

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here with you today, part of the delegation of the European Youth Forum to the second panEuropean Dialogue on Internet Governance. It is the first time the European Youth Forum has been officially invited to participate in this process as a stakeholder, and we surely don't take our participation lightly.

As we speak now and as the meeting goes on in the next two days thousands of youth from around Europe will have the chance to participate in the discussions through the dedicated youth blog for this event (at youthopinion.worldpress.com), the European Youth Forum facebook homepage and the live tweets of the youth participants present. A great advantage brought to us by the internet: an extensive, immediate valorization effect. Even before coming here, the debate about many of the issues to be discussed over the next two days, had been fired up with a number of youth organizations around Europe.

In general, the role of the internet has become essential for the work of youth organizations as a tool to enhance access of young people to information and –more importantly- for the development of active youth participation in democratic processes.

As you are well aware we – the younger generation, the internet generation- are always keen on living it up through new technological formats. The internet is the preferred means of communication, information and social interaction for youngsters – many of who claim to be the savviest internet minds around! In this context, it is crucial that the voice of young people – advanced media users and the generation of the future- is heard and taken seriously into account when discussing internet policies.

More so, because of the serious challenges in media and communication policies lying ahead, appearing in parallel to the seemingly endless evolution of the internet.

Moreover, it is essential to provide young people with the possibility to exercise their fundamental rights and especially freedom of speech and expression, while at the same time ensuring that they are aware of the responsibilities that come with these rights.

We have thus repeatedly proposed the mainstreaming of media literacy at all levels of formal education to raise awareness and knowledge about the rights, responsibilities, opportunities and risks related to the use of the internet. By equipping the young generation with the substantial and critical understanding of the internet, we decrease the need for heavy regulation in the field. By 2020 being media illiterate may well have the same effect as being illiterate in the year 2000- so we need to act fast.

Speaking of regulation, copyright policy is one of the bigger challenges we are presented with: sharing all intellectual and creative goods is still a major advantage of the Internet. But as it seems extremely difficult to adapt offline copyrights to the online content, there is still the need to remunerate intellectual and creative work. We are in favor of developing – with both users and producers- new, suitable ways of combining both factors, such as Creative Commons or a cultural flat rate.

We have also supported the development of common standards regarding privacy settings and personal data protection. Young people seem to be among the most vulnerable users in violations of security, dignity and privacy; therefore legislation in this domain should indeed be of highest priority. Hopefully we'll see the day when the internet is an entirely safe environment for children for youth.

Least we should not forget the fundamental question of access to the internet. Although young people are surely some of the most advanced

users and may well be very creative, we cannot take care of the infrastructure on our own. We are thus especially concerned on the huge gap in internet accessibility for youngsters across countries even in our own Continent. Universal access to the internet should not be just an utopia, but a realistic target for the next decade – at least in Europe.

Although a global approach is necessary if we are to be really effective in most of these challenges, it may still be considerably faster for us in Europe to move ahead efficiently and promptly provide good practices for internet governance and substantial feedback to the upcoming IGF in Sharm el Sheikh.

The European Youth Forum, gathering 99 youth organizations and representing dozens of millions of youth from around the Continent, has been very keen to be at the forefront of the debate on new media and communication services in Europe having recently organized, with the help of the Council of Europe, a dedicated youth event to coincide with 1st Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and New Communication Services, held in Reykjavik in May 2009.

We are very glad to continue fostering the links with the Council of Europe in this working area and would like to warmly thank their DG Human Rights and Legal Affairs for sponsoring our participation today and for their continuous support. A warm thank you also to the Eurodig Office, the EBU, and the Swiss Federal Office for Communication for hosting us.

Last but not least, thank you to all of you for valuing the youth opinion in your work. We are hopeful that we will see many more youth involved in future Internet Governance related activities.

Thank you.