Press Release

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: DIGITAL SECURITY CALLS FOR GREATER GLOBAL COOPERATION

The International Digital Security Forum (IDSF) in Vienna initiated a global dialogue to increase the security of our digital systems

Digital security concerns us all. That is the key takeaway from this year's International Digital Security Forum (IDSF) which was held in Vienna on 2 and 3 December – in digital format due to the coronavirus. Ensuring the security of our data and digital systems is a key prerequisite for realising the potential offered by digitalisation. All our digital infrastructures must be extremely reliable within a global context, including the omnipresent social media platforms, the video communications systems we currently use while working from home, the widely-used government agency networks and citizens' services, digitally networked factories, the data infrastructures supporting healthcare, energy supply and telecommunications, and smart home applications. The experts are calling for intensive international cooperation to ensure this can be achieved.

The aim of the two-day event titled "Security in times of pandemics and major global events" was to encourage the international exchange of information and cooperation between research, business, public administration and politics and to establish partnerships to combat and reduce the damage caused by crises.

Politics, business, research and users all at the table

The IDSF brought together a wide range of central organisations and high-ranking officials and experts in the field. The conference was organised by the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology and ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA in cooperation with go-international, a shared export-initiative of the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. The conference attracted more than 500 participants from over 40 countries.

This year's IDSF was opened by Federal Chancellor **Sebastian Kurz**, who highlighted the importance of secure solutions in an increasingly digital and networked world. Welcome addresses were also given by **Margarete Schramböck,** Federal Minister for Digital and Economic Affairs, and **Christian Weissenburger**, Head of the Department for Innovation and Technology at the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, who represented Federal Minister **Leonore Gewessler.** He underscored the innovative power of Austrian research and business and the importance of creating the framework conditions needed for technological developments. **Andreas Reichhardt,** Head of the Department for Telecommunications, Security and Defence Research at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism, delivered a keynote address on behalf of Federal Minister

Elisabeth Köstinger. In his keynote, he presented Austria's security research programme and noted the high quality and dynamism of the Austrian R&D landscape. **Karl Nehammer**, Federal Minister of the Interior, opened the second day of the conference by stressing the strong political interest in the topic: "We want to make the digital world a welcoming and safe place: the efforts we make today are vital to ensure a prosperous, secure and democratic digital future," he said.

International support for the conference

The high relevance of the topics of the IDSF conference were welcomed by international organisations such as the UN. **Vladimir Voronkov**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Office (UNOCT) in New York, highlighted in his speech the evolving threat scenarios which, to be effectively addressed, require strong multilateral cooperation. **Arne Schönbohm**, President of the German Federal Office for Information Security (BSI), used his keynote to highlight the importance of reaching out to international partners, and strengthening communication with all relevant stakeholders – Europe should be much more confident in doing so, and drive the development of global standards. Finally, the **Hon. Vincent Waiswa Bagiire,** Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Information Communications Technology and National Guidance in Uganda, explained the importance of digitalisation for social and economic development in African countries. He offered the example of Uganda which plans to transform from an agricultural economy to a flourishing digital economy by 2040; this will depend on cybersecurity and international cooperation.

Discussions on cybercrime, virtual currencies and fake news

The following key topics of digital security were discussed in various discussion panels: cybersecurity and cybercrime, safe artificial intelligence, protection against abuse of virtual currencies, effective digital platforms for crisis and disaster management, contactless biometric sensor technologies, fight against international terrorism, and resilience of digital infrastructures. Special emphasis was placed on the topic of combating disinformation, which the corona pandemic has made even more urgent. The discussions focused on the impact of fake news on the social and political order, as well as the new role of the media.

Europe should be a pioneer

Intensive international cooperation is needed to combat cybercrime. "At the moment, no single stakeholder in the world can manage all the challenges alone. We must cooperate, and this requires mechanisms, international standards and treaties, as well as a common global understanding of how to use the Internet safely," said **Helmut Leopold**, initiator of the IDSF and Head of the Center for Digital Safety & Security at AIT. **Mariana Kühnel**, Deputy General Secretary of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and co-organisor of the IDSF stressed that: "There is no doubt that the coronavirus has triggered one of the world's greatest economic crises, and that this will lead to further, unpredictable consequences. But this crisis has also boosted digitalisation efforts. Digitalisation offers companies new opportunities, as well as challenges in the form of cyber-attacks and data leaks. And digital security depends not only upon technologies, but

AIT Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH
Giefinggasse 4 | 1210 Wien, Austria | T +43 (0) 50 550-4015 | presse@ait.ac.at | www.ait.ac.at

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about how we all act. It is always the human factor that makes us most vulnerable, and this is something we all need to be aware of in our new world. Interdisciplinary and international discussion of these topics is very important, and the International Digital Security Forum has provided the platform for this purpose."

Arne Schönbohm, President of the German Federal Office for Information Security (BSI), emphasized that Europe has a special role to play: "We have a lot of expertise and experience here in the EU member states. It is important that we use these resources to provide mutual support, and that we learn from one another," he said. EU initiatives such as the 2019 Cyber Security Act also impact partners in Asia and North America. "We should more confidently call for global standardisation in this field," the expert said.

Rafal Jaczynski, CSO at Huawei CEE & Nordics, confirmed that many IT systems are not well protected from cyber-attacks in practice. "Many companies are navigating the digitalisation ocean in cybersecurity canoes," he said. He stressed that while we already have sufficient know-how and technology to make systems secure, many companies and organisations are failing to pay enough attention to the issue. As well as applying available technologies, **Kai Rannenberg**, Professor at the University of Frankfurt and coordinator of the European CyberSec4Europe competence network, called for research efforts to be intensified and research findings more quickly transferred into practice. "We must continually acquire new competencies, because cybercriminals also have access to extensive knowledge," he said.

Global relevance of IDSF topics

The high relevance of this global topic was also demonstrated by the broad participation of international organisations such as the United Nations, government representatives and global industrial players such as SAS and Huawei, and international universities and research institutions.

AIT as a global service provider

AIT carried out a cybersecurity training course for the safe and secure operation of nuclear power plants at the Nuclear Security Training Centre (NSTC) at Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 16 to 20 November 2020. The course was organised on behalf of the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and URS Federal Services International and was delivered virtually due to the Covid situation. The aim of the training was to develop both awareness and skills required to develop, implement and maintain effective information and cybersecurity programmes for critical facilities.

Women in cybersecurity

Particular attention was also paid to the subject of women in the cybersecurity sector. This took the form of a breakout session which considered access barriers, opportunities and the experiences of women in this field. The webinar was organised by the World Institute for Nuclear Security (WINS).

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New global partnerships

The IDSF conference was accompanied by a virtual exhibition showcasing developments by Austrian and international organisations and companies, including the Austrian Defence & Security Industry (ASW) of the Austrian Economic Chamber, ARES - Cyber Intelligence, Attingo Datenrettung, CYBERTRAP Software, Digital Factory of the University of Applied Sciences Vorarlberg, Huemer-IT, Ikarus Security Software, KIVU Technologies, Kuratorium Sicheres Österreich (KSÖ), Lieber Lieber Software, msg Plaut, SBA Research, Softprom Distribution, Sparx Systems Central Europe, T3K-Forensics, World Institute for Nuclear Security (WINS) and X-Net Services. The event was supported by Huawei, SAS Institute and T3K-Forensics

On-demand content

In January 2021, the fascinating panel discussions will be made available on the IDSF website for registered users to view: www.idsf.io. Interesting photos of the event are already available at: https://idsf.io/impressions/

Contact:

Michael W. Mürling
Head of IDSF Event Organization
Marketing and Communications
AIT Austrian Institute of Technology
Center for Digital Safety & Security
T +43 (0)50550-4126
michael.muerling@ait.ac.at I www.ait.ac.at

Image description: The IDSF Organizing Team (from left): Donald Dudenhoeffer (AIT), Matthias Grabner (AWO), Verena Serini (AIT), Helmut Leopold (AIT), Michael Mürling (AIT); not in picture: Wolfgang Grabuschnig (AIT), Philipe Reinisch (AIT)

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Giefinggasse 4 | 1210 Wien, Austria | T +43 (0) 50 550-4015 | presse@ait.ac.at | www.ait.ac.at

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