

**Wednesday 18 November 2020, 14:00-18:00 CET**  
**Conference at EPFL (Lausanne) and online**

## **Governance Of and By Digital Technology**

The rapid pace of technological change and the deepening reliance of societies on digital technologies raise profound governance questions. Some of these governance questions are relatively familiar, such as what kinds of rules and regulations are needed to prevent new technologies from causing harm?

However, in addition to these “governance of technology” questions, we increasingly face questions about our increasing “governance by technology”. This raises high-profile risks, such as the danger that decision-making algorithms will remove decision-making abilities or reduce the quality of decision-making processes within and between societies.

In November 2020, the EPFL International Risk Governance Center (IRGC) will convene a group of leading policymakers, researchers and practitioners to consider the future of “Governance Of and By Digital Technology”. These are some of the issues that the conference will consider:

- How can a technology like machine learning be used to enhance the performance of decision systems while ensuring that issues of accuracy, bias and misuse are addressed?
- Are there lessons about governance of and by technology to be learned from the rapid roll-out of digital contact tracing apps as part of governments’ urgent public health response to Covid-19?
- Does the EU’s approach to digital technology point to the future of global governance in this area—for example, the extraterritorial reach of the [GDPR](#) or the new focus on technological sovereignty in the EU’s recent data strategy. data strategy?
- Central to all these questions is the need to make trade-offs between values and goals that can come into tension when new technologies are developed and deployed—for example, how should we weigh performance or efficiency against ethics or sustainability in different domains?
- Who should make decisions about governance of and by technology? To take a recent example, is it healthy that major private sector actors have been left to take the lead on decisions about the use of facial recognition technology?

This conference is organised under the auspices of the Horizon 2020 [TRIGGER project](#) (2019-2021). Led by [CEPS](#) (Centre for European Policy Studies), the project focuses on Europe’s role within the evolving global governance landscape. The EPFL International Risk Governance Center (IRGC) is leading the TRIGGER work streams that deal with digital technologies, focusing in particular on machine learning, data protection, distributed ledger technologies, open source and open standards.

The conference will be conducted primarily online, and we expect most participants to connect virtually. However, we hope that it will be possible for at least some participants to join us in person in Lausanne, although this will of course be subject to the latest Swiss and EPFL rules concerning conferences.