The Open Industry 4.0 Alliance and the GAIA-X Foundation

The alliance is informally and closely linked via individuals to the GAIA-X Foundation, a foundation that will put the European cloud and data infrastructure GAIA-X into practice

Reinach, Switzerland, 10. September 2020 - In June 2020, 22 companies and organizations from France and Germany - including Beckhoff Automation GmbH & Co. KG from Verl, Germany - took another major step towards the European digital infrastructure with the establishment of the GAIA-X Foundation. A German and French initiative around international cloud and data infrastructure, GAIA-X is designed to promote a secure, trustworthy data infrastructure in Brussels, thus also promoting the digital sovereignty of Europe. In the meanwhile, the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance is demonstrating similar working principles and goals, and now comprises of 64 members operating worldwide.

The connection between the two non-profit organizations is informal. Many members of the Alliance work simultaneously in the Foundation, in corresponding topics of technical and industry-specific workgroups. In the case of the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance, the idea arose early on that cloud offerings from various machine manufacturers and automation providers could never fully cover the actual needs of a customer on their own. In addition, some functions that plant operators need are missing. All this is of particular importance for the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance, as an organization that drives the implementation of an open solution from the user's perspective. Accordingly, the connection to all existing cloud offerings, as well as the integration into a workflow for asset management at the operator, are seen as key to a manufacturer-independent, open, vendor-neutral offering of coordinated products.

Gerd Hoppe, Corporate Management at Beckhoff Automation GmbH & Co. KG, is a founding member of both the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance and GAIA-X Foundation. He explains the connection between the two non-profit organizations: "*The GAIA-X initiative was launched by politicians, administrators and industry alike, in the context of the Industry 4.0 movement. GAIA-X aims to create a data space that goes beyond industrial applications, where industry meets administration, healthcare, mobility, smart home, energy, agriculture and many other user domains. The use of cloud technologies based on these principles is particularly desirable for market participants in capital goods industries who use automation technology as an enabler for their products. Finally, many users formulate special requirements for the use of so-called hyperscaler clouds. In addition, some users of cloud technology also become cloud service providers to their customers. In this respect, participation in GAIA-X by the relevant companies - and thus the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance - is highly desirable.*"

"The Alliance's principle is data sovereignty for all participants with private, shared and public data for every user and provider in the supply chain, up to the final product," added Nils Herzberg, Spokesman of the Executive Board of the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance and Global Head of Strategic Partnerships for Digital Supply Chain and Industry 4.0, at SAP. *"This principle can be implemented much more easily if an open, data sovereign, federal data ecosystem is available through which numerous Alliance-specific tasks can be handled. In this respect, the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance welcomes and supports the GAIA-X initiative and intends to adapt its offerings accordingly and, where possible, to port them. We see ourselves as the 'alliance who rolls up its sleeves' and that is why many of us are working impartially and neutrally to make sure that things actually happen."*

A user's perspective

Even the concept for GAIA-X was developed entirely in the spirit of the Alliance, promoting the idea of a data ecosystem from the point of view of a data producer, or data owner and user being sovereign over this data; creating open, uniform access to a data space. This led to the fascinating plan to implement a European data ecosystem with a single layer that would be used by, and between, all these infrastructure providers and users. This would occur both within a domain, and across domain boundaries, and would stimulate data exchange. The overarching, overriding goal is to convey European values in the sense of a respectable businessman, and not to see the customer as a product. The magic word is **'Trust',** complemented by federal management of identity and access and clearly regulated principles for the storage, sharing and exploitation of data under the control of the data owner ('Data Sovereignty').

Alliance members list over 155 products and services that they plan to redesign over the next few years to meet the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance's interoperability guidelines.

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About the Open Industry 4.0 Alliance
The Open Industry 4.0 Alliance acts as a partnership of leading European industrial companies that pragmatically participate in the implementation of cross-vendor industry 4.0 solutions and services for manufacturing facilities and automated warehouses. The alliance was launched in April 2019. The association is headquartered in Reinach, Switzerland.

Further information can be found at https://www.openindustry4.com/