THE NEXT GENERATION INTERNET (NGI) EUROPEAN INITIATIVE TO BUILD ON DIGITAL COMMONS AS A FOUNDATION OF EUROPEAN DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

"Digital commons are non-rivalrous and non-exclusive digital resources defined by shared production, maintenance and governance. Under the right conditions, digital commons contribute to the preservation of the collective control and valuation of data, and consequently to improve the security of digital tools and innovations" (Declaration by the Presidency of the Council of the European Union)

Multilayer Internet infrastructure is becoming crucial to the European economy and the daily use of technology for interoperability and community governance. European businesses and citizens are starting to recognise the real benefits of an interconnected world, and it is time for Europe to grab new opportunities by strategically supporting digital commons.

On 31 January 2023 at 14h30-16h30 CET, the NGI Outreach Office will be hosting a **High-Level Expert Webinar on Digital Commons and Digital Sovereignty**. The webinar will be held online with key speakers, including **Gemma Carolillo**, Deputy Head of Next Generation Internet Unit and **Nele Leosk**, Ambassador-at-Large for Digital Affairs of Estonia, and together with a list of high-level panel speakers , including **Paul Keller**, Director of Open Future, **Kasia Odrozek**, Director of Mozilla Foundation, **Melanie Dulong de Rosnay**, Director of CNRS Center for Internet and Society, and **Laureen Van Breen**, Director of WikiRate.

"Next Generation Internet is one of the Commission initiatives that nurture digital commons. NGI has already delivered a wide portfolio of open source solutions, both hardware and software, covering all layers of the Internet. The plan for the next year revolves around three pillars: structuring the human-centric internet ecosystem, piloting the NGI solutions in key sectors, mapping active communities of commoners to devise a plan to better support those according to their needs." **Gemma Carolillo**, Deputy Head of Next Generation Internet Unit, European Commission

For the first time ever, the high-level expert webinar will discuss the role of the NGI initiative as a way to foster digital commons and European digital sovereignty. The event aims to steer conversations around European digital priorities supporting an open, free, interoperable, and secure internet by exploring the latest evolution of

digital commons. Therefore, policymakers, regulators, public authorities and all other relevant players in the internet arena will converge, defining collaboration, policies and targeted institutional and financial plans to guarantee the development and uptake of digital commons across the European Union.

THE NGI'S PATH TO EUROPE'S DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

The NGI initiative is funding "commons" and open-source projects, both at the European and national levels. Several initiatives, including some digital commons communities, call for specific needs that the NGI initiative groups and connects these networks within the NGI Ecosystem, enabling sharing of expertise, knowledge, and the current concentration of Internet resources. The NGI is also actively promoting open calls launched by the European Commission and by the NGI project partners targeting strategic digital commons and giving opportunities for researchers and innovators to fund and support their ideas.

Digital Commons are among the core assets to pursue Europe's Digital Sovereignty. The future of technologies must support a fair and democratic Europe and seek prosperous opportunities by shaping tomorrow's digital society. The NGI Initiative sees that Europe has great potential to position itself at the forefront of an open and democratic digital nation. Let's take action now!

AGENDA

- **14h:30 – 14h:35**
  Welcome and introduction – Dr Monique Calisti, CEO Martel Innovate, Director NGI Outreach Office

- **14h:35 – 14h:50**
  The European Digital Priorities Next Generation Internet (NGI) contribution to Digital Commons – Gemma Carolillo, Deputy Head of Next Generation Internet Unit

- **14h:50 – 15h:10**
  Key note – Nele Leosk, Ambassador-at-Large for Digital Affairs of Estonia

- **15h:10 – 16h:25**
  Expert panel discussion
    - Paul Keller, Director of Open Future
    - Kasia Odrozek, Director of Mozilla Foundation
    - Melanie Dulong de Rosnay, Director of the Center for Internet and Society at CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research)
    - Laureen Van Breen, Director of WikiRate

- **16h:25 – 16h30**
  Wrap-up and next appointments – Dr Monique Calisti, CEO Martel Innovate, Director NGI Outreach Office

TAKE-AWAY AND QUOTES FROM THE HIGH-LEVEL EXPERT WEBINAR ON DIGITAL COMMONS AND DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

Gemma Carolillo, Deputy Head of Next Generation Internet Unit, European Commission

The concept of digital commons, which are shared resources with a strong element of community and decentralisation. There are 3 major perspectives that make digital commons necessary, including angles of digital sovereignty, trust and European principles and values.

Digital sovereignty can be seen where innovators can develop technology in a non-restricted environment, avoiding dependencies and having access to affordable systems which can be improved, such as open source, where innovation does not need permission.

Trust is all about transparency of information, knowledge, and resources. Decentralisation plays a key role in trustworthiness, empowering users in the European Union.

Preserving European Values is the European Union's commitment towards digital transformation. Digital principles are crucial to ensure we have the same rights online as we do offline. This also applies to the approach to security and privacy where users must be empowered and have total control of their overall data.

Nele Leosk, Ambassador-at-Large for Digital Affairs of Estonia

What do you think are the critical aspects governments should keep high in their agenda to succeed in this open digitalisation, embracing all citizens and engaging them?

I believe one important aspect of reaching open digitalisation is for governments to become a more digitally democratic sharing state with transparency of institutional processes to the public. Government openness with the community is key. Government officials do not hold the necessary competencies in data science or technology engineering. Thus, governments need to collaborate more with the public and private sectors to gain knowledge and expertise to develop digital commons solutions.

Laureen Van Breen, Director of WikiRate

"Digital commons and open source is about efficient and smart use of resources, and there is no need for re-inventing the wheels all the time."

Kasia Odrozek, Director of Mozilla Foundation

3 elements of the digital commons mindset:

- *The Internet must remain open and accessible*
- *Internet as a public resource based upon interoperability*
- *Security and privacy of the internet are fundamental and non-negotiable*

Paul Keller, Director of Open Future

"Digital public spaces are based on democratic values. A public digital infrastructure must ensure a rights-based and society-centered alternative by commercial platforms."

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