



*CPDP 2018*

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*Values and Shifts in the Digital Age*

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Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to welcome you to this afternoon's panel discussion.

Two years ago I sat on this podium and announced this new project on ethics and data driven technologies.

It is fair to say that there were some sceptical looks among friends in the data protection community.

CPDP can be regarded as a weather-vane for the most important current topics related to privacy and data protection.

And this year I counted a total of 11 panels at this conference which, as described in the programme, explicitly address ethical questions.

Ethics and data protection seem intertwined like never before and I observe an ever-closer convergence between the two. Many issues related to ethics involve personal data; data protection authorities now face ethical questions that legal analysis alone cannot address.

Whenever I approach an ethicist to talk about ethics, part of my motivation, to be honest, is to take a break from data protection.

No such luck!

They all want to talk data protection principles. Data protection is one of their biggest concerns.

At the session this week on AI at Davos, privacy was highlighted as the big question to be tackled.

And yet, for DPAs and controllers, ethics is not yet a priority - with some notable exceptions. (Look for example at the excellent recent blog by Liz Denham, the UK Information Commissioner).

But let us not be too critical. Data protection legal experts are exhausted by all the legal changes and case law.

They are of course right when they say that there is a 'GDPR ethics', contained in the ideas of accountability and fairness.

But let us not pretend that the GDPR will, by itself, fix the glaring inequalities and unfairness which increasingly characterise the digitised society and economy.

We are striving towards a new model of treating people with dignity in the midst of pervasive technology.

We are looking for a simple maxim, a sort of digital Hippocratic Oath. An oath which all can understand - whether 'practitioners' or 'patients' in the digital operating theatre.

With the debate taking place this week, it will continue to grow - but not for ever. Soon the New becomes the Normal. Now is our window of opportunity in this convergence.

Data Protection rules will not alone make the world a better place. Today, most of the companies want to be compliant with data protection rules. This is good news. However, I doubt this will be enough to preserve a vivid democracy, our autonomy of choice or our capacity to develop our own personality.

Technologies allows human minds to be hijacked, changing the way we think and making us less rational and more and more impulsive.

Predictive algorithms are rating us in countless aspects of our lives. Recent investigations show how much these systems reinforce inequalities and exclusion.

Are technologies shaping our values?

The GDPR adapts to new and not so new technologies. It is reactive, its aim is to avoid arms and mitigate risks for the individuals. It does not proactively support a project for the future of our society.

To repeat: I am not trying to complement the GDPR with a new set of rules. This project is more ambitious;

We are looking beyond compliance mechanisms to understand how the digital age is changing the society and the person's daily life and see if ethics can do something about it.

Today the Ethics Advisory Group we set up meets for the last time to present its ideas to you.

This has been an independent group. That means that, even if I host their meetings, I do not take part in them.

Their report has just been published on our website. And I want to thank them for their work - done entirely voluntarily.

I am delighted Jim Dratwa, the secretary of the European Group on Ethics in Science and Technology moderates this panel. It confirms the convergence I have mentioned to you. We have been cooperating with the Ethics Group from Commission and will cooperate in the future.

We will now be in a listening mode until around June as we seek to expand the conversation further.

Expect a further paper which we will prepare for the 40th edition of the International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners which we host here in Brussels in October.

So now over to Jim.