World Series Events on Artificial Intelligence

Event 2 Report

Data Economy: Human-centric approach at the forefront

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

IRCAI
International Research Centre
on Artificial Intelligence
under the auspices of UNESCO

si2021.eu

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

About the Series

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The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, and the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence, under the auspices of UNESCO (IRCAI), have joined forces to organise 12 events in close cooperation with Slovenian embassies and other permanent representations in 10 countries around the world. The aim of this effort is to set an active agenda for AI during the Slovenian Presidency, and to provide a basis for continuing and promoting bilateral discussions in the field of AI and sustainable development beyond the Presidency.

International Events
Showcasing government, research and business perspectives in AI and Sustainable Development across the world from Abu Dhabi, Ottawa, Tel Aviv, Genève, Bucharest, Tokyo, Pairs with OECD and Berlin and ending at the main stage event for DigiEduHack 2021 in Slovenia.

Digital Education Hackathon
Hosting main stage on AI and Education, themed across solutions for UN Sustainable Goals, as the final event of this international marathon. This is an EU flagship initiative, a two-day event made of 24 hours of 'hacking' and 'generating ideas'.

International Network
A distributed center of excellence for research, innovation and expertise, to become a world reference in AI that can attract investments in AI and Sustainability research and the best talents in the field, and provide in-depth work based on the multistakeholder global discussions coming from the events series.

International AI Award
A pan-European and international award started by the Slovenian Presidency and to be presented annually.

Event 2: Data Economy: Human-centric approach at the forefront

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ConfTech Lab, Geneva (CH) / online
22 September at 16:00 CET

In 2020, we have produced 2.5 billion GB of data, and this number is in increasing order. Now, how we handle all this data today will also define how we will handle data in our digital future. Therefore, to shape the future of society, this panel discussion investigates the data economy we are living in and discusses the roles different actors will be playing in it, such as governments, the private sector and the citizens. Striving to adopt a more human-centric approach, where the needs, desires and abilities of the web user are at the centre of attention, the invited speakers answer questions such as "How can we provide a trusted, fair and innovative data economy?", "To what extent do business innovation and the protection of individual rights oppose each other?" and "How can citizens engage themselves to actively fight for their digital rights?".

This event was organized by Diplo Foundation via its Geneva Internet Platform, together with the European Union Delegation to the United Nations in Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the UN Office and other international organisations in Geneva in the capacity as Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Agenda

The European Delegation to the United Nations in Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the UN Office and other international organisations in Geneva in capacity as Presidency of the Council of the EU, and the Geneva Internet Platform invite you to a series of dialogues - From Geneva: Reflections on digital future - on issues of importance for the Geneva and global audiences. Linked to International Geneva as a global digital policy hub, the dialogues focus on priority issues around current developments, including the recent process of the UN Secretary's General Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.

The new data age has just begun. How we use data today will set the direction for our digital future. To inspire organisations to create value and make a positive contribution to shaping the future of society, we are looking at the data economy - what it means for countries, businesses and citizens. In the spirit of the human-centric approach, privacy protection and data governance practises should not hinder innovation and economic growth.

The following questions were explored:
- Rethinking the data supply chain: how to provide a trusted, fair, and innovative data economy;
- How to approach a perceived trade-off between the data potential and the protection of individual rights?
- Engaging citizens: How can we move from users to becoming active digital citizens?
- What roles for governments, civil society and the private sector?

Photo by Martin Adams on Unsplash

Event Proceedings

This panel discussion is the first of four in a series called "From Geneva: Reflections on digital future", a series of discussions on data, digitalisation, AI, and technologies for development - issues that are of a high importance for a global audience and especially for Geneva, an important digital policy hub assembling various actors from the field.

To discuss how a more human-centric approach can be implemented in defining the future guidelines of the data economy we are part of, five experts from various sectors joined this discussion:

- **Maja Bogataj Jančič**, Co-Chair of the Data Governance Working Group in the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence and Head of the Intellectual Property Institute
- **Lene Wendland**, Chief of Business & Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Pascal Marmier**, Secretary General, Economy of Trust Foundation, SICPA
- **Thomas Schneider**, Head of International Relations at the Federal Office for Communications of Switzerland (OFCOM) & Co-Lead Swiss Network Digital Self-Determination
- **Paul-Olivier Dehaye**, President of PersonalData.io, Board Member of MyData.org & CEO of Hestia.AI

Rethinking the data supply chain: how to provide a trusted, fair and innovative economy?

Starting off with an illustration depicting the interrelation between the three stakeholder groups in a data economy - the internet user, the internet industry and the vendors - the speakers first discussed how these relationships have and will have changed our society in the digital future: The main change, as mentioned by several speakers, is that we produce a vast amount of data nowadays and will produce even more in the near future. As Paul-Olivier says, this data is produced in the most casual contexts, such as

when travelling with public transport or booking an appointment in the hospital. However, as mentioned several times in the discussion, this data tends to be under control of only a limited amount of companies mainly, leading to systemic problems such as the absence of information, presence of disinformation as well as issues of transparency. There is a "buzzy element" to our digital future, as put by Pascal. However, Maja accentuates the important role that effective data governance will play in our digital future, as it is a central component in building "reliable, responsible and human-centered AI and ML systems". Thereby, we need to question all human rights revolving around who should own our data, who should control our data, and how all involved stakeholders can get a benefit from it – and balance the power structures accordingly, as indicated by Lene. Discussing to what extent internet users are aware of the costs and benefits of participating in the data economy, Thomas asserts that while people are mostly aware of the practicality and efficiency arising from the increased exchange of data, more and more people also realize the risks that come with it, such as control issues, alarming us that we indeed need to find a way to make people able to control their personal data and get a share of the created benefits.

How to approach a perceived trade-off between the data potential and the protection of individual rights?

Diving deeper into the interplay between data protection and innovation, Pascal asserts that data does not per se hinder innovation: Developments like the creation of digital twins, for example, are instances where data protection even triggered innovation. However, again, data is highly siloed in today's data economy, since the major companies, that so many of us depend on, carefully select which data they will share and which data they will protect. Instead, Paul-Olivier suggests that we should implement a human-centred approach to data regulation, where the integration point for

all data are the users themselves: Their needs, desires and opportunities should be given highest priority, in order to build and maintain more trust in our data economy. Building upon this notion of trust, Thomas argues that a trusted data space would be beneficial, in which all kinds of stakeholders who want data to be used for the benefit of us all, such as the code of conduct which is being created as part of the Swiss Digital Self-Determination Platform: While creating this platform, companies were often found not to realize the potential of digitization because the customers were afraid to be tracked, and as a result, the companies feared to lose their customers. Therefore, Thomas suggests that we should look into what all parties are afraid to lose, in order to eventually build up more trust when it comes to the exchange of data.

Engaging citizens: How can users become active digital citizens?

Thomas argues that the fact that most of us have a contract with the five biggest companies in the world, that own a large portion of our data, is a deliberate decision. It might have a negative spillover on the individuals' data privacy, but it simply is the lowest-effort option. Instead, Thomas suggests that citizens should want to know about the flow of their data.

The EU's General Data Protection Regulation, for example, has given European citizens a better control over the use of their data along with the designated data authorities across the Member States which represent its citizens against infringing companies via fines. Thomas asserts that the "GDPR showed that if Europe's consumers and policymakers pull the same rope, they are actually big enough to make a difference", but when making use of internet platforms, the GDPR-related pop-ups are formulated quite cumbersomely: Consumers "really need to want to care and click on all these buttons" to take control of the protection of their data eventually.

What roles for governments, civil society and the private sector?

Paul-Olivier acknowledges that citizens are partly responsible for the oligopoly shared between only a few firms that control such a high proportion of our data. However, drawing on several examples, such as when being treated in a hospital or when buying a newspaper subscription, it is a hard task for the users to follow the flow of their personal data. In addition to that, even within companies there is a substantial asymmetry of data access, which is why it takes a while for whistle-blowers to obtain any sensitive data. Therefore, Paul-Olivier addresses the necessity of the private sector, and especially the big companies owning a lot of data, to balance the access to data across the firms but also within the firms active in the internet industry.

Coming from a legal perspective, Lene adds that the human rights community does not have the role of providing solutions to all affected policy domains, but rather of focusing on implementing the underlying global values into the International Human Rights Law. Thereby, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights would serve as the standards for the regulation of the creation, collection and usage of data in business. As also indicated by Paul-Olivier, the internet industry should thereby commit to and address all human rights in their data policy and not just select some salient issues.

Finally, the importance of cooperation between all these stakeholders was addressed by several speakers. Maja accentuates the importance of maintaining a multi-stakeholder governance, where policymakers, data holders and data producers (including the most affected communities) all have a say and pro-actively try to implement effective and equitable data policy. Thereby, places where all of these stakeholders are present can serve as the place to make this happen, such as the digital policy hub found in Geneva.

The transcript of the full panel discussion can be found here.

Quotes

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"Data governance is the mother of artificial intelligence - not just the cousin, but the mother: If data governance is not done right, many things can go wrong. Thus, it's an essential building block in the process of building reliable, responsible and human-centred AI and ML systems."
- on the importance of data governance in creating a human-centric data economy

Maja Bogataj Jančič, Co-Chair of the Data Governance Working Group in the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence and Head of the Intellectual Property Institute

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"We need to think about one of the biggest considerations, issues like data privacy: Who owns our data? How can we control who owns our data? How is data used to enable us to navigate society?" - on urge to committing to the human right of privacy in setting the digital future

Lene Wendland, Chief of Business & Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

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"I wouldn't necessarily set the one against the other: you'd be surprised by how many examples there are where regulation basically triggers more innovation." - on the interplay between innovation and data regulation

Pascal Marmier, Secretary General, Economy of Trust Foundation, SICPA

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"You need to know what each of the actors is afraid of losing: If you don't know, you will never get them to trust you, because everybody has got something to lose." - on the challenges of creating a trusted data space
"The GDPR showed that if Europe's 500 million consumers and some policymakers pull the same rope, they're actually big enough to make a difference." - on the potential of the General Data Protection Regulation

Thomas Schneider, Head of International Relations at the Federal Office for Communications of Switzerland (OFCOM) & Co-Lead Swiss Network Digital Self-Determination

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"There is a huge imbalance and huge asymmetry of knowledge: just a few people inside some of the biggest companies in the world have a perspective on social impact of their own big company of tens of thousands of people." - on data access asymmetry across as well as within firms

Paul-Olivier Dehay, President of PersonalData.io, Board Member of MyData.org & CEO of Hestia. AI