

Sponsor statement II

Dear APC- participant,

As many of you know, some of the people involved in the APC have expressed deep concerns about the sponsor policy of our conference.

We're fully aware of the moral and political challenges of having corporate sponsors and we have been discussing this issue extensively. Last year we organized a workshop on the topic with various stakeholders. We also had several discussions during meetings of the Amsterdam Platform for Privacy Research (APPR), of which more than 80 researchers are part. Furthermore, we talked to organizers of other conferences.

There was no clear agreement – no agreement on either the pro or the con side. In the end, we decided to continue to work with a sponsorship support model and to explain our position on the website of the conference. We critically assessed the sponsorship structure and adjusted it in order to further exclude any potential involvement regarding the organization and content of the event.

The most important reason for having sponsors is obvious: without sponsors, we would have to scale the conference down very significantly and/or raise the conference contribution substantially. Both didn't seem to us attractive options – or better: both options seemed to be even less attractive than to work with sponsors. In particular, we think it is very good that this way we're able to offer conference access for young researchers at a very low price while being able to invite excellent keynote speakers. Often the participation fees are an important barrier for young academics to participate in this kind of event.

The specific question which has been raised, viz. the contribution of particular sponsors, we also discussed extensively. And again, in the end we agreed that we think it would be arbitrary to be open to sponsorship of one particular organisation but draw the line at another. All these sponsors are subject of important and critical societal debates, including debates about how they deal with personal data.

In our policy to deal with sponsors, we have two very clear rules: full transparency and full independence. We're transparent about sponsorship, and the sponsors have no influence on the program as we organized it or on the papers to be given. If the chosen form of sponsorship allows them to organize one session, it is clearly marked as a sponsored event. In this we don't differ from other academic conferences or we're even stricter.

Of course, there is still room for disagreement: but in the end, we decided for this year to have the sponsors we do have now (Microsoft, Liberty Global, Palantir, Google, SIDN/SIDN fund, University of Amsterdam, and KNAW).

There will continue to be disagreement on the question – reasonable disagreement, with good moral and political reasons on both the con and the pro side. This is one of the societal issues where it is difficult, maybe impossible to reach a unanimous

agreement even among the people who deeply share a general critical approach to the issue.

We agree that it is very important to continue the discussion about the sponsorship of academic events. This is why we organize a special session on the topic on the Sunday evening of the conference.

We are very much looking forward to meeting you in Amsterdam, with all our best wishes,

The organizing committee