International Day for
Universal
Access to
Information

28
SEP
2022

Artificial Intelligence, e-Governance and Access to Information

#AccessToInfoDay
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Concept Note for the Celebration of the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) 2022

CI-2022/IDUAI/2022/CN/4

Slogan: Artificial Intelligence, e-Governance and Access to Information
Organizer: UNESCO;
Other partners: UN agencies, Member States, civil society organizations, professional networks & experts;
Date: 28 and 29 September 2022;
Global Celebrations venue: Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Executive summary

Artificial Intelligence and e-Governance can play an important role to improve access to information in our digital world. They can help bridge the digital divide, by giving citizens access to tailor-made and accessible information. They can assure services that are more efficient. Citizens can access public sector information and services nearly instantly. Making government services digital enhances transparency and accessibility.

However, these developments also raise questions about fundamental rights and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence and e-Governance by public institutions. Since Artificial Intelligence uses citizen data, how do we protect the privacy of citizens? Because Artificial Intelligence can determine what information we access, on which ethical principles is this determined?

Stakeholders need to pay due attention so that the use of e-Governance and Artificial Intelligence builds trust, ensures inclusion, protects human rights and assures the participation of citizens. This can only be done if citizens have open access to the internet and to tailor-made content in their language and if they have the skills to use the services.

The 2022 edition of the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) will be an opportunity to discuss e-Governance and Artificial Intelligence with a view to assuring the Right to Access Information. The theme will enable discussions about both the benefits and risks of e-Governance and Artificial Intelligence. Practical tools and best practises will also be discussed, especially in view of the presentation of policy guidelines for public sector information and a

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declaration that will affirm the right to information against the backdrop of good governance principles.

Themes

The theme of this year highlights the opportunities of digital governance and Artificial Intelligence in favour of developing resilient societies and an enabling environment for access to information. It will look at ways to leverage partnerships and international cooperation to facilitate knowledge-sharing under the common objective of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.

Monitor and report progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 16.10.2

UNESCO, via its International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), has been mandated by its Member States to **monitor and report progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 16.10.2** on Public Access to Information. Every year, UNESCO conducts a Survey on Public Access to Information to track progress on the adoption and implementation of "constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information". The 2022 survey gathered responses from 122 countries. This theme will explore trends gathered from the 2022 survey and explore synergies with other initiatives to gather data related to SDG 16.

Inclusive approaches for access to information

If the digital divide is fuelled by social and economic inequalities, it can also widen the gap by creating further barriers to good public governance implementation, including the right to access to information. However, the digital divide can also be narrowed by implementing e-Governance initiatives that incorporate the development of applications and online content to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration. Following the 13th edition of the International Conference of Information Commissioners on access to information, participation, and inclusion in the digital age, it is important to debate the role of e-Governance and Artificial Intelligence, exploring how to turn them into an ally for promoting inclusive approaches for access to information.

Civic space, accountability and public participation in digital era

As public bodies make increasing use of digital solutions, with Artificial Intelligence being used to support e-Governance systems and to aid decision making, it is essential that these processes are subject to the same transparency and accountability as traditional administrative processes. The

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digitalisation of government services is also still partial, with a paucity of data in some sectors of government and too few decisions benefiting from data-driven evidence. Drawing on the conclusions of the 2021 Open Government Partnership Global Summit, which underlined the importance of **civic space, accountability and public participation in digital era**, it is important to get a clearer picture of the current state of digitally driven governance and will identify specific challenges and recommendations for action by UN bodies, governments, and civil society.

Policy Guidelines for the Development and Promotion of Governmental Public Domain Information

The updated version of UNESCO's 'Policy Guidelines for the Development and Promotion of Governmental Public Domain Information' will be presented for discussion during this years celebrations. The purpose of the Policy Guidelines is to build impetus in the development, promotion, production, dissemination, preservation, and use of public sector information, with particular attention to information in digital form. It recommends that information produced by public entities in all branches and at all levels should be publicly accessible, unless clearly defined as an exemption.

Open Data Guidelines

UNESCO and its Information for All Programme (IFAP), in collaboration with the International Research Centre on AI (IRCAI) and UNESCO Chairs on AI and Data Sciences, have developed Open Data Guidelines to apprise governments of the value of openness of data for AI and empowering them through a set of steps to take action. The Guidelines outline concrete steps in the preparation, opening and follow-up for reuse of data. This year's celebrations will review the guidelines during the session, and the audience will be invited to provide its comments.

Tashkent Declaration

The 2022 celebrations in Tashkent, Uzbekistan will adopt the **Tashkent Declaration** that will reaffirm the commitment by Member States to recognising and respecting the fundamental right of access to information. It will cover the principles of good governance and issues raised by Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies with regard to access to information. It will also address recent developments, such as the increase in access to information national legislation, implementation modalities, the impact of digitalisation and the importance of access to information legal guarantees to be inclusive, especially for persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups.

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