Universität Zürich UZH

Digital Society Initiative (DSI)

Digital Society Initiative – December 2025

Dear interested, dear researchers,

With this final edition of the DSI News for 2025, we look back on a year full of exciting developments and progress. At the same time, we look ahead to 2026, when we will celebrate a special anniversary: the DSI will be ten years old!

We hope you enjoy reading this edition, have a relaxing holiday season, and a great start to the new year.

Your Digital Society Initiative team

News

THE DSI IN 2025

Growth, innovation, and interdisciplinary impetus

2025 was a year full of progress and developments for the Digital Society Initiative (DSI): New **projects**, **professors**, and **postdocs** enriched the DSI, **communities** developed, and the number of network members continued to grow. **Education**, **research**, and **outreach** initiatives achieved visible results. With the upcoming 10th anniversary in mind, it is clear once again that **the DSI is actively shaping the digital transformation**.

Are you interested in what we have been working on over the past twelve months? Here is an overview of DSI's current activities and developments, organized by the areas of **Research**, **Education**, **Strategy**, and **Outreach**.

DIGITALIZATION IN 3 MINUTES

DSI Spotlights

In short videos, **DSI Spotlights** shed light on various aspects of digitalization. After the first season met with great interest, **six more videos** were released last month.

DSI experts answer questions such as: Why shouldn't we just **leave writing to AI**? How can digital tools increase our **motivation to learn**? And what exactly are **quantum computers** all about?

You haven't seen the videos yet? Then we recommend you catch up.

Click here for the videos

DSI INSIGHTS

AI innovation begins with disadvantaged groups

In the latest column in the «DSI Insights» series, DSI Postdoc Oriane Pierrès argues that **AI innovation** should not be geared toward the majority of users, but should instead start with **disadvantaged user groups**.

In the column series «DSI Insights» the DSI showcases its **expertise** and **interdisciplinarity** on topics of **digital transformation**. The columns by authors from the DSI network appear in the online magazine «Inside IT».

RESEARCH AT THE DSI

Three questions about ELIAS

Prof. Dr. Tobias Kowatsch briefly introduces **ELIAS** – a project in the **«DSI Infrastructures & Labs»** series.

What was the main idea behind the ELIAS project?
With ELIAS, we want to make interviews more scalable and less biased by using a friendly, human-like interview agent to talk with people, supported by another smart coding agent that helps sort and understand the conversations. As an added benefit, the anonymous data collected via ELIAS also helps improve AI models, especially for sensitive topics that are rarely available publicly.

How does ELIAS change the way interviews are conducted and evaluated?
ELIAS fills the space between detailed human-led interviews and low-cost online surveys. The interview agent works in close collaboration with a human-supervised coding agent: once enough insights are gathered for a question, the coding agent informs the interview agent, who then adjusts the interview so that not everyone has to answer the question. With this dynamic agentic collaboration, we aim to use interview time and effort more carefully.

Where do you see ELIAS's greatest potential?
ELIAS enables low-threshold interviews through an accessible, friendly, and non-judgmental interview agent. This approach can help reach and engage diverse and vulnerable individuals who often avoid research studies, encouraging greater openness about sensitive topics and giving researchers new insights for more informed and impactful decisions.

You can find out more about ELIAS and Tobias Kowatsch here.

DSI Media Workshop

Cyberattacks have long been commonplace. And yet cybersecurity remains a topic that is difficult for many to grasp. It is therefore not surprising that the **survey conducted by the DSI among media professionals** in early 2025 identified this very topic as the favorite for an upcoming DSI Media Workshop.

Based on this feedback, the DSI dedicated its **sixth media workshop** in mid-November to cybersecurity. Media professionals were able to learn about the **technical and social aspects** of the topic.

More information

MORE NEWS IN BRIEF

DSI Shorts

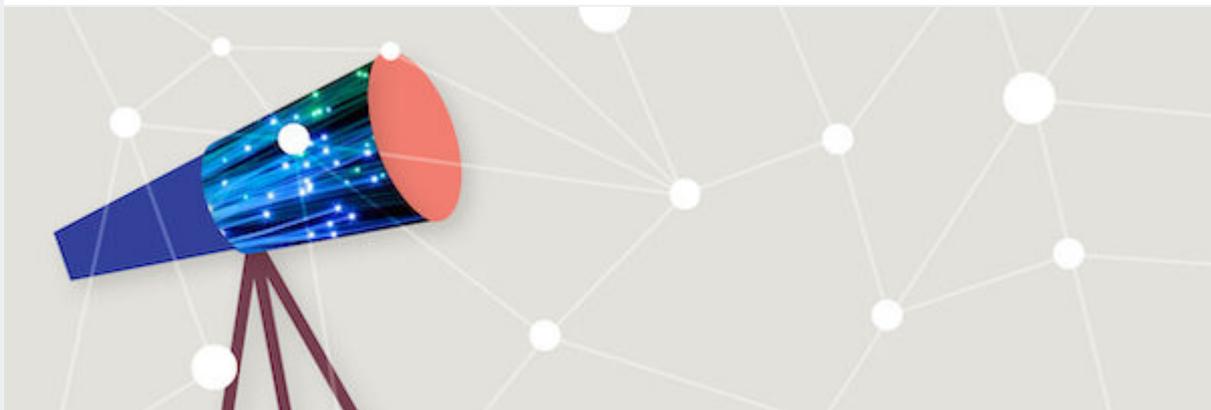In this section, we highlight **more news** from the DSI universe:

- **DSI Postdoc Oriane Pierrès** is seeking participants for a study on AI-generated academic websites.
- Following the election of new DSI members during the General Meeting 2025, our network now comprises **more than 1400 individuals.**
- A team of PhD students from the DSI Excellence Program has created an **interdisciplinary module** that examines the spread and combating of disinformation through AI: «AI and Disinformation in the Digital Age».
- **DSI Professor Luis Aguiar** and **DSI member Debjani Bhattacharyya** have been awarded Consolidator Grants from the European Research Council (ERC). Congratulations!
- **Three DSI members** have received SNSF Starting Grants. We congratulate them warmly.
- We are delighted to congratulate a second DSI expert on her inclusion in the list of the **100 most influential women** in the field of artificial intelligence and data in Switzerland: DSI Professor Giorgia Ramponi.

Event on the new Platform Act

Digital platforms and search engines shape our access to information and public debate. With the planned **Federal Act on Communication Platforms and Search Engines (KomPG)**, the Swiss government aims to introduce binding rules for these services for the first time.

At an event on **January 14, 2026** in the DSI event room, organized by the Center for Information Technology, Society, and Law (ITSL) of the University of Zurich, **experts from academia, industry and civil society** will discuss the opportunities and challenges of the proposed law and how protection against digital risks can be balanced with freedom of expression.

More information and registration

NOTIFY PUBLICATIONS

DSI Reporting

Finally, we would like to make a request to all **members of the University of Zurich** in the DSI network: Have you **published** anything that is part of a DSI/DIZH or DSI/DIZH-relevant project? If so, we kindly ask you to mark these publications accordingly in ZORA.

In doing so, you will help us to **communicate** our joint **achievements** to the university management, the canton, and the public. Thank you very much for your support.

10 YEARS DSI

The anniversary is just around the corner

In 2026, the DSI will celebrate its **10th anniversary**. Planning is already underway, and as soon as the first details are finalized, you will be among the first to know.

But first, we are taking a short break for the turn of the year: our office at Rämistrasse 69

in Zurich will be closed from **December 22, 2025, to January 4, 2026**. After that, we will be back with full vigor for our anniversary year – we are looking forward to it.

Events

14.01.

Weitere Regeln für das Netz: Das neue Plattformgesetz (KomPG) auf dem Prüfstand

Event organized by the Center for Information Technology, Society, and Law (ITSL) at the University of Zurich on the implications of the proposed KomPG for platforms, the public sphere and freedom of expression.

More information

15.01.

AI & Law Lecture Series

An event of the AI & Law Lecture Series on the topic «From Formalism to Relational Accountability in Complex Computing Environments».
Organized by the DSI Community AI & Law.

More information

02. - 03.03.

7th Scale-IT-Up Workshop 2026

Topic: Advancing Digital Women's Health Across the Life Course
Co-organized by the DSI Community Health.

More information

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