
Global AI event for Sligo postponed due to Coronavirus

A global tech conference that would have put Sligo on the global map for artificial intelligence has been impacted by the Coronavirus.

In January *ThinkBusiness* [reported](#) how Sligo had landed a UN global conference AlforGood Global Visions in a move that would have shone a vital light on the pioneering work in the area of AI in the city by local tech firms, start-ups and of course the local Sligo IT.

The conference was being organised by software firm, [LiveTiles](#) which has its EMEA headquarters in Sligo and was being supported by The Western Development Commission, The Atlantic Economic Corridor, IDA Ireland, IT Sligo, Sligo County Council and Tech Northwest.

Keynote speakers were to include Neil Sahota, Global Lead for IBM Watson, Digital Inclusion advocate Joanne O'Riordan, Alessandra Sala from Nokia Bell Labs and Ethical AI leading expert Dr. Kevin Danaher.

Coronavirus impact

As the Coronavirus situation escalated the organisers initially planned to conduct a virtual/remote version of the event but even gathering speakers has been decided as impractical in light of the evolving situation.

“We continue to be impacted by the unfolding story of Covid-19. Since last week our UN partners have moved from non-critical travel ban (which would have allowed a cohort of those directly involved to travel) to an outright travel ban across the UN (except for cases of personal tragedy) meaning that now nobody from the UN system can attend,” explained Paul Conneally, director Marketing for EMEA at LiveTiles explained.

“Additionally, a number of our speakers and panellists have informed us over the weekend and today (9 March) that their employers are instigating a travel ban and are issuing directives for non-participation to events which further impacts our event.

“This can only be expected to continue over the next few weeks as more and more regulation is applied to public gatherings of all sorts. It is therefore decided to postpone the AI Global Visions event to be held in Sligo later this month until the global health crisis has passed and we can plan with more certainty. We are extremely disappointed of course to make such a decision but in the health interests of our speakers, sponsors and guests we believe it is the correct and responsible thing to do.

“Not having a physical event in one venue in Sligo also impacts the virtual element of the conference as we would now require a production set-up to manage speakers in multiple locations and time zones. We would certainly need more time to execute that properly and to the standard required.”

As the Coronavirus situation escalates, conferences of all sizes are either being postponed or held virtually. Last week the organisers of the Web Summit announced that its Collision conference due to take place in Toronto in June will instead be held online.

Tech giant Google also cancelled its annual I/O developer conference in the US because of the Coronavirus escalation.

In Ireland all St Patrick’s Day festival events across the country have been cancelled to curtail the spread of the virus. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar revealed a €3bn package to deal with the crisis. He said: “It is possible we are facing events that are unprecedented in modern times.”

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