Yrjö Länsipuro
24 June 2024

Finnish Internet Forum 2024

Finnish Internet Forum 2024 was held 3 June in the Auditorium of the Annex to the Parliament House in Helsinki at the invitation of the Committee for the Future of the Parliament, a cooperation partner of the FIF since its first meeting in 2010. The partnership with this committee – a parliamentary think tank with a mission to generate dialogue with the government on major future problems and opportunities – as well as with the Transport and Communications Committee - has enhanced the function of the FIF as an important annual event for interaction among all stakeholders, including members of Parliament.

In the focus of the 2024 FIF were artificial intelligence and resilience of the digitally-based everyday life in Finland. In addition, there was an update on the preparations for Global Digital Compact and for the 20-year review process of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS).

The Forum had about a hundred on-site participants, including members and staff of the Committee on the Future (which had listed FIF as a regular open committee meeting on its calendar) and about 200 online participants.

The overall moderator of the Forum was *Janne Hirvonen*, Second Secretary from the Department of International Trade of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, coordinator of the FIF organizing group.

Opening the 2024 FIF, the Chair of the Committee for the Future, *Anna-Kaisa Pekonen*, pointed out that its themes were also high on her committee's agenda. In her opening remarks, Techology and Strategy Director of the regulatory agency Traficom *Kirsi Karlamaa* touched the resilience theme of the Forum, noted the growing number of DDoS attacks and other security problems and called for more cooperation among all actors in countering them. AI will create both opportunities and threats, and Finland has to be active, innovative and open in benefiting from the former and tackling the latter.

1st Panel: EU artificial intelligence regulation – already out of date?

Most panelists, but not all, agreed with the title. Member of the Committee for the Future *Aura Salla* pointed to the Metaversum development that has been going on for years in Silicon Valley and called for more realistic regulation. "There is already a huge amount of regulation, overlapping every which way", she said.

 Development Manager of Save the Children *Anna-Maija Ohlsson* noted the many harmful effects on children of the digital environment that AI may make even worse. She favored more effective control of content, early recognition of risks and inclusion of children themselves in planning how to counter them.

According to Executive Director *Tapani Tarvainen* of Electronic Frontier Finland, the EU AI Act relates to yesterday's technologies, while technical development is rushing forward.

Professor *Pauli Myllymäki* from the University of Helsinki brought up the question of different possible interpretations of the AI Act.

In the ensuing discussion, various problems of AI governance were brought up, including lwhether government bureaucracies are sufficiently competent for dealing with it. Regulation was seen to favor large enterprises, as they have most resources to influence interpretations and decisions.

Increasing awareness of AI-related challenges and opportunities among citizens was seen as important, with mainstream media in a key educative role in this regard. Many families feel that AI is not for them or their children, which can increase inequality. AI sets new demands on teachers charged to instill critical thinking and digital literacy in their pupils.

In his commentary, Senior Adviser *Joonas Mikkilä* from Technology Industries of Finland welcomed the EU AI Act's risk classification, which enterprises can use to assess their own activities, but the enormous size and complexity of the field as a whole remains a challenge.

Participating remotely, MEP *Miapetra Kumpula-Natri* noted that AI Act was adopted by the European Parliament with a clear majority.   She mentioned the new EU AI Office set up by the European Commission to support the development and use of trustworthy AI, while protecting against AI risks.

The first panel was moderated by *Tommi Karttaavi*, Chief Digital Officer of the Wellbeing services county of Eastern Uusimaa and honorary President of the Finland chapter of Internet Society.

2nd Panel: Cyber Security and New Technologies

Setting the scene for the discussion of the resilience of the digital resilience of everyday life, Cybersecurity Lead *Petri Puhakainen* from VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland noted that G 6 is already on the threshold of becoming reality. All manner of home appliances are eagerly waiting to connect, and networks themselves are expanding so that even the sky will no more be the limit.

Noora Hammar, Founder of Women4Cyber Finland stressed the need to assure the necessary competences and widest possible cooperation between various actors.

According to Research Director *Mikko Hyppönen* from WithSecure, the problem is that people are too trustful and increasingly falling for a growing array of tricks and hoaxes. Algorithms grow more sophisticated, capacities expand, authoritarian states are making colossal investments in quantum technology to break encryption, and dangerous situations are becoming more common. But on the other hand, defense capacities are growing too. Educational institutions play a key role. Future generations are not automatically "digital natives". Regulation is not a cure-all, but at least provides a necessary framework and guidance to a right direction.

The second panel was moderated by *Stefan Lee,* Deputy Cyber Security Director at the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Update on Global Digital Compact and WSIS-20

After two panels and a light lunch (sponsored by the Internet Society Foundation), the last program item was an update of the preparations of the Global Digital Compact and of the 20-year review of WSIS follow-up remotely by *David Souter*, Managing Director of ICT Associates, who as consultant to the United Nations had been heavily involved in the previous (ten-year) WSIS review. In his opinion, as to its

importance, GDC will be comparable to the WSIS final acts. If the latter would be negotiated today, they would focus on the goals of the GDC. As it happened, the zero draft of the GDC had been published the day before. In Souter's view, it was better and more substantive than many, including himself, had expected.

Commentary from the Finnish government point of view was provided by *Aki Enkenberg*, Senior Adviser on development cooperation policy in the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He reminded that digital governance discussions are going on, and regulatory build-up is taking place also on regional level, including in the European Union, and that the optimal role of the United Nations should be subject of careful consideration in the drafting process of GDC.

In his concluding words, *Timo Harakka*, Vice Chair of the Committee for the Future stressed the need to maintain the multistakeholder approach in meeting digital challenges of the future, among which AI now looms large, and could even develop into one of the most important political questions of our time.

The program schedule of the event is here