

## UN rapporteur calls for more debate on big data

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UN Special Rapporteur, Joe Cannataci, called for a more open debate on the border between data collection and privacy during his visit to Denmark this week.

"Every risk is worth taking, as long as it's for a good cause, and it contributes to a better life."

UN Special Rapporteur on privacy [Joe Cannataci](#) quoted Virgin founder Richard Branson during a presentation at the Institute for Human Rights this week. The Special Rapporteur was invited to Denmark by the institute and think tank DataEthics.EU.

"It's rare that I quote this man," continued Joe Cannataci with a smile. "But here I must say that Branson has hit the nail on the head. For the question is precisely whether the risk we run, actually contribute something positive to our lives and to society. "

Joe Cannataci was appointed as the first UN Special Rapporteur on the privacy of a year ago. Behind him he has many years of research and writing in data laws, legal systems and the Internet completely comprehensive. Since his appointment, he has traveled around the world to inform and negotiate solutions to the relationships between privacy and data collection and monitoring. During his visit to Denmark this week he met among others with representatives from the Foreign Ministry and the Defence Intelligence.

The Special Rapporteur also held a public presentation in which he highlighted the challenges of the vast quantities private information, citizens leaving on the Internet, among other things via their mobile phones - so-called big data.

"I'm not saying that privacy must necessarily face the opportunities that big data offers. But if we must choose the interests of privacy from, it should be an active, discussed choice and not something we just accept because some firms and states have crept in through the back door, "said Joe Cannataci.

### When information is to control

Multinational companies like Google and Facebook have long used big data to analyze marketing trends and consumer behavior, which is then used to sell ads and other services. Today speaking companies and authorities also about how big data can be used to diagnose diseases and adjust welfare policies based on data on citizens.

"Proponents of big data compare it to oil drilling to highlight how large economic gains are to be had in the industry. But though we, as consumers often turn to watch, because "we do not have anything to hide," it is important to remember that data collection can be used as a control," said Joe Cannataci.

Cannataci pointed to the Chinese government's use of big data as an example. In China, the government constructs an online system that collects information about each citizen's behavior in society into a single character. The system provides information such as how you behave in the labor market, and how positively you write about the Chinese regime on the social media. The rating will appear on social media and will be used by both landlords, employers, police, friends and family.

"China's plan may sound dramatic, but at least they are quite open about their digital surveillance. In the West we have no idea how much intelligence services know, or whether they have secret rating systems. We have to get these considerations to light so that the development does not happen around us," said Joe Cannataci.

### **Smart cities need smart people**

There is great potential in big data. The so-called smart cities - digitized cities - is the vision of many: self-propelled cars, e-government systems and automatic security monitoring. The technologies offers everyone the opportunity for a more effective and perhaps more accessible society. It is an efficient machine where data on citizens' action patterns and behavior is the driving force.

"Even if we choose to prioritize effectiveness over privacy, we still have to educate our citizens better in digital behavior. The digital development has been so rapid that many people do not have a reflective relation to their behavior patterns are monitored. If we get smart cities, we also need to train smart people who know about the consequences of their actions," said Joe Cannataci.