

Europe's Push For Democratized Innovation Rattles Big Tech

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Executive Vice President at the European Commission for “a Europe fit for the digital age,” Margrethe Vestager, announced the European Union’s “digital strategy” in late February, [prompting executives](#) at U.S. tech giants, [like Facebook](#) and Google, to express both support and concern over the potential effects of the plan. The unveiling of the plan comes as the U.S. and China lead the pack in investing in innovative technologies like artificial intelligence and signals a desire for Europe to [carve out a space](#) in the data-driven technology race.

Broadly speaking, the digital strategy aims to provide the European business world with the room to build innovative companies alongside and in fair competition with existing giants, as well as to allow technological innovation to drive public policy making.

“Currently, a small number of Big Tech firms hold a large part of the world’s data,” the [paper reads](#), which “could reduce the incentives for data-driven businesses to emerge, grow and innovate in the EU today, but numerous opportunities lie ahead.”

The plan aims to both promote local innovation across sectors, as well as to [regulate](#) data-supported technologies like artificial intelligence, which may pose [potential risks to privacy](#).

The European commission is taking a markedly different approach to digital innovation than the United States, where private, deep-pocketed Big Tech has [driven development](#), and China, where the government has [heavily subsidized](#) investment in artificial intelligence. Notably, concerns over individual rights to privacy in the wake of this technological development have emerged in the U.S., where [individuals grow wary](#) of unregulated companies like facial recognition startup, Clearview.ai.

The European Commission plans to implement a protective stance ahead of the technological tide. This sentiment echoes that of the conversation surrounding the Commission’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), implemented in 2018, which affected U.S. tech companies’ compliance [teams across the board](#). Given the effect of that bill, it’s not surprising that tech giants are [concerned](#) about the potential ramifications of a plan that hopes to de-monopolize data access.

