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Towards a digital ethics

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Auteurs	J. Burgess, P. [1], Floridi L. [2], Pols A. [3], & van den Hoven J. [4]
Subsidiary Authors	Lanier, J. [5], & Rouvroy A. [6]
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Samenvatting	The report by the EDPS' Ethics Advisory Group will help advance the debate on digital ethics that the EDPS will continue, focusing on how we can make technology work in the interests of human dignity, culminating at the 40th International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners which the EDPS will co-host in October 2018.

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This report is issued at a time when the data protection community is preparing for the application of the long-awaited GDPR. It cannot and does not seek to override the GDPR, to regulate present data protection practices by proposing additional rules. This is adequately and appropriately accomplished by the new regulation. This report proposes concepts and arguments to support and advance data protection as a project of European values. It describes the way traditional concepts of value may be rethought, re-articulated and re-purposed in order to assure the continuity of legitimate practices and anticipate an unseen future. This task can, by way of conclusion, be condensed into five significant 'directions' of thought and innovation.

Aantekeningen

1. The dignity of the person remains inviolable in the digital age
Life in the digital age is close to a confrontation with the basic principle of personhood: dignity. Digital experience reshapes our understanding of personal identity, human experience and social interactions. Digital life will need to be compatible with the inviolable nature of human dignity.
2. Personhood and personal data are inseparable from one another
Personhood - understanding oneself as a person endowed with moral qualities, rights and responsibilities - is inseparable from the information produced by, and pertaining to that person.
3. Digital technologies risk weakening the foundation of democratic governance
The freedom of choice of each person is a fundamental principle of democratic self-governance. Automated, big data-based interaction with political decision-making may be incompatible with democratic processes.
4. Digitised data processing risks fostering new forms of discrimination
Profiling is part of everyday cognition and judgment. Digitally generated profiles based on very large quantities of data are powerful and increasingly unaccountable.
5. Data commoditisation risks shifting value from persons to personal data
The market value of personal data is not intrinsic but stems from its relationship to the person or persons who give rise to it. Ethical tensions can arise where human value and market value intersect.

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