

Santander–CIDOB Future Leaders Forum

“How can the European Union achieve digital strategic autonomy? Data, cybersecurity, and digital geopolitics”

November 8th, 2022

Online event streamed on CIDOB's YouTube channel

A CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs) initiative with the support of Banco Santander

The **Santander–CIDOB Future Leaders Forum** is a collaboration programme between Banco Santander and CIDOB that aims to identify and promote dialogue between future global leaders from different social and economic fields that will shape the international agenda.

The programme consists of three complementary activities: the **Santander–CIDOB 35 under 35 list**; the **Santander–CIDOB Future Leaders Forum**; and an online space where the talented youngsters nominated in the **Santander–CIDOB 35 under 35 list** will be able to share ideas and opinions through videos that will be made available online. Additionally, the conclusions of the **Santander–CIDOB Future Leaders Forum** will be published in an open-access **CIDOB Briefing**.

Following on from the first edition [“Global Techno-politics: Technology, the next global order and the role of the EU”](#) in November 2020, the second edition topic was [“The future of the digital global order: Algorithmic governance and artificial intelligence”](#). This year, the new edition will focus on the intersection between the geopolitical and security aspirations of the European Union and the digital transition, titled **“How can the European Union achieve digital strategic autonomy? Data, cybersecurity, and digital geopolitics”**.

Digitalisation has become one of the main factors in power distribution within the international system, acting as a catalyst for global powers' geopolitical and economic ambitions. In this context, the necessity of the European Union to advance toward strategic autonomy and achieve digital sovereignty have become two priorities of the von der Leyen Commission. In contrast with other technological and digital powers, such as the United States or China, the European Union intends to guarantee the development and control of new technologies within its own borders, following its democratic tradition and liberal values, while benefitting from its use in the economic, social and geopolitical domains.

To achieve its digital sovereignty, enhance technology innovation and economic growth, and empower the EU as a global actor in these areas, the governance of data is a pressing matter. How data is collected, stored, used, protected and transferred across borders is a question of increasing geopolitical, geoeconomic and security interest in the Union. The availability and abundance of data are essential to new technologies and strategic digital services development, such as Artificial Intelligence. Data are also at the centre of a Digital Single Market built upon the free flow of data between state members and the creation of European data banks and libraries. However, despite the advances resulting from the new European Data Strategy and the new Data Act from February 2022, the EU doesn't have yet the full control of data and its citizens' private information, due to significant dependencies on digital services from third parties to store and manage its vast data. This situation highlights the current vulnerabilities of the EU - where data storage is one among many - and urges the need to advance its own strategic autonomy in the digital domain and enhance its cybersecurity.

To understand this multidimensional challenge, the third edition of the **Santander–CIDOB Future Leaders Forum** will analyse the following questions: Which are the next steps that the European Union should take to achieve its digital strategic autonomy? Which role should cybersecurity play within this digital strategic autonomy? What should the European Union do to promote the potential of the Digital Single Market and which role does data play? Which impact will have the new Data Act on the technology sector in Europe and which benefits, opportunities and challenges emerge from it? Can the European Union balance its willingness to develop a digital strategic autonomy and technology innovation which depends on massive data while it advances its own regulatory policies to protect its citizens' right to privacy? How can the EU develop its digital sovereignty in the current global competition between the United States and China and how can this geopolitical and geoeconomic context impact the European Union? And finally, can the European Union develop its own digital sovereignty in an interdependent world?

The members of the **Santander–CIDOB 35 under 35** list will participate in the **Santander–CIDOB Future Leaders Forum**. The list acknowledges the work of 35 young people (35 years old or younger) with the potential to become future leaders in their different areas of expertise and activity (public decision-makers, private sector and media professionals, activists, intellectuals and academics).

Conceived as a space for dialogue between future leaders, the **Santander–CIDOB Future Leaders Forum** will gather the 35 members of the list in order to debate, exchange ideas and discuss this year's topic with other social, economic and political actors from Spain and Europe. During the Forum, the members of the **Santander–CIDOB 35 under 35** list will be made public.

In 2022, as in previous editions, the **Santander–CIDOB Future Leaders Forum** will be held online. The event will include a public part, at which the **Santander–CIDOB 35 under 35** will be presented, followed by an initial contribution on this year's topic. The event will continue with the private part of the forum – a networking space for the members of the three editions of the list.

Programme

- 12.00-12.20 **Welcome and presentation of the Santander–CIDOB 35 under 35 list**
Pol Morillas, Director, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
Cristina San José, Global Head of Models and Data, Santander Group
- 12.20-13.15 **First inputs**
José Ignacio Torreblanca, director, ECFR Madrid (European Council on Foreign Relations)
First reactions
Carme Colomina, Research Fellow, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
- 13.15-13.30 **Closure**
Carme Artigas, Secretary of State for Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence, Government of Spain
- 13.30 **Networking (via Teams)**
Between the members of the 3rd *Santander–CIDOB 35 under 35 List* and participants from previous editions.