



DIGITAL ENLIGHTENMENT FORUM 2013- SUMMARY

Personal Data and Citizenship in the Digital Society

Brussels, 18-20 Sep 2013

Set against a “post-Snowden” back drop of eroding public trust in the Digital Society, the Digital Enlightenment Forum 2013 provided a timely opportunity for an interdisciplinary discussion on how to valorise the current change in public consciousness and the new awareness of the threats involved, and bend these into a constructive solution finding process.

The goal of this process is to help build, step by concrete step a new Digital Social Covenant between Government, the Private sector and the individual citizen that builds Trust and guarantees autonomy and freedom of the individual.

The new Data Protection framework that the EU institutions are expected to deliver in the spring of 2014 provides good progress in some DP areas such as enabling individuals to move their personal data freely from one provider to another, or ensuring better enforcement.

An important next step can be the creation of a program for context-aware Personal Data management and related technological tools that enable the individual to effectively not being tracked in some contexts and, more generally , to control actual access to and use of his personal data by either government or business.

This desired contextual end-user control and current business models and government practices clearly do not match. New business models need to be invented which do not require total surveillance as a prerequisite for convenient and (so –called) “free” services.

A very useful step in this direction would be the reinvention of the concept of the user-agent to be supported by trustworthy applications that help the individual asses the economic and social value of his personal data (currently obscured by providers) and manage it effectively.

Urgent measures are proposed to start remedying the growing gaps in the Trust infrastructure supply chain including standards, technical testing and risk analysis. In this context trust must be seen as the fundamental issue overcoming artificial “digital sovereignty” obstacles.

The rapidly evolving ability to process “big data” does not merely increase the threat to privacy. It actually transforms it in ways that render vacuous previously operational concepts such as Purpose limitation and Notice and Consent. In this context, electronic identity technologies can make fundamental contributions to personal data management.

The overall approach proposed aims to harness the humanism, the rationality (without overreliance on technological solutionism) and optimism (tempered by healthy scepticism) bequeathed by the 18th century Age of Enlightenment to better shape a vision of our common future in the evolving Digital Age, as well as the consequent steps to achieve it.

DEF 2013 calls for a genuinely accountable, context-dependent personal data ecosystem with the checks and balances needed to avoid being haunted by the spectre of a Digital Dark Age.