

EuroDIG Plenary 4: Arrangements for a European IGF and Future EuroDIG events

Responses to questions about national IGF structures: Serbia

1. Effectiveness of national IGF structures?

What is your experience with the effectiveness of your national IGFs discussions? How do you make sure that your national IGF discussions do have an impact on the policy discussion and on national legislation process? How do you make sure that the relevant stakeholders get together and have a constructive exchange?

How do you make sure that your national IGF helps people to better understand the challenges related to Internet Governance?

National structures (Ministries and the Regulatory Agency) are still in the phase of resolving technical and economical issues (privatisation, licensing, demonopolisation, infrastructure, economic models) of the telecommunication sector, and have not much entered the Internet Governance sphere. The level of awareness on Internet Governance and related issues within the official institutions is very low, and has started to emerge only recently with the privacy concerns of users and the discussions on broadband policy.

Apart from the WSIS meeting in 2003 in Geneva and the IGF meeting in Athens in 2006, when there was an official of the Serbian government as a representative, no other formal representatives of Serbia have been present at other international meetings related to the IGF. At the same time, Serbian representatives have been present at all major ITU telecom conferences in recent years.

Few Serbian citizens have been involved with the IGF and ICANN processes on behalf of several national and international organisations since WSIS in 2003. Nevertheless the official structures have not used them as contact points and have not shown much interest or understanding in the whole process at all.

Several trainings on Internet Governance and Information Society were organised by DiploFoundation and by Belgrade Open School. Many roundtables and meetings have been organised on CCTLD regulation and on few IG&telecom-related regulatory issues (universal service, e-government, digital signature), as well as on strategies for telecommunications and broadband policy. Few meetings have been organised to gather the interested stakeholders around the international IG events - roundtable on WSIS Tunis, and roundtable and online discussions on ICANN related events. The first IGF remote hub was organised in Belgrade during the IGF meeting in Hyderabad in 2008, hosted by the Regulatory Agency and the Ministry, that gathered around 20 interested professionals; most of them have for the first time faced the discussions on Network Neutrality and IPv6 in a shape of IGF fora.

Several online communities (forums, facebook groups, other) exist that share news and updates on telecom&IG-related issues on national and international level, and provide space for discussions. These gather a good number of active professionals (businessmen mostly and some civil society activists) involved with national CCTLD regulation, e-government, broadband policy, digital signature and e-commerce, and alike. The Open source and Wiki like communities are existent and strong. Most of the professionals are linked together and know each other; yet there seems to be no organised pattern of development except for the discussion spaces. The awareness of the IG area as such is not high there either, in spite of the fact that several IG-related issues are being heavily discussed.

There is almost no media coverage on IG related issues. There are almost no journalists specialised in telecommunications and digital media, and the understanding of the issues is very low, apart from a very few techy-oriented local web sites.

There is almost no academic coverage of IG-related issues in a multidisciplinary context within the official study curriculum in Belgrade. The existent ones are linked either strictly with the infrastructure without broader social or economical perspective, or with economy and business without broader technical or social understanding; there is no study programme on governance models with relations to Internet.

There is a need for a larger activity for raising awareness of the IG-related issues. There is an excellent potential in infomed and motivated professionals, and several fora to gather them. There is a growing interest of official institutions (Regulatory Authority, Ministry of Telecommunications and IS, and Ministry of Culture and Media) in the issue, with a number of young and motivated professionals within. The IGF

process and the remote hub in Belgrade is another chance for extending the range of activities in Serbia. The forthcoming EuroDIG meeting with a number of Serbian representatives (including the officials) is as well an exquisite opportunity for getting more professionals and official institutions involved.

2. European Approach on Internet Governance?

What is "European" about the Internet Governance Discussion in Europe? What can Europe contribute to the global Internet Governance Discussion? What are European perspectives, best practices and how should they feed into the global IGF?

Bringing IG related discussions on European level may enable more Europeans to get involved with the IGF process - especially the ones from non-EU countries - Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, whose participation and general awareness of the post WSIS process has been low. The ability to travel to the European event is greater than the ability to follow the IGF events scattered around the world.

Having the European IG event agenda similar to IGF one is a good approach, since it may feed into the global process more easily with the relevant inputs from the regional level. Nevertheless, adjusting the agenda slightly to emphasise the burning issues of European region adds value to the regional level and enables discussion foci to be within the areas of direct concerns for the European users.

Finally, the networking of pan-European professionals that the EuroDIG can provide is of utmost importance; again especially when it comes to the non-EU professionals and state officials that - unlike the EU ones which meets on regular bases - do not have regular contact and exchange of concerns and experiences. The more formal status of EuroDIG (as organised by CoE as well) gives higher political weight to the process and draws the attention of officials of EE and SEE states as well, which is highly relevant for the success of the national IG developments (without political support there can be no progress in these countries in spite of a good pool of informed and motivated professionals).

3. European IGF: mandate and objectives?

Is there a need/desire for a European IGF? If yes, what should be its mandate and objectives? Which stakeholders should participate?

The need for a European IGF in form of a discussion forum - alike the global one - of course exists: any chance for regular updates on regional developments and discussions on challenges, concerns, best practices and success stories is most welcomed.

Yet another question is if the European IGF should become of a more binding nature than the global one. Bringing in certain politically binding levels would increase the participation and awareness of political elite but would probably decrease the level of open discussions and the influence of non-government entities.

A right balance should probably be found for the European IGF to have more binding nature yet to keep it open-end discussions and to involve wide variety of interested stakeholders - from governments and regulators, via civil society (including youth representatives) and academia to business sector.

The European tradition of political inclusiveness and openness is the great advantage of the future regional process comparing to the global processes. European IGF can and should set up a prototype of a successful model of regional IGF structure that is binding enough for officials yet fully inclusive for all the interested participants (the model not yet existent on a global scale, not only within the IG).

4. European IGF: structure and working methods?

How should such a regional forum work? How should it be organized and how should it be funded? How should it link to national, global and other regional Internet governance initiatives? How could it help to improved e-participation in internet governance in Europe?

Vladimir Radunovic, Serbia

