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The Global Citizens' Dialogue on Ai & the Metaverse – We, the Internet

Introducing the Global Citizens' Dialogue x We the Internet

In this note, we unveil the vision and essential elements of the Global Citizens' Dialogue on AI & Metaverses—an initiative by Missions Publiques and its platform We the Internet, to continue building an internet governance that is more inclusive and participatory. Aligned with the "We, the internet" strategy spanning 2022-2025, this groundbreaking project will kick off in 2024, preceded by pilot activities in 2023 and followed by impactful endeavors in 2024 and 2025. With participation from over 70 countries, it will engage citizens and stakeholders in thought-provoking discussions on key internet-related themes, exploring the metaverses' role within: Accessibility and Affordability, Fragmentation and Governance, Web3, and Artificial Intelligence. **We invite interested partners to join our existing coalition.**

Introduction

Questions like "Will my grandchildren be able to meet me even if I am dead? Shouldn't we have real police in there to prevent crime? Will AI take over the world?" or "Can we experience smell and touch in the metaverse? How will my data be used? Who is going to set the rules?" have sparked vibrant discussions among citizens in the European Citizens' Panel on Virtual Worlds. Their thoughtful deliberations led to the formulation of guiding values, principles, and recommendations for the European Commission. These valuable insights will contribute to the upcoming Communication on this subject, to be presented by the Connect Directorate-General in June 2023. This process perfectly aligns with the strategic objectives of "We, the Internet"—to foster an ongoing dialogue between decision-makers and citizens worldwide, exploring internet-related topics, governance, and its future.

Missions Publiques is honored to have collaborated with the European Commission in designing and implementing the [European Citizens' Panel on Virtual Worlds / Metaverse](#). Through this experience and engaging with members of the "We, the Internet" coalition, we have witnessed the relevance and immense opportunity to elevate this dialogue to a global scale. Within this policy note, we delve into the valuable lessons we have learned from past projects and present a comprehensive timeline for a new cycle of We the Internet.

The lessons learned from We the Internet 2020 and the European Citizens' panel 2023

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The outcomes of the **2020 Global Dialogue on the Future of Internet governance**, known as "**We, the Internet**," have proven the power and feasibility of engaging citizens worldwide in shaping internet governance. This decentralized dialogue has left a lasting impact by influencing discussions at the United Nations (UN) level. Notably, the United Nations Secretary General's Office incorporated the Dialogue's results into its Roadmap on Digital Cooperation. These outcomes were also presented in diverse UN forums, including the global and local levels of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), thereby enriching policy formulation and decision-making processes across all levels. This experience emphasized the need for a regular process and robust connections with other policy arenas to maximize impact. proved the necessity to have more time for citizens to dive into the complex topics. On Artificial Intelligence and its governance, citizens of the world gave following 2 key recommendations:

1. There should be more dialogues and citizens' Dialogues on the topic as participants felt their level of knowledge and understanding of AI was not high enough to have an informed discussion on it. They also put forward that in their view other stakeholders, like companies and governments, were facing the same limitation.
2. AI governance should be carefully designed to forget no one and to involve citizens.

Do you perceive the following application domains of Artificial Intelligence rather as a threat or a hope?

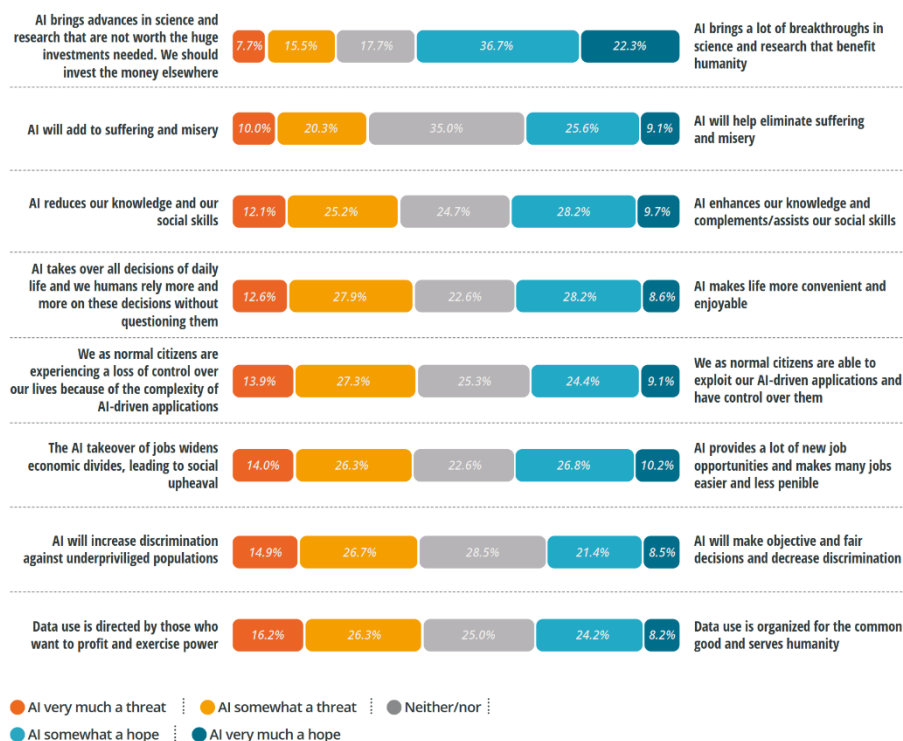


Figure 1: Results of "We, the Internet" 2020 on artificial intelligence

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Similarly, the **European Citizens' Panel on Virtual Worlds/Metaverse** shed light on the complexities and relevance of the metaverse. Given the ongoing exploratory nature of stakeholders at both technological and governance levels, articulating the metaverse's intricacies posed a challenge. The panel addressed this by providing participants with immersive experiences to enhance their understanding of the technology they were deliberating upon. By tackling concerns related to control, privacy, accessibility, and inclusivity, the panel played a pivotal role in assisting the European Commission in formulating a democratic, safe, and equitable framework for the metaverse.

Many discussions related to the relation between Europe and the rest of the world. For example, citizens' their recommendation 19 concerning digital identity ("the EU needs to develop regulations on digital identity and on when to allow and secure citizens' right to be anonymous") participants pointed out that "the EU should work at the international and diplomatic level, to share awareness with other regional organisations". This shows the importance for participants to scale the dialogue beyond Europe.



European Commission

Building upon these valuable insights, and by leveraging the lessons learned from "We, the Internet" and the European Citizens' Panel, we will forge a path that empowers citizens globally, facilitates informed decision-making, and paves the way for an inclusive and responsible metaverse.

Figure 2: credits: Missions Publiques and Directorate-General for Communication –

Goals and objectives

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The Global Citizens' Dialogue on AI & Metaverses is driven by two overarching goals and three concrete objectives that shape its purpose and outcomes.

Goals

The dialogue will have 2 overarching goals:

- **Informing Citizens:** The first goal is to provide citizens with comprehensive knowledge about metaverses, including their vast opportunities and potential risks. By equipping citizens with essential insights, the Citizens' Dialogue aims to empower them to understand the complex issues faced by decision-makers in navigating the metaverse landscape.
- **Empowering Decision-Makers:** The second goal is to channel the informed judgments and enlightened perspectives of citizens to decision-makers. By doing so, the Citizens' Dialogue seeks to facilitate progress in addressing emerging challenges associated with the metaverse. Integrating citizens' deliberative thinking into the decision-making process at an early stage helps prevent an overreliance on decision-makers alone.

The Citizens' Dialogue recognizes the importance of addressing emerging metaverse-related issues before dependency on decision-makers becomes excessively strong. By integrating citizen perspectives at an early stage, the Citizens' Dialogue strives to ensure a balanced approach that incorporates diverse voices and promotes responsible decision-making.

The Global Citizens' Dialogue on AI & Metaverses seeks to create a dynamic platform for informed dialogue, fostering a collaborative environment where citizens and decision-makers work together to navigate the metaverse's challenges and opportunities.

Metaverse(s) as a door to explore the future of the Internet

The subject of the Metaverses has several advantages: It is an emerging field of research, technology, product development and governance. Its' embryonic stage means that it is early enough to include the views of the world's citizens in its future and development and have great impact. Also, the topic is a simple unique "teaser" to enter a complex series of intertwined issues of our digital future.

The pivotal core issues:

- **Accessibility and affordability:** How can the remaining 45% of the worlds' population get meaningful access to the Internet and benefit from it?
- **Governance:** How are the metaverses governed? And the Internet on which they rely? What are the opportunities and risk lying in new approaches to governance, for example decentralized governance (Web3)?
- **Artificial intelligence:** The development of the Metaverse is deeply intertwined with advancements in the broader field of Artificial Intelligence. This dimension of the dialogue will

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delve into the significant role AI plays in shaping various layers of the Metaverse. Not only when it comes to rendering of virtual worlds but also when it comes to live interpretation, work in industrial metaverses, big data analysis, etc. By examining the interplay between AI and the Metaverse, we can navigate the ethical, societal, and technological challenges, fostering responsible AI integration within this transformative landscape.

- Sustainability: How to make the future of the Internet aligned with planetary boundaries without limiting its potential for progress?

Key questions

The development of our methodology and key questions will be a collaborative endeavor engaging the Coalition's esteemed members, including the Advisory Board, Scientific Committee, key stakeholders, and our extensive network of national partners. While it is still in the early stages to determine the precise questions for participants, we can provide some illustrative framing:

- What are the essential factors for a joyful and fulfilling experience in the Metaverse?
- How can we ensure equitable access to the Metaverse for all individuals?
- What measures should be implemented to effectively address and mitigate potential risks associated with the Metaverse?
- Among these measures, which ones should be applied on a global scale, and which should be tailored to specific local contexts?
- How should these rules and measures be subject to open debate and establishment, fostering a participatory and inclusive approach?
- The invaluable recommendations put forth by citizens will be thoroughly considered at the 18th Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, a prestigious event hosted by the Government of Japan in the city of Kyoto from October 8th to 12th, 2023.

Should such Citizens' Dialogues become part of the standard way of making decisions on the future of the Internet?

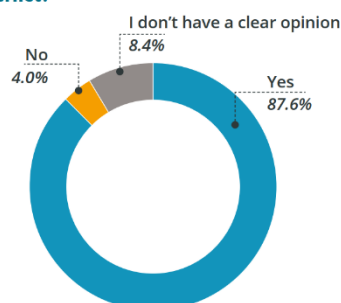


Figure 3: Participants to the 2020 Edition clearly stated their wish for a new round

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A unique method of decentralization for more inclusion in over 70 countries

In terms of methodology “We, the Internet” is based on a multilevel approach which unlocks various benefits.

A coalition of partners with a Scientific Committee and an Advisory Board

Our coalition of partners, with the support of the scientific committee, develop the methodology at global level. This ensures relevance for decision makers and impact, as well as global quality and standardization while respecting local contexts.

70 partners worldwide, ready to kick-off a decentralized citizens’ dialogue in 70 countries

Our method stands out for its decentralization, enabling the inclusion of citizens who lack internet access or are frequently excluded from participatory processes. How? Thanks to our exceptional network of practitioners around the world (the Global Fellowship Program), the majority of whom are in the Global South and have already implemented citizens’ dialogues with Missions Publiques since 2017. This network, which we have initiated and which we coordinate, can quickly activate local partners on all continents to implement decentralised and coordinated dialogues on a large scale.

Citizens who do not have access to the Internet or who are often excluded from participatory processes have a chance to come to the table and participate. Regardless of the country or continent, level of education or digital literacy, thousands of everyday citizens can deliberate in an informed, inclusive and participatory dialogue. Decentralization allows for scaling at reduced costs and consideration of local contexts.

Our partners are professionals of citizen engagement, who have been selected for their high-level practical experience in civic engagement, citizen participation and/or with stakeholders, and for their ability to connect with local and national decision-makers. Many of whom are from the Internet Society (ISOC) chapters (ISOC Egypt, Mali, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Singapour, Indonesia, Bolivia, Brazil, Serbia, Canada, Russia, Pakistan...).

Our global or decentralised approaches therefore respond to the real needs of the communities concerned. In this sense, participate in the implementation of SDGs 16 and 17.

A Dialogue anchored to the Summit of the Future 2024

To leverage the power of transnational settings, we propose to mix this decentralized approach with federated bricks. Ambassadors of the local dialogues meet at regional and/or global level to exchanges results and produce consolidated outputs. We envision a global brick anchored to the Summit of the Future 2024 or WSIS2025.

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When? Since 2017 to 2025.

1. June 2023: Launch of the new cycle
2. October 2023: Pilot in 5 countries (1 per continent)
3. October 2023: Presentation of results of pilots during IGF 2023 in Japan and launch of global process.
4. June 2024: deployment in approx. 70 countries of the world.
5. July 2024 - July 25: Impact activities at global and local level: Summit for the Future, IGFs, WEF, and any other relevant policy arenas

Two success stories of inclusion from the prior We the Internet dialogues

In **India**, for the first time, a group of non-binary monks was included in discussions on disinformation and data protection.

On the **border between Myanmar and Bangladesh**, our partner initiated a dialogue in a Rohingya refugee camp, as part of our We the Internet project. For the first time, the dialogue was able to bring men and women in situations of digital and social distress to the table and to debate their issues in relation to digital technologies, internet access and disinformation.

Read our exclusive interview from this unique experience in the Rohingya camp [here](#) and portraits of citizens [here](#).

Three success stories of impact from the prior We the Internet dialogues

Our partnership in **Rwanda** has proven immensely impactful through our We the Internet project, influencing two crucial political processes within the country. Firstly, it contributed to the **development of a National Startup Act**, designed to enhance the overall business environment, facilitate growth infrastructure for startups, and promote innovation and digital transformation. Secondly, it played a pivotal role in shaping a national policy on artificial intelligence, incorporating locally relevant content.

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In **Pakistan**, our partner brought in, for the first time, the Minister of Innovation and Technology, who was present during the debate and gave his support to a large-scale participatory process, with 200 citizens present. In Namibia, the Minister of Information and Communication Technologies was also present and undertook, in a public and publicized setting, to consider the results of the debate in her political agenda.

They supported us

Vint Cerf, Vice President and Chief Internet Evangelist for Google: “It all started with a very basic idea: if you are wondering what people think, why not ask them? Today, the internet is not just about receiving feedback from users, it is also an information process. People learn how things work, what issues arise and what policies need to be debated. Putting information into the hands of the general public is as valuable a contribution as the consultation itself.”

Livia Walpen, Director of the Swiss Federal Office of Communications: “We supported this initiative because we believe that discussions on digital governance can and should be enriched by the opinions of ordinary citizens around the world and in particular from countries in the Global South.”

Michael Roth, Deputy Minister for Europe at the German Federal Foreign Office: “Citizens are not only consumers and recipients of technology, but also stakeholders and political participants.”

98% of participants will change their behavior at the end of the debate and say they grew from the experience”
(We the Internet, 2020)

Call to action

We extend a heartfelt invitation to all interested parties to join this new of We the Internet and to join the broad coalition of partners in an open system. We welcome:

- Strategic partners: If you are eager to collaborate and make a difference, we welcome you to join us in fundraising, becoming a part of our Advisory Board, co-creating the method, and contributing to its global and regional impact.
- Local partners: Are you ready to drive change in your own region or country? We invite you to co-create the process, deploy it in your country or region, and take the lead in making a lasting impact within your environment.

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Figure 4: Join us! We, the Internet in Nicaragua in

2020

Coalition

Global partners

FACEBOOK

Google



WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM



Internet Society

WORLD WIDE WEB FOUNDATION



Strategic Partners



DIPLO



National partners

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Coverage of the coalition

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