

Setting up a Center for the 4th Industrial Revolution Affiliate in Finland

SUMMARY OF HIGH LEVEL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE AND CALL FOR COMPANIES TO EXPRESS THEIR INTEREST TO JOIN THE CONCEPTUALIZATION WORK

February 9, 2021

Mayor Vapaavuori opened the event by emphasizing the role of data and access to it as the most important societal currency in today's fast-moving world. He also presented the City of Helsinki's plans to become a MyData operator and to allow its citizens better control over how their data is used.

In his speech, Minister Harakka highlighted Finland's active promotion of the new data economy, and how Finland supports ethical and sustainable information policies not only at the national and European levels, but also in international settings.

Mirek Dusek, WEF's Deputy Head of the Centre for Regional and Geopolitical Affairs, summarized the evolution of WEF's work and the history behind the establishment of the C4IR. He also provided some reasons other countries have had in establishing C4IR Affiliate Centers of their own: supporting the development of expertise and being able to show leadership in a policy area relevant for future technologies, as well as benefiting from WEF's global networks and convening power. He thanked the strong relationship that already exists between Finland, Finnish companies and WEF, and was hopeful that the Affiliate Centre could help take those relationships to a new and more sustained level.

Sheila Warren, C4IR's Head of Data Policy and Blockchain, described some of the work on data policy that C4IR is undertaking, such as developing digital personhoods and empowered data societies, operationalizing trust between holders of data, and opening data for a common purpose. She also underscored Finland's leadership in the data policy space and was looking forward to closer collaboration as WEF's and Finland's thinking on the critical areas of data policy are closely aligned.

In the discussion following the opening statements, moderated by Maria Rautavirta, Director of Data Business Unit at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Viivi Lähteenoja described her work as a WEF C4IR Fellow focused particularly on human-centric data policy development. Other reflections and comments brought up during the conversation included:

- Finland's Affiliate Center would be the first one within the European Union. As such, it could play an important role in the influencing of the EU's data policies, which have critical importance for companies not only in Finland and the EU but across the world.
- Work around data utilization should not only focus on regulatory obstacles. Rather, proactive policies to reap the benefits of wider data use should be pursued ambitiously.
- To drive progress in this space and to make the benefits more concrete for companies, value-driven use cases need to be developed. These need to be co-created by business and regulators.
- Market places for data are needed, if data is to be shared more broadly than today. These require trusted data operators which are currently lacking.
- The C4IR is a network of Centers and Hubs located around the world, which all tackle policy and regulatory questions related to the development of future technologies. For WEF, it is of utmost importance that the network works in a coordinated manner, and exchanges and interlinkages between the various national centers are strongly encouraged. As the Center for data policy, the Finnish Affiliate Center would have a particularly strong need to engage with the other centers.

- Given the fast pace of technological progress, the implementation of policy and regulations needs to also become quicker and more agile. As such, policy experimentation is necessary for quick learnings to ensure things are not set in stone in a way that proves counterproductive.
- Previous initiatives have shown it to be very difficult to build structures for data sharing in a single vertical function or industry. A broader horizontal approach is needed if the benefits are to be reaped.

In her closing statement, Maria Rautavirta called upon the participating companies to join the work to detail the concept of the Center. Company representatives wanted to better understand the specifics of how to get involved.

The national C4IR project organization is keen to engage in closer talks with all interested parties who want to participate in the development and evolution of a Finnish C4IR Affiliate Centre. Our ambition is to build an international Center of Excellence in the data economy, which combines our existing national strengths and seeks a growing impact for Finland's extensive data competence at the global level. This can only be achieved in a strong collaboration between the public and the private sectors.

For this reason, we are seeking companies with a strong interest and ability to invest into the development of the Affiliate Center concept. We foresee that the participating companies could take the lead in developing the concrete focus areas of the Affiliate Center, including the first use cases called for during the meeting, as well as drafting a realistic 3-year budget for an impactful Affiliate Center. To this end, we call upon all interested parties to get in touch with the national C4IR project organization so that we can start discussing and planning together how we could make a Finnish C4IR Affiliate a reality and a global success story. We welcome any ideas, questions or brave new initiatives that you might wish to discuss and promote further in the context of the World Economic Forum's Centre for the 4th Industrial Revolution Network.

The current national C4IR project organization, consisting of representation from the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour and the Economy, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, City of Helsinki, City of Espoo, Sitra, VTT, Business Finland, Aalto University, EK, Teknologiateollisuus and Fintraffic, would continue to manage the overall initiative and the negotiations with WEF.

We are ready to engage in an open discussion on the terms at which your participation and active contribution in laying the foundations for a Finnish Affiliate can be confirmed. If your company is willing to explore this opportunity further, we request that you reach out to us at C4IRprojektitoimisto@lvm.fi. By doing so, we will provide you access to a Teams-workspace with much more information regarding the initiative. We also aim to set up individual follow-up meetings with each interested party to define the mutually best way forward. In your message, please specify some suitable times for such further discussions, and who you would like to participate in them from your side.