R9 Position yourself on digital rights!

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Agenda item: 1. Resolutions

Motion text

Technology now permeates every aspect of our lives; the ‘digital’ angle has become relevant to all domains - whether health[1], security[2], democracy[3], migration[4], justice[5], gender and personal identity[6], international relations[7], or of course personal communications[8]. Digital rights are therefore increasingly important, as they shape what is possible and what is necessary, the structure & dynamics of our lives.

There is also an increasing interest from the general public into the digital - the youth knows of the GAFAM, of the importance of personal data (GDPR), of the way they are tracked on the internet in order to be targeted with intrusive tailored ads, …

However, green (and other) political parties have not yet picked up digital rights as a key priority, despite it having become a core aspect of our lives and of many ‘green’ fights. It is not clear for the public - and the youth particularly - what a ‘proper digital society’ is for the different parties within their framework of values (or at least that is not made clear enough to the general public). Yet, it is both strategic and logical for greens across Europe to claim the (currently rather unoccupied) spot of defenders of digital rights, as it is in the continuity of the greens’ values and the fights they picked so far - ambitious and forward-looking.

It is particularly strategic as there are many recent and forthcoming laws that are relevant from a digital rights perspective both at national level (e.g. in Belgium: data retention) and at EU level (Digital Services Act, Data Act, Artificial Intelligence Act, Child Sexual Abuse Regulation, Advance Passenger Information Regulation, the European Health Data Space, etc.). More will come, and hence the importance of the theme ‘digital’ is here to stay. Many rights & interests are at stake with these laws - among others our rights to anonymity in the public space, to freedom of speech, to freedom of information, to privacy, to the secrecy of our personal communications, to freedom of movement, to fairness & non-discrimination. Algorithms, on the other side, raise concerns about key principles for individual and communal life - such as the principles of transparency, accountability, fairness & non-discrimination, freedom of

movement & speech.

These are rights that we fought hard to gain “back in the days”, and principles we fought to establish durably, but because they are ‘reborn’ under the prism of digital spaces and technologies, and because data, digital tools and processing power allow for unprecedented insights and ways to monitor and control people, these rights have to be fought for anew. Green parties already support and defend them, but ‘digital’ still remains a marginal topic politically - there is little political positioning through it despite its importance.

In light of the importance of these rights and principles, and in light of their newly-found prevalence in all areas of work traditionally (though not exclusively) ‘Green’, this motion is calling on Green parties to pick up digital rights as a key priority for the 2024 european elections - to think ahead together: what is a sustainable digital society? What principles & interests should prevail? What is our ambitious Green vision for a digital society (beyond the more ‘traditional’ green digital angles of sustainability, right to repair & digital divide), and how much of prominence should it have in a political program ?

This resolution is a call from the Federation of Young European Greens to seize the transversal topic of ‘digital’ in politics, a call to Green parties to position themselves (more clearly) as champions of a sustainable digitised society, and a call to claim the spotlight for an electorate who increasingly cares about the architecture of their digital personal, communal and political life. At a time where tech has become the biggest lobby sector in the EU by spending (ahead of pharma, fossil fuels, finance, and chemicals), let’s think ahead about what the key digital priorities of the green youth for the short- and long-term represent, and their place in politics!

References:

1. [1] Digitisation of patients’ health records and its forced sharing: what space for choice and autonomy? Opt-in vs opt-out. [2] Covid-19: technosolutionism in contact-tracing apps and combined databases

2. [1] Facial recognition: the Greens/EFA’s position on the AI Act; the petition to ban it in Bruxelles. [2] Mass surveillance of citizens in ‘democratic’ countries: data retention (in all Member States - DE, BE, NL, IE, LU, SE, PT,...)

3. [1] Advertising is key to the free internet - targeted advertising isn’t; about the internet’ business model, how we are constantly tracked and profiled on the net, and how it harms consumers and publishers alike. [2] Targeted political advertising as a threat to democracies (Cambridge Analytica).

4. The increasingly ‘connected’ databases of the police & migration authorities.

5. SyRI (System Risk Indicator) - the algorithmic risk profiling method employed by the Dutch government (and others) to detect individual risks of welfare, tax and other types of fraud.

6. [1] Reproductive Privacy Requires Data Privacy- Roe v Wade. [2] The digital euro: will all our transactions be tracked or not? [3] Orwell’s Wallet: European electronic identity system leads us straight into surveillance capitalism. Should we be tracked all over the web, or should we have a right to anonymity?

7. Sovereignty and surveillance - diplomatic transatlantic politics of data transfers with Schrems II.

8. Techno-solutionism & the privacy of communications: the CSA Regulation.