

Press Release

Emilio Gayo: “AI offers a huge opportunity to do things better for the customer”

- Speaking at the 29th Instituto de la Empresa Familiar Congress, Telefónica’s COO, Emilio Gayo, called for a rapid evolution of European regulations to support business growth, promote investment, accelerate innovation and strengthen European technological sovereignty

Madrid, 5 October 2026. Telefónica’s COO, Emilio Gayo, today called on European institutions to speed up the adaptation of the regulatory framework to new technological and economic challenges. In his view, Europe needs to take a long-term view when designing policies that encourage investment and facilitate the creation of businesses with sufficient scale to compete globally.

During a discussion with José Luis Blanco, Chief Executive of the Instituto de la Empresa Familiar (Family Business Institute), as part of the 29th Instituto de la Empresa Familiar Congress, Gayo called on Brussels to “rapidly evolve the regulatory framework and steer it towards promoting greater investment. I would ask Brussels to think like family businesses: in the long term”.

The executive defended the need to move towards European technological sovereignty based on the ability to control and make decisions regarding strategic digital assets, underpinned by a regulatory framework that fosters investment, innovation and business growth. Gayo emphasised that this should not be understood as a model of isolation, but rather as Europe’s ability to maintain control over critical technologies, infrastructure and data without sacrificing an open and interconnected environment. “Technological sovereignty is not autarky; it is not about us having to do everything 100 per cent ourselves for all activities, processes or developments,” he stated.

Regulation, scale and investment to strengthen Europe’s strategic autonomy

Building genuine European technological sovereignty requires a sustained commitment over time and coordinated action between institutions and businesses. Gayo has pointed out that this objective must be based on three fundamental pillars: regulation that encourages technological development; the need for European businesses to scale up as a result of regulatory developments; and the ability of businesses to act with a long-term strategic vision.

“Regulation is the foundation on which we can build greater technological sovereignty. If it does not foster that sovereignty or help companies to invest in the necessary

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developments, it will not work. That regulation must enable us in Europe to achieve scale,” he explained.

AI opens up new opportunities for businesses

During his speech, Telefónica’s COO also highlighted the transformative potential of artificial intelligence to improve business efficiency, optimise processes and deliver a better customer experience.

However, he advocated a balanced approach to this technology, based on training and a thorough understanding of business processes. “It is the people who understand a company’s processes who will actually implement artificial intelligence. That is why we need them to understand its capabilities and receive the appropriate training,” he said.

He also emphasised that the initial benefits of AI are already becoming apparent in areas such as productivity and cost reduction, although he believes that the greatest opportunity lies in improving customer relations.

‘AI offers a huge opportunity to improve the customer experience and provides extraordinary capabilities for reducing errors. It also enables levels of hyper-personalisation that were previously impossible,’ he said.

About Telefónica

Telefónica is one of the world’s leading telecommunications service providers. The Company is committed to tackling the undeniable challenge of providing citizens, businesses and public administrations with the best way to access digital technologies, helping to drive economic and social development in the countries where it operates. Telefónica offers fixed and mobile connectivity, as well as a wide range of digital services for both residential and business customers. With 299,8 million customers, Telefónica is focused on four key markets: Spain, Brazil, Germany, and the UK.

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