DLD Europe

"Whatsapp is a data vacuum cleaner"

About one year after the installment of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Burda’s DLD innovation conference in Brussels staged by DLD founder Steffi Czerny started with a wake-up call. “Why do we allow some internet companies to create complete personal profiles with our data and use them without limits?” Burda CEO Paul-Bernhard Kallen asked the 300 participants. He described Whatsapp as a “data vacuum cleaner” that basically stores everything - from the location to the duration of a contact. Kallen further asked: “Do we all want to be completely transparent for a handful of people?”

Following a new, representative study by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach the answer is: No! The study which was presented by Anne Niedermann at the conference suggests that Whatsapp, Google & Co may have illegally collected data from millions of users.

“When users are asked to give their consent to the terms and conditions of Internet services, this creates negative feelings. The current declarations of consent frustrate users because they feel obliged to agree to them, whether they like it or not.”
Facebook benefits from its market power

Focus columnist Jan Fleischhauer also discussed data protection, among others with Christina Colclough from the organisation Uni Global Union, which represents around 20 million trade unionists worldwide.

“Market dominance protects Facebook from surviving scandals like Cambridge Analytica. There are currently no real alternatives that promise better privacy options, so we’ll stay with the platforms we’ve used so far. If someone asked me if I wanted to share my personal data with a third party, I would never agree. Politics must protect me much more here!”

Christina Colclough, Uni Global Union

Unicorns made in Europe

With Nicolas Brusson (Bla Bla Car) and Johannes Reck (Get Your Guide), the founders of two European Unicorns from France and Germany took their seats on the DLD stage. In order to remain competitive, they made clear demands towards the EU: “In Europe, we have a fraction of the investment capital available compared to the US and China. Something must be done here,” Brusson explained.

“Talents today are more about ownership of the company than a fixed salary. Currently, we cannot offer stock packages due to regulatory requirements. This is a big difference compared to the US and makes it difficult for us to attract talent to our company. Politicians always want us to build the next Unicorns out of Germany and Europe. We would love to do so, but without the right political structures it’s simply not possible.”

Johannes Reck, Get Your Guide

It’s time for a third way!

Despite all the great challenges facing the EU, DLD Europe has also spread optimism and courage because there is a chance for Europe to go its own way in the digitalization alongside the state internet in China and data capitalism from the USA. According to journalist Jennifer Schenker (The Innovator), trust, openness and understanding for the consumer should be leading the way. EU Commissioner Mariya Gabriel reinforced this:

“In the EU we are pursuing a human-centered approach to digitalization. We must continue to stick to this approach, invest in our talent and ensure the greatest possible transparency! EU citizens need to know where, when, why and for what purpose their data is collected.”
EU Commissioner Günter H. Oettinger also called for even stronger cross-border cooperation to be able to compete against China and the USA.

**Late summer night in Brussels**

After the DLD conference, around 400 guests from politics, business and media came together at the “Kwint” restaurant in front of the impressive Grand Place on the occasion of the seventh “Burda...SummerNight”. Burda CEO Paul-Bernhard Kallen as well as board members Philipp Welte and Andreas Rittstieg welcomed, among others, EU Budget Commissioner Günther Oettinger, Bavarian Minister of State for Justice Georg Eisenreich as well as numerous Members of the European Parliament. Amongst them were Axel Voss, Angelika Niebler, Markus Ferber and Andreas Glück as well as Svenja Ilona Hahn, Bernd Lange, Marlene Mortler and Andreas Schwab.

**Journalism and democracy**

“Brussels will decide if there is a future for our vital, rich media landscape regardless of the market conditions of the 21st century that have changed dramatically. Our task is to convince politicians that there is an indissoluble bond between free journalism and the power of democracy.”

*Philipp Welte*, Burda board member

This includes a political framework for a level-playing field that needs to be put in place in Germany and Europe – a framework that forces US corporations to act according to European law if they want to operate within the European region.

Far after midnight, a long, intense day of Burda in Brussels came to an end. See you next year in the political heart of Europe!