



Report from the Second Online MMP Meeting

The Pact in Practice: Digital Infrastructure and Cybersecurity, with a focus on AI for Good

On April 26, the Swedish Dialogue Institute conducted the second online meeting of the Mutual Mentorship Programme 2026 (MMP26). The session focused on artificial intelligence (AI) for good. Added to that was a short introduction to storytelling.

Deputy Director **Maria Chalhoub** opened the session by highlighting the significance of the gathering, noting that it was taking place at a time of considerable turbulence in the region. She emphasized that, given the prevailing uncertainty and challenges, it served as a space for dialogue, coordination, and reaffirming shared priorities despite the difficult regional context.

Interactive activity

During the meeting, MMPs reflected on pair-based experience of co-mentoring, highlighting strong engagement and well-matched mentors. Discussions on AI addressed regional developments and the growing use of AI and related technologies, emphasizing both challenges and potential for positive impact.

Reflections on AI

Participants engaged with expert insights from the following speakers, who addressed key issues related to AI governance, risks, opportunities, and societal implications:

- **Dr. Maja Fjæstad**, *Expert Coordinator at the Centre for Health Crises, Karolinska Institutet, with a background at the European Commission's AI Office in Brussels.*
- **Dr. Mona Demaidi**, *Entrepreneur, Vice President of AI and Director of International Relations at Arab American University.*

Artificial Intelligence for Good

The AI-focused segment featured contributions from Dr Mona, who provided a regional and practical perspective, and Dr Maja, who offered insights from a European governance and policy standpoint. Dr. Mona highlighted the transformative potential of AI across sectors such as education, public services, and development, while also underlining risks related to bias, censorship, and unequal access. She emphasized the importance of EU–MENA cooperation in combining research capacity, funding, and technical expertise with contextual knowledge and skills from the region. She also stressed the need for responsible and ethical use of AI, alongside maintaining critical thinking in increasingly AI-integrated environments.

Dr. Maja complemented these reflections by framing AI as a fundamentally political and societal technology that requires democratic oversight and regulation. She discussed the role of frameworks such as the EU AI Act in ensuring safety, transparency, and accountability, while also addressing concerns around data bias and algorithmic decision-making in public systems. She further emphasized the importance of

identifying which human skills should be preserved in an era of increasing automation, particularly in relation to governance, healthcare, and public administration. Both speakers underscored the importance of international cooperation and shared responsibility in shaping the future of AI governance.

Open discussion

The open discussion that followed invited participants to reflect on the broader implications of AI adoption. Key themes included concerns about over-reliance on AI, its potential impact on human creativity and critical thinking, and the evolving relationship between humans and machine-generated content. Participants also discussed global technological dynamics, including the positioning of different regions in AI development, as well as the importance of ensuring ethical and human-centred approaches to innovation. Overall, there was consensus that while AI offers significant opportunities, it must be guided by strong ethical principles and sustained human oversight.

Key recommendations from the discussion

- Strengthening dialogue between EU and MENA stakeholders on ethical and applied AI governance frameworks.
- Encouraging practical collaboration on AI solutions to address common regional challenges
- Integrating critical thinking components into AI-related capacity-building initiatives.

Storytelling Techniques to be used for EU-MENA Narratives

This additional segment of the session highlighted the importance of human-centered storytelling, encouraging participants to draw on real-life experiences to convey complex ideas in a clear and impactful manner.

- Professor **Brian Palmer** (*Social Anthropologist and Scholar of Religion at Uppsala University*), introduced practical approaches to storytelling, highlighting its role in effectively communicating diverse topics within the EU–MENA context.
 - **Authenticity:** Effective storytelling comes from lived experiences and honesty
 - **Focus on individuals:** Stories are strong when centered on one person or experience to build emotional connection and clarity.
 - **Use of detail:** Concrete details make narratives more powerful and relatable
 - **Show, don't tell:** Let facts and experiences communicate meaning
 - **Narrative structure & pacing:** Build curiosity first, then unfold events gradually and avoid revealing outcomes too early.
 - **Audience engagement:** Capture attention from the start and maintain it; storytelling competes with constant distractions.
 - **Delivery matters:** Voice, timing, pauses, eye contact, and physical presence shape how the story is received.



- Preparation & timing: Practice aloud and stay within time limits while allowing space for emphasis and rhythm.
- Ethical responsibility: Storytelling must respect consent and representation
- Hope and humanity: Include moments of goodness or hope to balance difficulty and deepen emotional impact.

Concluding remarks

Looking ahead, the next MMP in-person meeting will take place in Stockholm on 19–20 May. Building on the discussions from this session, participants will further explore the themes of artificial intelligence for good through a dedicated workshop. Another session will be dedicated to sharing narratives across EU & MENA in the areas of peace and security, migration, climate change, cultural relations, inclusion of women, inclusion of youth, and AI for good. In this session, storytelling techniques can be put to use. The programme will also include visits to the Swedish Parliament and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, among other activities. Participants will receive further information in advance and will continue their discussions with **Dr. Brian Palmer** and **Dr. Mona Demaidi** during the meeting.