

DRAFT PROGRAMME

>TECH
AND
SOCIETY
SUMMIT<

1 October 2024
Residence Palace, Brussels

TRACK 1

09:00 - 10:00

Opening

10:00 - 11:30

PANEL: **Digital Austerity: impact of digitalisation on essential services**

11:30 - 13:00

PANEL: **Breaking Open Big Tech: a positive vision for a fairer digital economy**

13:00 - 14:00

Lunch

14:00 - 15:30

PANEL: **Exposing the environmental costs of technology: what's the alternative?**

15:30 - 17:00

PANEL: **Safety beyond surveillance: a rights and justice framework for safety in EU digital policies**

17:00 - 19:00

Drinks and closing

TRACK 2

Opening

ROUND-TABLE: **From broken by design to building a better internet from the ground up**

ROUND-TABLE: **Making EU laws work for people: best practices for engaging with civil society**

Lunch

ROUND-TABLE: **Community based alternatives: a tool to rein in Big Tech and build a healthy online public sphere**

ROUND-TABLE: **Brussels in the world: platform regulation and surveillance export control beyond 2024**

Drinks and closing

TRACK 1

10:00 - 11:30

» **PANEL - Digital Austerity: impact of digitalisation on essential services**

The current growing trend of digitalisation and datafication of public services is predicated upon a promise of increased flexibility, cost effectiveness and time gains. However, the forced march towards a ubiquitous digital life comes with multiple negative impacts on our privacy, dignity and autonomy, especially on those of us already experiencing social exclusion, including people living in homelessness, those who are undocumented, migrants, elderly people, people with disabilities or low-income groups. The right to access essential services and equal treatment are no longer guaranteed. Furthermore, the digitalisation of services and social protection schemes comes at new costs, inducing new forms of exclusion. It normalises discriminatory and harmful systems like predictive identification and risk scoring systems, towards systems of surveillance and punishment and away from approaches focusing on care and well-being.

11:30 - 13.00

» **PANEL - Breaking Open Big Tech: a positive vision for a fairer digital economy**

We live in a digitalised society almost entirely shaped by a small handful of dominant tech companies. Despite over a decade of regulation and competition investigations, Big Tech's dominance and core business model remain largely untouched. They use their immense power to set the rules of the digital economy, to extract reams of data and money from smaller businesses, governments and people, as well as to shape politics and block alternatives. The concentration is also constitutive of the AI market as we know it today.

Is it time to stop treating the symptoms and instead solve the problem of Big Tech power? Join us for an exciting panel that will dive deep into concrete examples such as Alphabet's and Meta's power to impose surveillance advertising and use the resulting data dominance for advantages in AI, or Amazon's ability to exploit smaller businesses and drive prices up across the economy. The panel will also look into discussions about breaking open Big Tech's power and building an alternative, people-led digital future.

14:00 - 15:30

» **PANEL - Exposing the environmental costs of technology: what's the alternative?**

Digitalisation and the 'twin digital and green transition' are the big promises of our times to bring about new economic prosperity while saving the planet. Yet digital transformation creates significant pressure on the environment and people, from their production to waste and including the substantial energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions emitted by producing and using digital devices. These intertwined social and environment costs remain mostly hidden, and often false and misleading tech solutions to the climate crisis are being put forward - addressing 'future existential harms' rather than current ones. Given that there is no such thing as climate neutral Big Tech and that green growth is unlikely to achieve the Paris Agreement, it becomes clear that a more nuanced and holistic approach is needed.

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15:30 - 17:00

➤ **PANEL - Safety beyond surveillance: a rights and justice framework for safety in EU digital policies**

The last EU mandate saw a surge of tech and data-driven surveillance, within and at the EU borders, from spyware and mass hacking to migration control and racial profiling, dangerously eroding EU's fundamental rights and values. Instead of pouring resources into surveillance and criminalisation infrastructures, what political responses are needed to address the root causes of social problems? The panel will explore visions for safety centered on rights and justice, away from the current paradigm that prioritises technological quick fixes and extensive or mass surveillance, which only lead to harms and discrimination. To address societal issues at their roots, what policies and public investments would benefit everyone?

TRACK 2

10:00 - 11:30

➤ **ROUND-TABLE - From broken by design, to building a better internet from the ground up**

Today's predominant business models on the internet have been designed to amplify division and hate, to manipulate us into staying online for huge stretches of time, and to commodify our data. This harms everyone, and can have a particularly strong negative impact on young people, women and on marginalised communities. In response, some lawmakers have suggested a sledge-hammer response: shutting children out of the internet. Join us as we take an intersectional and inclusive approach to explore visions for how we can better tackle online harms by using privacy, data protection, consumer protection and safety-by-design principles. We will explore effective measures to keep everyone safe, without resorting to social media and smartphone bans, mass privacy-invasive age verification systems or other surveillance or censorship-based measures, which put the burden on the individual. In this round-table, we will explore how to collectively build a better internet from the ground up - one which works for everyone, and leaves no-one behind, including children.

11:30 - 13.00

➤ **ROUND-TABLE - Making EU laws work for people: best practices for engaging with civil society**

In the last few years, the EU has adopted several legislative initiatives critical for addressing the impacts of technology on society, fundamental rights and consumer protection. These include the GDPR, the Digital Services and Market Acts and the Artificial Intelligence Act. Civil society expertise has been vital for providing evidence of harms and concerns and for proposing practical policy solutions. However, the legislative process and the subsequent enforcement mechanisms are often difficult to access and contribute to by civil society, especially CSOs representing people affected by the use of technologies. How can EU decision-making and enforcement processes be more inclusive so that they work for people in practice? This roundtable will create a space for exchange between civil society and EU and national institutions regarding lessons learned and best practices related to civil society participation in policymaking, implementation and enforcement of EU laws.

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➤ **ROUND-TABLE - Community based alternatives: a tool to rein in Big Tech and build a healthy online public sphere**

Big Tech platforms have long functioned as 'walled gardens', locking people into their toxic structures and promoting disinformation and hate speech through surveillance-based business models. Recent EU laws like the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA) have taken big steps to tackle the abusive positions of Big Tech firms, but there is still a lot of work to be done, especially with the rise of AI-generated content. This round-table will explore not only the harms of Big Tech's business model and how we are fighting back against Big Tech dominance, but crucially how community-driven platforms and services, like Wikimedia and the Fediverse, offer a genuine and meaningful alternative of community-led governance. The critical questions will be: what is needed for these community-centric alternatives to flourish, and what are the tools that we have - both legislative and otherwise - to achieve a healthier public online space in Europe and beyond?

15:30 - 17:00

➤ **ROUND-TABLE - Brussels in the world: platform regulation and surveillance export control beyond 2024**

The round table creates a space of exchange and learning for human rights defenders and decision-makers alike, looking to understand the nuances of promoting EU regulatory models as one-size-fits all solutions around the world, with reference to DSA, the AI Act and spyware.

Defining the "Brussels effect", speakers will present different angles of understanding the phenomena, tackling issues as Big Tech's varying attitudes towards regulation/compliance across the world, EU officials' interventions in the legislative processes of Global Majority countries, as well as in the context of EU accession countries. In the second part of the discussion we will tackle concrete examples – from DSA to the export of European surveillance technologies.