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ICRC and CERN cooperate on R&D in technologies for humanitarian action

24 MARCH, 2023 | By Andrew Purcell (/authors/andrew-purcell)



CERN and the ICRC signed a memorandum of cooperation in December 2022. The ICRC was represented by Massimo Marelli, Head of the ICRC Delegation for Cyberspace in Luxembourg, and CERN was represented by Joachim Mnich, Director for Research and Computing. (Image: CERN)

Technologies to be covered include Indico, CERN's popular platform for organising events; CERNBox, which is used to store and share data; Newdle, which was created at CERN to aid meeting scheduling; CERN's Single-Sign On solution for authentication; and OpenStack, a popular open source cloud-computing tool to which CERN contributes and which is used at CERN to manage the computers in its data centre.

The ICRC is an independent, neutral organisation that works to ensure humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. It takes action in response to emergencies and at the same time promotes respect for international humanitarian law and its implementation in national law.

At today's event, the ICRC was represented by six members of its Luxembourg-based Delegation for Cyberspace and of its Geneva-based Data Protection Office Tech Hub. They are responsible for carrying out research and development and exploring and testing the technology relevant for the deployment of services to populations affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence by digital means, in a neutral, impartial and independent manner. Their aim is also to explore how to adapt the ICRC's way of working, as well as the work of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as a whole and the wider humanitarian community, for the benefit of people affected by humanitarian emergencies globally.

"Through this collaboration, we aim to develop new research-and-development opportunities for cooperation related to the use of free and open source software development, as well as to cybersecurity," says Enrica Porcari, Head of the CERN IT Department. "We will work to further the sharing of knowledge, experience and tools in this area."

"We will also identify new challenges as they emerge and develop guidance to help equip the humanitarian and academic sectors with the tools necessary to navigate them," continues Porcari. "This is an important opportunity for us to further boost CERN's positive impact upon society."

CERN is at the heart of the open science movement, which is underpinned by sharing open data and creating open tools. The ICRC and CERN share institutional features and interests, including neutrality, impartiality, independence, openness, data protection and cybersecurity. Both organisations recognise the importance of openness and building pillars of knowledge. They both value suitable, affordable, easy-to-use computing tools that enable them to pursue their respective mandates, from protecting vulnerable populations to advancing science.

"This collaboration with CERN is an essential enabler for furthering our exploration in the area of neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian action in the digital space," says Massimo Marelli, Head of the ICRC Delegation for Cyberspace in Luxembourg. "Specifically, to do this, we will work with CERN to set up their free and open source software tools in the Delegation for Cyberspace environment and test new functionalities and tools as well as operating modalities."

At today's event, initial plans were made for more in-depth training sessions later in the year. Find out more about this important new cooperation, which will further boost the positive impact CERN technologies have on wider society, in an announcement [published today on the ICRC website \(https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-ern-collaborate-research-and-development\)](https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-ern-collaborate-research-and-development).

CERN works closely with other international organisations in Geneva to boost its positive impact upon society. For example, CERN hosts [UNOSAT \(https://home.cern/news/news/knowledge-sharing/unosat-cern-satellite-mapping-good-humanity\)](https://home.cern/news/news/knowledge-sharing/unosat-cern-satellite-mapping-good-humanity), the United Nations Satellite Centre, and has an agreement with the United Nations Office at Geneva to collaborate on Indico, a popular open source platform for organising events.

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