

## Press release

Vienna, 05/10/2023

### IDSF23: AUSTRIA AS A HOTSPOT FOR THE DIGITAL SECURITY COMMUNITY

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Digital Security Forum (IDSF23), international digitalisation community stakeholders from around 35 countries met in Vienna to discuss aspects of "Digital Resilience – The Basis for a Safe, Secure and Free Society".

Vienna (AIT) – Held for the third time, IDSF23 (19-21 September 2023) once again impressively demonstrated its distinctiveness as an international meeting point for security experts active at the interface of diplomacy, politics, IT industry and science. In just three years, the brand developed for the Forum has matured into a globally recognisable reference for solution-oriented and sustainable multi-stakeholder exchange on core topics of digital security.

The conference was designed as a tried-and-tested mix of inspiring keynotes and top-class discussion panels. IDSF23 featured 8 keynotes and 13 sessions with more than 100 speakers. Over the 3 days of the event, more than 500 participants attended this international hotspot for digital security.

"We are very proud that, in such a short time, we have succeeded in bringing together a unique community from diplomacy, politics, the IT industry and academia to tackle the challenges of our digital transformation," says IDSF initiator Helmut Leopold.

#### IDSF's success owes much to broad international support and cooperation

IDSF23, organised by the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology in cooperation with the Austrian Security and Defence Industries Group (ASW) of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the Competence Center Secure Austria (KSÖ), was able to further increase the attractiveness of the programme content on the three conference days, as demonstrated by the broad public support at home and abroad.

In addition to the Austrian Federal Administration represented by the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Ministry of Finance with the State Secretariat for Digitalisation and Telecommunications and the Federal Ministry of Defence, international organisations such as the United Nations, the OSCE and the IAEA all supported the forum, as did renowned industrial sponsors (SAAB COMBITECH, msg Plaut and Trend Micro Austria), and Raiffeisen as the location host for the conference.

In the interests of providing the broadest possible coverage of current challenges involved in establishing digital resilience in business, government and society, the conference explored the following digitalisation and related security issues:

- TechDiplomacy and responsible technology development and handling of sensitive data in a global context
- Use of trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Digitalisation for modern crisis, conflict and disaster management
- Advancing digital security through digital innovation
- Cybersecurity for critical infrastructures

In addition to the dialogue forum, IDSF partner VICESSE (Vienna Centre for Societal Security) ran a parallel conference for the international scientific community on the topic of "(De)centralisation of digital infrastructures" on the second day of the conference.

#### International significance of the conference

On Tuesday, 19 September 2023, at 2:00 p.m., Helmut Leopold, IDSF initiator and Head of the Center for Digital Safety & Security at AIT, opened the third IDSF on behalf of the Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, Karl Nehammer. This year's conference was held at the Raiffeisen Forum Vienna as a purely in-person event for the first time.

Raffi Gregorian, Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General and Director of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), who attended last year, via a video message due to the UN General Assembly being held in New York at the same time, then made an urgent appeal to the IDSF participants to work together to protect global critical infrastructures and to respect human rights in the best possible way, and underlined the positive cooperation already established between the UN and AIT.

Afterwards, Spain, which currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union according to the six-month rotation principle, honoured the Forum with the appearance of its Ambassador to Austria, Cristina Fraile. In her opening speech she outlined her country's priorities for a broader European digitalisation policy, including digitalised re-industrialisation and the implementation of important legal instruments including the AI Act, and consolidation of the European Digital Identity or the Cyber Resilience Act. She also explicitly welcomed the granting of a new mandate to the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) this spring, with the introduction of the Cyber Security Act as an EU-wide certification framework for enhancing cybersecurity.

The conference opening was rounded off by a keynote address given by Bjørn Berge, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe (CoE), Strasbourg. In his speech, he explained the role of the Council of Europe in the global governance of AI and other emerging technologies and addressed their geopolitical implications. He saw the biggest challenges as countering cybercrime, data protection and with it the right to a private life and human dignity, and the development of human-centred AI.

#### Responsible technology development, artificial intelligence

In the first panel in Track 1 "Responsible Technology Development", chaired by Claudia Reinprecht, Head of the Department for Telecommunications, Digital and Tech Diplomacy at the

Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA), security experts examined the topic of "Tech Diplomacy in the 21st Century" from a geopolitical perspective. Based on the realisation that technologies are critical factors for innovation and competitiveness, as well as for the national security and military strength of states, the not always frictionless relationship between companies, governments and societies in the digital space was discussed, as well as the development of strategies for global regulation and governance of key technologies used for political power play, such as artificial intelligence and quantum technologies.

The transition to Session Track 2 "Artificial Intelligence" was provided by the Rector of the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Misha Glenny, with his philosophically underpinned keynote on "AI, Cybercrime and Human Scale". He showed how in the past dramatic and political upheavals have always led to deep technological changes, and indicated how humanity has found it increasingly difficult to strike a balance between the needs of progress and the needs of humanity. In light of the ever-increasing power and ubiquity of artificial intelligence and its use for cybercrime, we urgently need a return to human control of our technologies.

The first day of the conference ended with the panel on "Trustworthy and Socially Responsible AI". The topics ranged from information integrity and bias avoidance to ensuring the transparency of AI algorithms, and the need for broad public education and combating disinformation through AI in the news world. Traceability and explainability of AI-supported system processes are vital if we are to improve trust in machines and our understanding of AI.

### Modern crisis, conflict and disaster management and improved global security through digital technologies

The second day of the conference began with an opening speech by Josef Schröfl, Deputy Director of the Col on Strategy and Defence and Head of the Cyber workstrand at the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, Helsinki, Finland. Referring to the Ukraine war, he noted that in view of the new type of warfare involving mass disinformation campaigns and targeted cyber-attacks on critical digital infrastructures, it is no longer sufficient to defend oneself exclusively by military means, and emphasised that the parallel and effective defence of cyberspace has become essential.

Afterwards, in the first keynote of the day, Lars van Dassen, Executive Director of the World Institute for Nuclear Security (WINS), gave an insight into the operation of critical infrastructures in difficult environments using the example of Ukraine. He impressively demonstrated the difficult and extremely stressful situations in which people in their fight for democracy and freedom go to great lengths to maintain the secure operation of critical infrastructures.

Afterwards, Session Track 3 addressed the transformation in crisis and disaster management which results from digital innovations, and the opportunities this has created to respond to transnational threats in a more effective and coordinated manner. It then discussed how modern digitalisation tools (e.g., social media, geographic information systems, data analytics and virtual training technologies) can be used to make peace missions in hybrid crisis theatres more secure and better support the diverse international efforts in civilian crisis and conflict management.

The afternoon began with a keynote address in the form of a prepared video presentation given by Guilherme Canela Godoi, Chief of the Section of Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris. He referred to UNESCO's global "Internet4Trust" initiative to develop guidelines for drawing up principles and processes for content moderation and curation in the digital space which also fully consider human rights and freedom of expression.

The following Session Track 4 "Advancing Global Security Through Digital Innovation", discussed tools, technologies and strategies for combating organised crime, as well as innovations and services for counter-terrorism strategies. The first discussion focused on various border security measures conducted by law enforcement agencies, while the second presented the CT (Countering Terrorist) Travel Programme of UNOCT (United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism) in detail. The third panel round dealt with responsible digital identity management, examining security standards to protect against misuse, as well as technological solutions for improved privacy protection and real data protection.

The third and final keynote on the second day of the conference was given by Ludmyla Rabchynska, CGI Executive Consultant, OECD Consultant, and former Deputy Minister for Digital Transformation in Ukraine. She gave an insight into the systematic destruction of Ukraine's critical infrastructure that Russia has been attempting for years. The main targets were government facilities, information and energy systems, telecommunications and financial centres. Between 2013 and 2021, around 40 million cyber incidents were registered in Ukraine, the result of Russian espionage, disruption of information services, and attempted information psychological influence.

The last panel of the day presented technology funding systems and partnerships. First, Ralph Hammer, Director of the Staff Department for Security Research and Technology Transfer at the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF), addressed the special "K-PASS" (Cybernet-Pass) directive which has now been launched alongside the KIRAS and FORTE research programmes. This is the first research funding instrument established in Austria that is completely geared towards cyber security and is exemplary within the EU. Lydia Lindner from the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) then explained the European funding programmes which play an important role in establishing a necessary innovation ecosystem for digital security in the EU.

### Cyber security for critical infrastructures

The final day of the conference was opened with a video greeting by the Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Moldova, Adrian Efros, who emphasised the need for cooperation between European nations in order to establish a common security doctrine for the digital space.

Afterwards, in her keynote speech "A never ending battle: How to build and maintain societal resilience to foreign malign influence", Dominika Hajdu, Director of the Centre for Democracy and Resilience at the Slovakian thinktank GLOBSEC in Bratislava, presented the results of studies conducted into developing and consolidating societal opinion on the Ukraine war in the face of widespread disinformation, and how our democratic societies can defend themselves.

The rest of the morning was devoted to 3 panels highlighting different issues in Session Track 5 "Cyber Security".

The first focused on the disruptive challenge of establishing reliable and secure data exchange ecosystems that can build and expand trust in infrastructures, stakeholders, and data exchange mechanisms which different industries perceive to be necessary.

The second panel, with Walter Fraiße, Head of Information Security at Verbund AG, Austria, and Wolfgang Rosenkranz, Team Leader of the Austrian Energy CERT, focused on "Securing the Energy Sector: Strategies for Building Resilience against Cyber Attacks". Resembling a small energy summit, it explored a range of current challenges such as network monitoring, incident response, continuity management and recovery, as well as using new IT and OT technologies from the cloud to overcome supply chain insecurities. From a scientific perspective, more research is needed to develop state-of-the-art protection methods which effectively counter the increasing threats.

The panel that concluded the morning was entitled "Bridging the Gap: Strategies for Global Collaboration between Security, Standardisation and Policy Making Communities" and dealt with strategies for interlinking these building blocks. The discussion ranged from the automotive industry, where product approvals are already linked to regulatory requirements, to the cybersecurity certification of products and IoT systems, and the importance of security by design in developing resilient systems. The session also referred to the NIS2 Directive and highlighted its relevance for establishing cybersecurity standards.

The final stage of IDSF23 highlighted the topic of digital security from a political, economic and scientific perspective.

At the beginning of the afternoon, Florian Tursky, State Secretary for Digitalisation and Telecommunications at the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF), gave his keynote speech on "The Importance of Digital Transformation", highlighting how we can master the shift into the digital world. He believes the supporting pillars of collaboration, skills, and, of course, the intensive examination of artificial intelligence as well as its human regulation are the basis for a sound digital transformation as addressed in the EU's upcoming AI Act. This should also serve to reduce fears among the population.

The final keynote of the conference by Senadin Alisic, Strategy Advisor at Combitech AB, Sweden, titled "Unlocking and Protecting Value: Transforming Industrial Ecosystems and Smart Cities with Cybersecurity Vigilance", emphasised the importance of the emerging data economy, which will fundamentally change existing business models. He presented three impressive data space examples in the areas of smart cities, sustainable mining, and highly effective port logistics operations.

The penultimate conference panel on "Building Cyber Resilience: National Strategies for Capacity Development in Cybersecurity" brought together experts from the European cybersecurity arena to discuss the challenge of developing the necessary skills for critical infrastructure operators, public authorities and, ultimately, the entire economy. The corresponding training initiatives and training

methods of the IAEA, UN Office for Counter Terrorism, as well as the new initiative for the implementation of an EU Cyber Security Skill Academy were presented.

The panel on "Navigating the EU Data Strategy: Challenges and Opportunities for Industry and Public Authorities" discussed current strategies and developments to create modern federated IT architectures that support sovereign and trusted data exchange in order to drive new data-driven business cases.

The EU Gaia-X initiative was also discussed. This is an initiative to develop open source technical solutions and establish open specifications, enabling the development of open and standardised system architecture for federated data exchange platforms as a means of forming effective "data spaces" in different market segments.

The closing speech of IDSF23 was held by Karoline Edtstadler, Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution at the Federal Chancellery. She formulated Austria's concept of an open, free, secure and global internet, in which human rights are always the first consideration. In doing so, she referred to the important interlinking of politics, science and society. In her speech, she also offered insights into her work on the Leadership Panel of the UN-based Internet Governance Forum (IGF) to which she was appointed last year by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for a two-year term as one of its 10 members.

#### Parallel Social Science Track on the second conference day

IDSF23 also continued the successful cooperation with the Vienna Centre for Societal Security (VICESSE), which started last year. As part of this cooperation, a "Social Science Track" was held on Wednesday, 20 September 2023, in parallel to the IDSF main programme. The meta-theme "(De-)Centralization of Digital Infrastructures" was reflected in 2 keynotes and four thematic sessions, combined with the sub-themes "Decentralisation, Open Source and Open Data".

Anja Klauzer and Veronika Nowak from SBA Research touched on the importance of "Open Source Intelligence for Energy Infrastructures" in their keynote, and Jeanette Klonk from the FFG shed light on the topic of "Research and Innovation for an Open, Inclusive and Secure Society".

The three sessions "Digital Infrastructures and Supply Infrastructures", "The Power of Social Media Platforms" and "Digital Infrastructures of Governance", which were spread over the day, highlighted important aspects of the ongoing infrastructure discussion. A concluding round table on "Hypercriticality: Establishing Safety & Security of Entangled Infrastructures" once again summarised the challenges posed by the dense entanglement of critical, digital infrastructures.

#### Accompanying exhibition of innovative Austrian SMEs and global companies

IDSF23 also continued the tradition of an accompanying exhibition at which innovative domestic companies (SMEs) and organisations in the IT sector, as well as research institutions, were able to present their developments to an interested and knowledgeable professional audience. This year's exhibitors were the Austrian Security and Defence Industries Group (ASW) of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the Competence Centre Secure Austria (KSÖ), SAAB COMBITECH, msg Plaut, Trend Micro Austria, X-Net Services, Misbar, Nimbusec, Bacher Systems, fragmentiX,

Cytraction, Rohde & Schwarz, Sustainista, SBA Research, Digital Factory Vorarlberg, Silkroad 4.0, Vienna Cyber Security and Privacy Research Cluster (VISP), and the Vienna Business Agency.

### IDSF sponsors and supporters

SAAB COMBITECH was the European industry's main sponsor of the International Digital Security Forum Vienna 2023. Raiffeisen generously supported the conference by providing the Raiffeisen Forum Vienna as the event location. Other sponsors and supporters were the Competence Centre Secure Austria (KSÖ), the Austrian Security and Defence Industries Group (ASW) of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, the DigitalCity.Wien Initiative, the Austrian Security Research Programmes KIRAS and FORTE, AED, msg Plaut, Trend Micro Austria, Verbund, World Institute of Nuclear Security (WINS), the European Security and Defense College, the Vienna Business Agency and relevant Austrian federal ministries. The conference organisers would like to thank all supporting partners who ensured the high quality of this conference.

### This year's IDSF was also a Green Event

IDSF23 was again run in accordance with the guidelines for Green Meetings & Green Events.

### Revisit IDSF

Video recordings of all IDSF23 keynotes and sessions, as well as selected presentations, will soon be available on the Forum website <http://idsf.io> for all registered participants to view. Interested parties unable to attend the conference in Vienna and who are not yet registered will soon be able to register on the website, giving them access to the entire content. Photos of the event are already available on the Forum website at <https://idsf.io/impressions-2023/> and can be used with the copyright reference *IDSF/Katharina Schiffli*.

### Press contact:

Mag. (FH) Michael W. Mürling  
Head of IDSF Event Organization  
Marketing and Communications  
AIT Austrian Institute of Technology  
Centre for Digital Safety & Security  
T +43 (0)50550-4126  
[michael.muerling@ait.ac.at](mailto:michael.muerling@ait.ac.at) | [www.ait.ac.at](http://www.ait.ac.at)

Mag. Michael H. Hlava  
Head of Corporate and Marketing Communications  
AIT Austrian Institute of Technology  
T +43 (0)50550-4014  
[michael.hlava@ait.ac.at](mailto:michael.hlava@ait.ac.at) | [www.ait.ac.at](http://www.ait.ac.at)