The Poysdorf Declaration

Digital Humanism: A Compass for Citizens During the Digital Transformation

While frontier technologies are celebrated around the world as being part of the solution for many of our global challenges, we also need to be aware of the potential impact of technology on our privacy, our freedom of speech, and our democratic institutions.

Concerns about novel technologies are now shaping our political debates of today: Increasing automation could soon make a large part of our jobs redundant. The gap between the beneficiaries of digitalization and the number of those who feel marginalized by it is growing. In our networked platform economy our privacy no longer seems to be guaranteed.

Our social life is increasingly shifting into virtual space, creating new dependencies and transforming us from involved citizens into compliant consumers. Our democratic institutions are slowly being undermined by filter bubbles and echo chambers. Face recognition and illegitimate data access play into the hands of authoritarian dictatorships.

Our critical infrastructure is vulnerable to cyberattacks requiring increased commitment to resilience building and improving cyber security. Digitalization seems to have reached a point where it calls into question our understanding of what it means to be a human being.

Digital humanism is a response to fears among citizens of the harms of technology. Digital humanism provides us with a framework to navigate digitalization towards human-centric approach. It allows us to regulate frontier technologies like artificial intelligence and safeguards our human rights, mitigate against unacceptable biases, intransparency and other harms, and to ensure human autonomy when confronted with systems based on automated decision-

making. It is also an enlightened assessment of the true potential of technologies embracing their problem-solving capacity, without ignoring their risks.

It empowers the world of art, philosophy, and the humanities to explore what it means to be a human being in the digital age. Digital humanism is also a response to digitalization, a third way based on the belief in our basic rights as well as in the power of human resilience and imagination.

Digital Humanism and Human Rights

New technologies such as artificial intelligence may pose serious challenges to our human rights and dignity. Europe must be vocal against the deployment of such technologies by countries and companies alike and resist their use to control and surveil citizens. By the same token, Europe needs to defend their rights, such as the freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of association, peaceful assembly, as well as their liberty of movement.

Furthermore, Europe sould make sure that the Digital transformation does not affect negatively young generation, mainly as regards negative influence by AI on their cognitive skills and perception of reality.
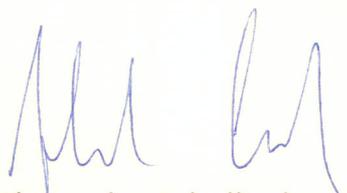
The three Ministers acknowledge the promises and new opportunities that disruptive technologies bring for individuals and societies. At the same time, they express deep concerns about the growing scope and sophistication of disinformation in the digital space which has been employed both by state and non-state actors for unsound purposes. Disinformation can erode public trust in our democratic processes and institutions, undermine public health initiatives, reinforce stereotypes, and incite discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and violence.

The three Ministers agree on the need to address disinformation while ensuring a free, open, interoperable, reliable and secure internet, and fully respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Thus cooperation between public and private sector and civil society is essential to address disinformation.

The three Ministers agree to collaborate in the promotion of the underlying values, concepts, and ideas for this digital humanism, and will advance human-centered technologies, principles, regulations, norms, standards, and legal
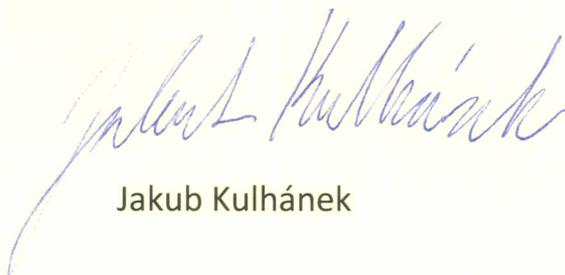
instruments, including the protection of digital human rights in the European Union and in all international fora, such as the UN, ITU, UNESCO, the OSCE or the Council of Europe.

For the Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria
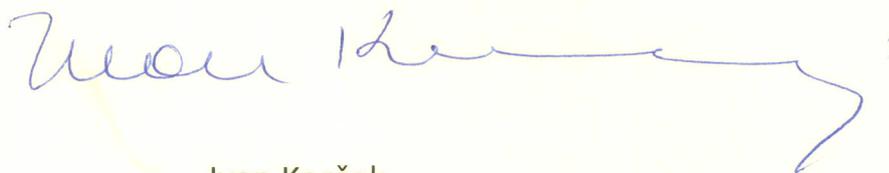
Alexander Schallenberg

For the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Jakub Kulhánek

For the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
of the Slovak Republic

Ivan Korčok