



## Agentic AI, technological sovereignty and the race with China: the keys to the new world order

DES 2026 examined the global technology landscape, focusing on the secure scalability of AI, data, governance and Europe's role alongside the superpowers

The event featured global technology experts from Microsoft, Tencent Cloud, the World Bank and New York University, among others

Madrid, June 11, 2026. – [DES – Digital Enterprise Show 2026](#), Europe's largest AI event, has explored the reality of AI and its impact on business through tomorrow in Malaga, Spain. Over the first two days, global tech gurus have taken the stage to outline the next steps for the technology to have a real impact on organizations' competitiveness.

One of the leading voices has been that of **Yongdong Wang**, Corporate Vice President at Microsoft and President of the Asia-Pacific R&D Group, who has analyzed how AI is entering a new phase characterized by intelligent agents, cost reductions and the acceleration of its adoption by businesses. "*If we look at the major advancements in society, we have arrived at agentic AI*", he noted, pointing out that ChatGPT reached 100 million users in just two months.

Wang emphasized that, in this regard, the evolution of AI will only be effective if companies strengthen their data management, infrastructure, and governance. "*For businesses, data is the most important asset they can have*", he stated, underscoring the need to use information correctly to add more value to co-pilots and intelligent agents. He also highlighted the importance of scaling AI securely, both at the edge and in the cloud and cautioned that "*agents need their own identity and access controls*".

The presentation also addressed the new global landscape of AI, which is dominated by Asian leadership. According to Wang, China has a "*comprehensive, cost-efficient, large-scale ecosystem characterized by constant experimentation and a high concentration of talent*", while Europe faces challenges related to regulation, investment, computing power and ecosystem fragmentation. However, he argued that European companies have significant opportunities if they focus on vertical AI, strengthen B2B partnerships between Asia and Europe, and position trust and governance as strategic assets.

### Digital bridges to shape the future of technological transformation

Cooperation between China, this year's guest country at DES, and Spain can strengthen their ties through joint projects, investments and public-private partnerships related to digitalization and innovation. **Carme Artigas**, an international leader in the field of AI, has highlighted Spain's strategic role in this relationship, as it is one of the European countries with the highest volume of trade with China and a market that the Asian giant views as "*a major testing ground*".

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According to Artigas, “*bilateral dialogue is evolving from traditional trade toward a deeper reflection on who is building the digital infrastructure and how partnerships can be forged to make both countries partners in accelerating the digital transformation*”. For her part, **Margaret Chen**, recognized by the Chinese government as one of the 100 people with the greatest impact abroad, noted that the nation has developed its technological capabilities at a rapid pace and that Europe must understand that “*speed is key*”.

The debate also highlighted the relationship between regulation and innovation. Artigas argued that “*the Chinese case demonstrates that the two are not incompatible, as the country has strict AI regulations without this having slowed its progress*”. In his view, Europe should not aim for all stakeholders to regulate in the same way, but it can learn from China’s ability to apply AI. However, he called for greater transparency and reciprocity, especially regarding the creation of R&D centers in Europe.

This vision of a more practical, scalable and trust-based AI was also pointed out in the remarks by **Fred Sun**, Tencent Cloud’s General Manager for Europe, who discussed the new phase in which organizations must move from pilot projects to actual implementation. “*AI has moved beyond experimentation*”, he noted, highlighting that the arrival of agentic AI is leading companies to understand the true potential of this technology. For the executive, the challenge is no longer to test every solution that appears on the market, but to choose the capabilities that best fit the specific needs of each organization.

### **The new race for ethical and competitive AI**

DES 2026 once again highlighted the importance of European digital sovereignty and of building a model of our own based on responsible innovation. In this regard, **Stefaan Verhulst**, a scholar at New York University specializing in data usage, warned that “*in Europe, there is a dependence on technology, and this can be harmful*”. For this reason, he has advocated for the need to “*reduce that dependence*” and to broaden the concept of digital sovereignty so that it is not limited to infrastructure or regulation, but also incorporates people, data and the capacity for collective action.

Similarly, Verhulst underscored that Europe needs to increase its influence through collaboration among middle powers, the creation of common data spaces, and a “*social license*” that legitimizes technological development in an ethical manner.

### **AI on the front lines: from response to preparedness**

Artificial intelligence stands out for its ability to transform humanitarian action and shift from a reactive model in response to crises to one based on preparedness. On this point, **Trevor Monroe**, Senior Program Manager at the World Bank, emphasized that “*AI can play a huge role*”, though he noted that “*the actions that need to be taken require human decision-making*”.

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the Regional Government of Andalusia. Over nine editions, it has become the largest European professional event on exponential technologies and one of the world's leading events, offering senior management the latest solutions and products to accompany large corporations, SMEs, and European public administrations towards digital transformation. Over three days, we combine technology and innovation with digital leadership, technological solutions to improve customer and employee experience, optimization of operational processes and the identification of new business models, services and products from all industries.

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