussels made clear, the next phase must focus on scalability and deployment—ensuring that successful innovations reach users, businesses, and administrations in usable, secure and sustainable ways.

A central focus was the upcoming Open Internet Stack, a curated set of open-source building blocks—covering secure identities, cybersecurity, interoperability, and decentralised platforms—intended for easy deployment across Europe. With new funding from Horizon Europe in 2025 (€10 million for foundational OIS work and €14.5 million for Web 4.0 integration), the NGI Forum 2025 has launched an important conversation on transforming open-source successes into reliable, validated and regulation-compliant solutions.

Speakers underscored the urgency of investing in robust digital commons to avoid dependency on non-European platforms and to boost Europe's competitiveness. As articulated in the sessions, the OIS initiative will empower policymakers, SMEs, and developers alike, reinforcing trust, quality, and autonomy within the EU's digital infrastructure.

Thibaut Kleiner, Director of Future Networks at the European Commission's DG CONNECT declared: *"The challenge is not lack of talent or creativity but rather the absence of a coordinated framework to transform open source communities into sustainable, sovereign solutions and to fill the gap between European contributors to Commons and adopters of digital solutions"*

Alexandra Geese (DE/Greens-European Free Alliance), Member of the European Parliament:" MEP Alexandra Geese said: *We must understand and raise public awareness about the alliance of power between US President Trump and Big tech CEOs which aims*

at establishing a system of surveillance and manipulation of public opinion that predilects hate over solidarity, fear over hope and fuels radicalization and extremism. This alliance also aims at controlling knowledge and prevent any regulation of digital services. We must fight and push back, preserve access to knowledge and above all, the EU must build its own digital infrastructure to preserve democracy, freedom and sovereignty.

Dr. Monique Calisti, CEO Martel Innovate and Director of the Next Generation Internet Outreach Office, said: *"Since the first NGI Forum in Barcelona in 2017, I've witnessed the extraordinary growth of a vibrant community of researchers and innovators working toward an open, inclusive, trustworthy, and sustainable internet," said Dr Monique Calisti, Director of the NGI Outreach Office. This 2025 edition represents a transformational moment for the Next Generation Internet initiative, moving towards the Open Internet Stack that is not just a technical framework, but the pathway to the EU's technological sovereignty and strategic autonomy."*

Renaud Chaput, CTO, Mastodon, said: **"***From open source to security, NGI brings meaningful innovation into the real world. We're excited to show the results of our work and connect with a wider audience."*

Isabelle Zablit-Schmitz, International Digital Health Expert in communications, said: "Digital sovereignty in Europe is about empowering the entire Economy for the future. It's not a choice. It's the only way forward." Validated

Michiel Leenaarts, **Director of Strategy at NLnet**, declared: *"Over the last decade, NGI has shown Europe the way digital sovereignty is achieved: through technology commons and a collaboration across civil society, academia and the private and public sector. This "coalition of the willing" will now need to go into the next year, and scale up - in order to regain control over our digital today, and safeguard our democratic tomorrow"*

Denis Jaromil Roio, Founder of the Dyne.org Foundation, stressed that *"European tech funding strategy should stop chasing hypes. Look at the Gartner hype cycle: we should step in post-hype to support those who stick to their plan and maintain placement as European industries on the plateau of productivity"*.

The NGI Forum 2025 is the flagship event of the European Commission's Next Generation Internet (NGI) initiative. It brings together some of Europe's top Internet innovators at work to build an Internet of Trust, empowering end-users with more choice and control over their data and digital identity.

About NGI:

The **Next Generation Internet (NGI)** is a European Commission (EC) initiative that aims to shape the development and evolution of the Internet into an Internet of Trust. An Internet that responds to people's fundamental needs, including trust, security, and inclusion, while reflecting the values and the norms all citizens enjoy in Europe.

After an initial EC investment in NGI research and innovation of more than €250m (2018-2020) that supported more than 1,000 Internet researchers and innovators involved in hundreds of projects, the EC announced renewed EU funding for NGI under Horizon Europe.

Horizon Europe Calls related to the Next Generation Internet, of relevance to the NGI community are listed under Pillar II, Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness, Cluster 4, Digital, Industry and Space.

NGI FORUM 2025 Photo Album / Recorded sessions available here

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