

Press Release

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#IDSF22 – AUSTRIA AT THE CENTRE OF THE DIGITAL WORLD

The second International Digital Security Forum (IDSF) invited international stakeholders in the digital security landscape to a dialogue in Vienna

(Vienna) From 31 May to 2 June 2022, Vienna was not only a cultural hotspot, but also the international stage for digital security issues. Organised by the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology in partnership with the Austrian Defence and Security Industry Group (ASW) at the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, #IDSF22 offered a 3-day programme featuring over 100 prominent speakers from around the world. With over 250 participants at the event location, and more than 500 attending online from a total of 41 countries, what was initiated as a virtual conference in 2020 was this year presented in hybrid form with a strong physical component. This year's theme was "Secure Digitalization for a Safe, Green and Sustainable Future". A total of 15 sessions and 10 keynotes in the main programme, and a parallel Social Science Track on the second day, underscored the enormous breadth of research & development being undertaken to support digital security policies.

Set against the cultural backdrop of Vienna's Museumsquartier, leading scientists met prominent political figures, key representatives from international organisations (e.g. the United Nations, OSCE and IAEA), the European Union (EEAS, EU Commission, EP) and think tanks (GLOBSEC, IPCS, Demos, CNRS), managers from industry, and engaged stakeholders from civil society to discuss the opportunities and potential offered by digitalization, as well as the current technological and societal challenges, and to consider future forms of cooperation. The entire ISDF programme was livestreamed online, allowing a global community of participants interested in the issues to contribute to the Vienna-based conference.

Helmut Leopold, Head of the AIT Center for Digital Safety & Security and IDSF initiator: "In addition to the search for innovations and benefits of comprehensive digitalization and global networking, it is also essential that we intensively consider the ever expanding range of problems that digitalization brings. Our challenge is to control our technologies over the long term. A global, sustainable dialogue between research, industry and public authorities is vital for shaping digitalization to ensure it reflects our goals and values."

Official opening by Austrian politics and ambassadors

The video welcome message from Federal Chancellor **Karl Nehammer** was followed by contributions from **Florian Tursky**, Secretary of State for Digitalization at the Federal Ministry of Finance, Ambassadors **Faouzia Mebarki** (Algeria/UN), **Tadeusz Chomicki** (Poland/OSCE) and **Rasa Ostrauskaite** (EU), **Erich Albrechtowitz**, Ministerial Counsellor at the Federal Chancellery, and **Raffi Gregorian**, Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General and Director at the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). They provided an insight into the current political thinking on

the status of digitalization and cybersecurity, introducing the participants to the holistic security perspective and international focus of the conference programme. All the speakers stressed the importance of dialogue between science, industry and the public authorities, and thanked the organisers of IDSF.

Day 1: Countering Malicious Activities in Cyber-Space

We know what we don't like about the Internet, and its inherent weaknesses: crime, ideologization and antidemocratic tendencies. **Alex Krasodomski-Jones** of CSAM/Demos in London started his keynote on "What does Good look like?" with these statements, and offered some impressive approaches to counteracting them. Today, the volume and diversity of hostile activities in cyberspace has become one of the greatest challenges to democratic societies based on the rule of law. They impact civil society as well as the economy and state institutions. After an introductory video address from **Gerhard Karner**, Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior, the first day of ISDF22 took the form of four discussion rounds (sessions) examining the most significant varieties of digital threat: countering terrorism using digital technologies while also considering the ethical challenges involved; the criminal use of cryptocurrencies in conjunction with ransomware; law enforcement scenarios in a global, digital age; and the role and responsibility of governments in a post-factual age with respect to fake news.

Day 2: Protecting Digital National and International Critical Infrastructure

Critical infrastructures include all (supply) systems which are essential to the functioning of a state or community. Today, all critical infrastructures are highly digitalized, exposing them to online threats on an almost industrial scale. For that reason, the second day took the form of 6 further sessions focusing on different aspects: the energy paradigm, the importance of which cannot be overestimated in view of the energy required for digitalization and the related need for secure and sustainable energy generation in times of a global climate crisis; the significance of security research and development as an essential component of a competitive economy; the development and retention of a capable workforce to successfully manage digital transformation in all areas; supply chain security in terms of addressing cyber vulnerabilities and mutual dependencies; and finally, the question of the balance between data sharing and data sovereignty.

Day 2 also featured three special keynotes: **Franziska Brantner**, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action in Berlin, raised an important issue in her keynote titled "Digitalisation: A Driver for Sustainable Economic Development in Europe", namely mining the raw materials needed for digitalization. She considered the importance of reducing existing dependencies on China, while at the same time, in light of raw materials scarcity, finding strategies and methods for recycling and establishing a circular economy, and investing in these technologies. The keynote by **Lorena Boix Alonso**, Director for Digital Society, Trust and Cybersecurity at the Directorate General CNECT of the European Commission, who joined the conference online, presented the current status of Europe's strategy for digitalization and cybersecurity. **Francesca Musiani** from the Centre Internet et Société at CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) in Paris used her keynote "Can digital sovereignty be infrastructured?" to discuss whether the state needs to exert stronger control over digital infrastructure as an integral part of its territory, while at the same time highlighting the risks of

creating a potential geopolitical fragmentation of the Internet.

Understanding the Challenges of Digital Societies

The second day diverged from the format of the first IDSF held in December 2020 by introducing a Social Science Track. This new track, conceived and presented by the Vienna Centre for Societal Security (VICESSE) headed by **Reinhard Kreissl**, was run in parallel to the programme on the main stage and was designed primarily to examine the societal and social challenges of digital society. The four discussion panels reflected the diversity of stakeholders in the digital arena, the social dimensions of digital societies, the necessary risk management, and dealing with emerging artificial intelligence.

Two outstanding keynotes, one at the beginning of the programme and the second before the start of the afternoon session, stimulated significant interest. In the morning, **Dominika Hajdu**, Policy Director of the Centre for Democracy & Resilience at the international think tank GLOBSEC in Bratislava, offered her views on how to protect digitalized democracies: regulation, limiting the influence of antidemocratic third states, and deliberate action to counteract those players seeking to undermine the rule of law. **Prof. Michael Latzer**, Professor of Communication and Media Research at the IKMZ of the University of Zurich presented his innovative model of the 'digital trinity' – the co-evolutionary interaction between datafication of all areas of life, algorithmization of selection processes and platformization of markets.

Day 3: Security and International Relations

Digital security always has an international dimension and is highly reliant on cooperation among all its stakeholders. The third and final day of IDSF22 impressively demonstrated this principle, both in terms of the topics covered in the sessions, and with respect to the discussion participants who were drawn both from the civilian and military sector.

After a video message given by Austria's Federal Minister for Defence, **Claudia Tanner**, which opened the day's sessions, **Masood Karimipour**, Chief of the Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), offered an overview of the next steps in international digital cooperation (multistakeholderism). He was followed by Brigadier-General **Friedrich Teichmann** of the Austrian Armed Forces who highlighted the importance of satellite services as critical infrastructure and stressed our current dependence on these services. Further sessions examined issues including enhancing nuclear security against the backdrop of rapid technological advances, at the same time stressing the extreme vulnerability of these systems as demonstrated by the war in Ukraine. The discussions also explored the question of whether, in light of the current global geopolitical situation, a collective, global cybersecurity system is even possible, as well as the status of developments in responsible artificial intelligence, based on ethical principles, regulations and laws.

At the request of the Foreign Ministry, IDSF22 drew to a close with a focus on the use of digital technologies for peace missions and civilian conflict prevention in a global context. The session started with the topic of "smart missions", understood as the future process optimization of civilian peace missions in terms of ensuring the best possible levels of sustainability achieved through the use of trained personnel and digital tools and networking technologies. This was followed by a

discussion of the subsequent, medium-term use of PeaceTech (technologies, media, data) which have the potential to decisively contribute to preventing and positively transforming violent conflicts and hugely improving peace-building measures.

IDSF22 ended with a closing speech by **Lukas Mandl**, Member of the European Parliament and Vice Chair of the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence, who joined live from Brussels. He highlighted the importance of security for rapidly advancing digitalization: “Strengthening European security means investing more in order to contribute to our autonomy. Security means we need to unite the free world and contribute to human dignity and freedom worldwide.”

Parallel exhibition of innovative companies

The IDSF conference was also accompanied by an exhibition of innovative Austrian SMEs and global companies from the digital sector. Exhibitors included the Austrian Defence and Security Industry Group (ASW) at the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the KSÖ Kompetenzzentrum Sicheres Österreich, Verbund, IKARUS Security Software, X-Net Services, K-Businesscom AG (formerly Kapsch BusinessCom AG), Cybertrap, Lieber.Group with ThreatGet, msg Plaut Austria, Softprom, fragmentiX, W&H Dentalwerk, University for Continuing Education Krems, SBA Research, DFV Digital Factory Vorarlberg, FH Salzburg, Silkroad 4.0, Vienna Cyber Security and Privacy Research Cluster (VISP), and the Vienna Business Agency.

IDSF was also supported by A1, Huawei, msg Plaut Austria, Verbund, the World Institute for Nuclear Security (WINS), the DigitalCity.Wien initiative, the Vienna Business Agency in cooperation with the ViennaUp initiative and funded by the Vienna Meeting Fund via the Vienna Convention Bureau.

Broad national and international support

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IDSF is a certified Green Event

To reflect the theme of the conference – “Secure digitalization for a safe, green and sustainable future” – the entire conference was organized to comply with the Austrian Ecolabel for Green Events, applying a range of measures such as selecting regional suppliers and conserving resources at the event location to make the event as sustainable as possible.

On Demand Content

In the next few days, the fascinating keynotes, discussions and selected presentations 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/idsf-2022/impressions>

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