ECIS Press Statement

Brussels – 9 December 2020 – The European Committee for Interoperable Systems (ECIS) hosted its traditional year-end event yesterday, focusing on the European Federated Cloud initiative and Digital Sovereignty; and Cloud and Global Competitiveness, implications for Platforms. This event brought together research, academia, legal practitioners and industry.

The first panel explored the notion of digital sovereignty from a global and European perspective. What it is, where it comes from, what its elements are, and how we have seen different flavours of digital sovereignty over the past ten years, from China, Russia and other geopolitical regions — little surprise that this sentiment has arisen in Europe. That being said, there are differences in how Europeans view this from member state perspectives.

One line is to create European alternatives to the "cloud hyper-scalers" through supporting national champions or a federated cloud infrastructure approach, another being to focus more on data sovereignty than digital sovereignty.

GAIA-X is approaching this issue both from an infrastructure and a data perspective. A federated cloud approach under GAIA-X provides for a common infrastructure which is strictly compliant with European regulation through the policy rules.

The architecture of standards assures that the appropriate levels of interoperability data portability and reversibility are assured to avoid vendor-lock in. The data layer in GAIA-X addresses different sectorial needs in Europe.

The second panel examined possible competition concerns in cloud and platforms – how to maintain a globally competitive market, how to pursue the goal of Europe being a leader in cloud and data, and how much these goals are in conflict. An approach to protect or subsidise the European market could distort the competitive landscape. At a global level there are also challenges to avoid certain players achieve dominant positions, particularly with regard to data accumulation and the risk of platforms tipping.

The panel raised questions about barriers to entry and the supply chain.
- How much of concerns around digital sovereignty are about ensuring competition and choice vs. needing a European player?
- Should we not be focusing on connection and interoperability generally?

The shortly to be published Digital Markets Act is eagerly anticipated, the broad view being that better ex-ante tools could be necessary to curb anti-competitive behaviour in cloud and platforms.

"*ECIS has been closely involved in policy discussions on cloud and interoperability since 2015, opposing lock-in, supporting higher levels of interoperability and data portability*," said Mr. Vinje, Chairman of ECIS.

"*"It is important to examine digital sovereignty from different perspectives: how does it square with international law, how do other countries understand it and which of our interests is it designed to protect,"* said Dr. Przemyslaw Roguski, Lecturer in Law at the Jagiellonian University, cybersecurity and international law.

About ECIS

ECIS is an international non-profit association founded in 1989 that strives to promote market conditions in the ICT sector allowing vigorous competition on the merits and a diversity of consumer choice. ECIS has actively represented its members on many issues related to interoperability and competition before European, national and international bodies, including the EU institutions and WIPO. ECIS' members include large and smaller information and communications technology hardware and software providers Adobe, Corel, IBM, McAfee, Nokia, Opera, Oracle, RealNetworks, Red Hat, and Sun Microsystems.

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