



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
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IAF

**GUMMERSBACH DECLARATION 2019 ON
DIGITIZATION
AND HUMAN
RIGHTS**

IAF Seminar Paper

Safeguarding Freedom in the Digital World

International Academy for Leadership (IAF)

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Gummersbach Declaration 2019 on Digitization and Human Rights

Foreword

“Do you see the L?” - “Yes, we see the L,” came the response

This dialog took apparently place via a long distance phone call and made history, because it accompanied a particular experiment:

For the first time ever, a word was being typed into one computer and could be read on another within the four-node network between UCLA, Stanford Research Institute (SRI), UC Santa Barbara (UCSB), and the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. The complete word was supposed to be “*login*” and even if the system crashed after typing the “*g*”: a revolution has just started!

This happened in 1969 – the idea of allowing humans to communicate via computers in a network had only emerged roughly a decade earlier.

Subsequently the World Wide Web came into being and with it a completely new world emerged. One full of opportunities, knowledge, communication, information, transparency - a world that seemed to become a more levelled one than ever before. Humans are still working on more connections and networks, are inventing new technologies or are making improvements all of which were unimaginable not long ago.

The internet today is part of everyday life. Nearly everybody is part of this new digitally connected world and everything that has an impact on it can instantly affect everybody, every community with its institutions, rules, social norms. This can question and change structures of power or cooperations within and between communities; relationships that have evolved over a very long time.

Looking at the digital realm today inspires to celebrate technological progress and, at the same time sparks the urge to examine its impact on our societies, our values and principles. For liberals freedom is the ultimate measuring stick. What is happening now to values and principles such as example the rule of law, property rights, freedom of speech, freedom of choice, or competition? Does digitalisation support or endanger individual liberties and rights? How can we protect earlier achievements towards more freedom in the world and develop them even further in the future?

This paper is the result of 22 participants exploring some of these and other questions during the recent IAF Seminar titled “Safeguarding Freedom in the Digital World”.

Dr. Stefan Melnik and Enikő Gal, both passionate liberals and knowledgeable defenders of human rights and individual liberties, have composed and facilitated this programme. They created a wonderful space for exploring the challenges and thinking through possible solutions. Our guests and friends from around the world enjoyed the experience and made extensive use of working together. They are happy to share with you their most important results by putting together this paper.

Bettina Solinger

International Academy for Leadership (IAF)

Working group: Principles for law makers to follow in creating a citizen-based digital world

Areas of crucial concern for policy makers were identified as being the following:

- the treatment of personal data
- data privacy
- intellectual property rights with equal attention given to both creators and consumers and
- maintenance and further development of the standards embodied in the *Universal Bill of Rights*.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING

1. The government must see itself as a facilitator in the process.
2. It must address the public on all important issues and ensure full information.
3. The best way forward is consultation and cooperation with NGOs and the private sector, the principle being to involve all stakeholders.

INCLUSIVITY

1. The interests of minorities and marginalised or disadvantaged groups must be taken into account.
2. The same applies to “non-digital citizens”.
3. Social innovations that serve public interests must be incentivized.

DIGITAL LITERACY

1. Digital literacy means digital empowerment
2. It must be an integral part of the process of education, both formal and informal. In formal education this implies a radical updating of curricula.
3. Promoting digital literacy is also a must in the field of adult education and, in particular, continuing education for elderly people.

4. The challenge of digital literacy cannot be met without the initiation of proper *train-the-trainers* programmes on a wide scale.

E-GOVERNANCE

1. One window digitized government services are a welcome opportunity to reduce bureaucracy and improve customer service for citizens.
2. Easy access is a must in e-governance.
3. Properly applied e-governance includes greater transparency
4. Data integration and portability must be taken into account when developing such services.
5. E-governance properly implemented is a way of ensuring that the right to information is respected.
6. Governments and legislators should study examples of e-governance that are already operating (eg, in Estonia).

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

1. Reduce government involvement in the private sector is an important guideline for insuring both efficient government and individual freedom.
2. To this end an increase of private participation in public affairs is highly desirable.
3. The obligation on government and the legislature is to provide services that are truly citizen-oriented and widely available. This implies ensuring an inclusive technical infrastructure, a right to access public digital media services and a framework that encourages actors to provide services that are affordable.

Working group: Policy guidelines for the digital world

DIGITAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

1. Integrate digital literacy into curricula in preparation for digital citizenship.
2. Produce manuals, publications, multimedia and grassroots instruments to increase digital awareness. Involve private sector and civil society in the creation of digital awareness instruments for public dissemination.
3. Conduct technological awareness trainings for policy-makers over 40.

E-GOVERNANCE AND PATHWAYS TOWARDS DIGITIZATION

1. Craft a comprehensive and flexible roadmap for digitization based on the best practices from other countries (e.g. Estonia). Approach this strategy from a rights-based lens, and include aspects of digital infrastructure, cybersecurity and defense, e-governance, digital literacy, data privacy, among others.
2. Harness digital technologies for greater efficiency and accountability in governance, including the use of big data for better decision-making and blockchain for greater privacy and security.

LEGISLATION

1. Ensure that digital legislation gives effect to existing rights, especially those on privacy, freedom of expression, etc.
2. Enshrine *net neutrality* in legislation.
3. Create an office for digital affairs under the leadership of an Ombudsman.

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

1. Create a consortium that links civil society actors in the interests of creating a more robust citizen-oriented digital environment.
2. Create a regional independent study group to analyze the processes and data of platforms, with the end-goal of drafting a reform plan to ensure the integrity of public discourse against malevolent actors. Ensure greater cross-border cooperation to address and craft strategies against disinformation, social engineering, democratic capture through digital means, and to assert individual autonomy and rights.
3. Pursue an agreement at the international level as regards standards for the protection of human rights online, possibly even a multilateral treaty on digital rights.

Authors

The 22 participants of 16 different countries who took part in the seminar „Safeguarding Freedom in a Digital World“ of the International Academy for Leadership (IAF), 13 – 25 October 2019, in Gummersbach, Germany.

Together with the facilitators of the seminar, Dr Stefan Melnik and Enikő Gal.

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