



*ICDPPC 2018, Debating Ethics: Dignity and Respect in a Data Driven Life*

*Closing Speech of Public Session*

*25 October 2018*

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Ladies and gentlemen,

The Olympics of Data Protection are drawing to a close.

Pope Francis published his second encyclical, *Laudato Si*, in 2015, the year we launched this project. Its subtitle was "On care for our common home".

There is a section in the document, which I cited at length in my Opinion, which I mentioned yesterday.

It says, "When media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. In this context, the great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distractions of an information overload. Efforts need to be made to help these media become sources of new cultural progress for humanity and not a threat to our deepest riches. True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data, which eventually leads to overload, and confusion, a sort of mental pollution. Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of Internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature."

Over 40 people have stood on this stage in the last day and a half. They brought some very different perspectives.

Some of the represented some very powerful interests. Some represented people who have not benefited yet from the digital revolution.

But each of them indicated their desire to "learn how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously"

In other words, they all care about our common digital home.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are so many people to thank that if I named them all, it would be longer than many privacy policies.

But first, I must thank President Tajani and his staff and interpreters for allowing us to use this extraordinary space. I want to thank my home country's President Mattarella for his support.

These slides illustrate the incredible diversity of the people and themes, which have each played their part in this conference. We had 40 side events in 14 different locations. We had 1400 delegates (of which, 200 are watching the conference from Sofia), 35% from corporate organisations, 18% from data protection authorities, and 11% from NGOs, among other categories.

I want to thank my wife and my family for their love and support through what has been one of the biggest challenges of my life.

I want to thank Parminder Mudhar for hosting the conference so beautifully.

I want to thank the conference team which has put together the amazing conference this week over many months of sleepless nights and caffeine-abuse.

Thank you to each and every member of EDPS staff and to Forum Europe.

I mentioned in my opening speech yesterday, about the scepticism towards a discussion on ethics in a conference hosted by data protection authorities.

I believe that the inspiring contributions over the last day and a half have demonstrated that this scepticism is understandable but perhaps misplaced.

Ethics is not, nor should it ever be, an alternative to the law. It is not a question of either ethics or the law. It is a question of both ethics and the law. Ethics should inspire a respect towards all human beings which enables the law to be upheld in spirit as well as by the letter. This has been a lesson from the discussions at this conference with philosophers and people with real life experience of the profound impact of digital technology.

After all, who cares about digital dividend? Data protection cares, but it cannot be on its own in doing so.

Ladies and gentleman, the poet T S Eliot wrote, "To make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."

Indeed we do not have any official conclusions to this conference. What we do have is the beginning of a more informed conversation about our common digital home.

I suggested yesterday that these are the Olympics of data protection. But after listening to the brilliant contributors to this event, maybe a different analogy is appropriate.

Instead of voices in competition with one another, we have witnessed a rich and varied tapestry of views. So more like the Woodstock music festival than the Olympics. Accordingly, I hereby declare closed the Woodstock Festival of Data Protection.