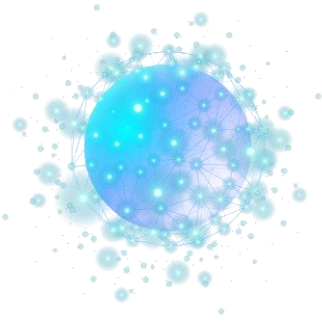


Croatian Internet Governance Forum CRO-IGF 2023 – Final Report





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What is Internet Governance Forum?

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is a global initiative operating under the auspices of the UN, with the primary goal of fostering inclusive and equal participation of all stakeholders in discussions related to Internet governance. Established in 2006 during the "World Summit on the Information Society" (WSIS) in Tunisia, the IGF was envisioned as an open platform for addressing Internet governance issues.

This decision was prompted by the recognition of the necessity to involve a broader community in the governance and regulation of the Internet. As a result, a diverse range of topics emerged, spanning from IP addresses and Internet protocols to domain management. In this context, it is crucial for multiple stakeholders, including civil society, academia, industry, and the private sector, to actively engage in these discussions alongside state representatives. This collaborative approach allows for well-rounded perspectives and ensures that a wide array of interests and expertise are considered in shaping Internet governance policies.

The IGF does not have a decision-making mandate, nor does it adopt binding acts, but their results may affect other processes, which have binding effects. The IGF, by drawing its conclusions and drawing attention to topics that are relevant, can influence decision makers and thus participate in forming an official national position or public policy in the field of internet governance.

The IGF is fully open to the participation of anyone interested in the issues of Internet stability, its security, usage and development. IGF is an annual event. Topics that will be discussed on the IGF can be suggested by anyone interested.

In addition to the global IGF initiative, there are regional (e.g. EuroDIG - European Dialogue on Internet Governance, SEEDIG - South East European Dialogue on Internet Governance), national (e.g. CRO-IGF), or age (Youth IGF) initiatives.

IGF initiatives, especially national and regional ones, are important as they promote communication among all stakeholders, foster the development of a culture of dialogue among different stakeholders on internet-related issues, which helps in anticipating different perspective and interests. Important principles on which the IGF is based are:

- openness and transparency (allowing all interested parties to participate in the IGF, public insight into all parts of the IGF's work)
- inclusivity (enable active involvement of all concerned)
- bottom-up approach (involving the public in the creation of the IGF program)
- is not intended for sale of goods and services
- multi-stakeholder model (model of involvement of all stakeholders: academia, business sector and industry, civil society organizations and state and public administration)

Why CRO-IGF?

The National IGF has been running for several years now as a platform for open and inclusive multi-stakeholder discussions on Internet governance issues in Croatia. The first CRO-IGF was held in Zagreb on May 6, 2015 at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb. One of the topics discussed was about the benefits that CRO-IGF as a platform could bring to Croatia. Report from the first CRO-IGF is available at [1635 \(intgovforum.org\)](https://www.intgovforum.org/)

The goals of CRO-IGF are:

- to point out to various stakeholders the opportunities for involvement in Internet governance processes relevant to their business and activities, and to encourage dialogue and, if necessary, help in capacity building for better understanding of Internet-related topics;
- to empower all stakeholders in Croatia to actively participate in national, and then directly or indirectly, regional and international Internet governance processes;
- to identify Internet governance topics that are important for Croatia.

CRO-IGF 2023 Preparatory Process

The preparatory process for the 2023 annual event began in fall 2022. The Organizing Committee prepared a call for topics and, based on the proposed topics, prepared a Forum program consisting of two panel discussions:

1. GDC, Global Digital Compact
2. DSA, Digital Services Act

CRO-IGF 2023 Organizational Committee

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|--|--|
| <p><u>Academic Community:</u> Tihomir Katulić, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb Marin Vuković, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb</p> | <p><u>Private sector/Industry:</u> Adrian Ježina, Telemach Hrvatska Hrvoje Hadžić, Ericsson Nikola Tesla Martina Silov, CroAI Branimir Rajtar, NOG.hr</p> |
| <p><u>Public Sector:</u> Tihomir Lulić, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Krešo Antonović, Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure Marin Ante Pivčević, SDU-RDD Nataša Glavor, CARNET Mislav Hebel, HAKOM, GAC Representative Zdravko Jukić, HAKOM, GAC Representative (Advisor)</p> | <p><u>Internet Users/Civil Society:</u> Kristijan Zimmer, Croatian Open Systems Users' Group, HrOpen</p> |

More detailed information on organizations with representatives on the CRO-IGF Organizing Committee:

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|---|---|
| Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs | http://www.mvep.hr/en |
| Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure | https://mmpi.gov.hr/en |
| Central State Office for the Digital Society Development (SDU-RDD) | https://rdd.gov.hr/o-sredisnjem-drzavnom-uredu/9?lang=en |
| Croatian Academic and Research Network - CARNET | http://www.carnet.hr/ |
| Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb | https://www.pravo.unizg.hr |
| Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing, University of Zagreb | https://www.fer.unizg.hr |
| Ericsson Nikola Tesla | https://www.ericsson.hr/en/homepage |
| Croatian Open Systems Users' Group, HrOpen | http://www.open.hr/ |
| CroAI, the Croatian Artificial Intelligence Association | https://www.croai.org/ |
| Network operators group Croatia (NOG.hr) | https://nog.hr/en/about/about/ |
| Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM) | http://www.hakom.hr |

CRO-IGF web site is available at http://www.carnet.hr/carnet_events/cro_igf

CRO-IGF community contact could be reached using email address cro-igf@carnet.hr

CRO-IGF 2023 Event

The sixth Croatian IGF was held in Opatija on 25 May 2023 at Grand Hotel Adriatic as an independent event at the MIPRO 2023 Conference. This one-day event had the following agenda:

- 10:00 – 10:05 Short introduction – Zdravko Jukić, CRO-IGF 2023 Coordinator
- 10:05 – 10:15 Welcoming speech – Tonko Obuljen, President of the HAKOM's Council
- 10:15 – 11:30 Theme 1: Global Digital Compact (GDC)
- 11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break
- 12:00 – 13:00 Theme 2: Digital Services Act (DSA)
- 13:00 – 13:10 Conclusion and messages
- 13:10 – 14:30 Networking

Zdravko Jukić, the Coordinator of this year's CRO-IGF gave a short introduction on what CRO IGF is, why it is important and how it fits into wider perspective of the Internet Governance and the future events like global IGF and the Summit of the Future in 2024. He also presented the agenda for this year's forum.



Zdravko Jukić, CRO-IGF 2023 Coordinator giving introductory statement

Tonko Obuljen, President of the Council of the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM), greeted the attendees and wished everyone a successful event.



Tonko Obuljen, president of the HAKOM's Council holds the opening statement

GDC, Global Digital Compact

GDC, Global Digital Compact – proposal of the UN Secretary-General, more info available at: <https://www.carnet.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-gobal-digi-compact-en.pdf>

Panel Participants:

Panellists:

- Tihomir Lulić, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
- Ivana Jelačić, CARNet (from the audience)
- mr. sc. Mislav Hebel, HAKOM
- prof. Marin Vuković, Ph. D., FER (from the audience)
- Hrvoje Hadžić, Ericsson Nikola Tesla
- Ivana Golub, Ph. D., NOG.hr
- Martina Silov, CroAI

Moderator: Desiree Milošević, RIPE NCC

Topics discussed in the panel:

- Scope and goals of the GDC
- Common vision of the future where new technologies are used
- Potential of the digital technology
- Risks and dangers
- Approaches to regulating the new technologies

Three introductory presentations were held, first one on the GDC as such, by the representative of the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, Tihomir Lulić. Second presentation was given by Martina Silov from the CroAI Croatian Artificial Intelligence Association Croatia and the world, possibilities and risks. The third introductory presentation was given by Ivana Golub, Ph. D. from the NOG.hr association on the association's activities and goals. The panel was led and moderated by Desiree Milošević, Co-Chair of the RIPE NCC's Cooperation Group.



Tihomir Lulić from the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs giving introductory presentation

Messages from the panel discussion:

- The technical community should be involved in the adoption of Internet governance policies
- Technical community can give best hints on how to implement needed/wanted policies
- Private sector's view on the policies is also needed
- The digital divide in the Republic of Croatia is still a big challenge
- High capacity networks are crucial for the connectivity
- Operators are building high capacity networks where they see interest
- Regulation and subsidies are needed to achieve good coverage for all citizens
- Citizens in all areas of a country need basic internet access in order to use modern online services like e-citizen
- NOG.hr – founded by 9 companies in Croatia
- NOG.hr is open for all network engineers and network technology experts from the private sector and from academia
- GEANT and SIG – Special Interest Groups – excellent platform to exchange knowledge and collaborate on network technologies
- The application of artificial intelligence (AI) is unlimited
- It is important to include wider participation in the discussion on the AI
- CroAI is open for all parties interested in AI, maintains a “map” of all active stakeholders
- There are some very successful start-up companies in Croatia that use AI
- What Internet has been in the last 30 years, AI will be in the next 30 years
- There is still no agreement on the definition of artificial intelligence
- It is difficult to regulate something that develops as fast as AI
- It is difficult to teach something that is developing so fast as AI
- It is very important to agree about the basic AI definitions before a meaningful regulation can be developed
- Regulation of artificial intelligence could potentially put the brakes on small start-ups
- Sandbox approach is difficult for AI, therefore we have very few initiatives in EU
- There is an awareness of the potential dangers of artificial intelligence, but it is important to educate people about the technology
- In Croatia, we already have and need to support current and future good initiatives on education of children through public schools
- New tools should not be banned but used with awareness and critical eye by students and teachers, new models of learning are needed
- It is very important to connect education system with tech companies and work on new technology challenges together
- Comments from students who completed their courses on AI “this changed my life”
- It is important to regulate the use of a technology (AI) not its development
- Use of data and personal data in machine processing and machine learning needs to be regulated
- Multistakeholder model is important for the future of the Internet governance
- Croatia is present in GAC at ICANN where it can together with the representatives from other governments influence the ICANN decisions that affect public policies
- So far the multistakeholder model where GAC has an advisory role has worked fine
- There are high expectations from the GAC and the coming Summit on the Future and the UN process, however some are sceptical that such big questions can be successfully resolved in the UN format alone
- It could be beneficial to open the positions in the Croatian delegation at the Summit on the Future to other stakeholders like private sector, academia and civil society

- Today digital has become everyone’s business therefore it is needed to involve all stakeholders in the dialogue on the future of Internet and technology in general
- IGF is still one of good examples on how to involve and include all interested parties in discussions of common interest.



GDC Panel

Panel discussion on the Digital Services Act

DSA, Digital Services Act – the European Union’s legislative action, more info available at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package>

Panel Participants

Panellists:

- Jan Sulik, Senior Advisor – Specialist, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
- Martina Dragičević, A1 Hrvatska
- Tomislav Pedišić, Vukmir&Partneri
- Marko Tomić, AST Law

Moderator: Domagoj Maričić, HAKOM

Topics discussed in the panel:

- Definition from the Digital Services Act
- Roles and responsibilities according to the Act
- Digital services take-up in Croatia
- DSA timeline

The introductory presentation on the current situation in Europe and Croatia was given by Jan Sulik from the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. The panel was moderated by Domagoj Maričić, Head of Legal Department at HAKOM.

Messages that could be heard on the panel:

- The aim of the Regulation is to create a safe, predictable and reliable Internet environment and to protect the digital space from the distribution of illegal content and to ensure the protection of the fundamental rights of users, and special attention is paid to the protection of minors
- The regulation applies to all online intermediaries that provide services in the EU, and their obligations under the DSA depend on their role, size (number of users) and impact on the internet ecosystem
- Some details like what illegal content is is decided at national level, so big companies providing services across the EU will have to respect local rules in each member state
- In the Republic of Croatia, the drafting of the Law for the Implementation of DSA will soon begin, and the plan is to submit it to the parliamentary procedure by the end of the year
- a model of several different supervisory bodies was chosen, which will receive certain supervisory or implementation tasks and competences related to the application of DSA, while the coordinator for digital services would be HAKOM
- operators support the regulation of internet intermediaries and consider it a kind of balancing regulation in relation to traditional telecom operators, even though it is a different set of regulatory rules
- operators, regardless of balancing regulations, believe that large providers of content and applications should also contribute financially to the development of the infrastructure
- DSA and DMA must be observed as a package
- Connectivity is the precondition for competition in the “services” layer
- Operators demand compensation from the digital services providers for the connectivity

- 170 billion Euro is needed to achieve Gigabit Society in European Union
- Today's networks are not the same as networks before 20 years – we have cloud, AI, edge computing, virtualisation of networks, etc.
- Some Croatian Internet intermediaries to whom the DSA applies mostly ask law firms for advice related to compliance with prescribed obligations (for example, what must be included in their general terms and conditions, etc.)
- There is a need to improve the overall horizontal coordination on wider digital policies in Croatia
- It is expected that the cooperation among the bodies responsible for the DSA would work fine with HAKOM as the national coordinator for digital services.



Participants in the panel discussion on DSA

Audience

The Forum was attended by 47 participants. The presence of participants from different stakeholders was fairly evenly distributed among the Government, private sector and academia, while civil society representatives were less represented.

Conclusions

The main conclusions of the Forum are the messages generated in its open and inclusive format. The participants recognised that this format is excellent for exchanging ideas and positions that may influence relevant policy processes at the national and international levels. It is necessary to continue to further develop a dialogue on issues related to the Internet and in particular Internet governance among all the interested stakeholders.

Special Thanks

CRO-IGF's annual event was made possible by the positive attitude and efforts of all the members of the CRO-IGF Organizing Committee. Special thanks to the MIPRO Conference that hosted this year's

forum. Support from the RIPE NCC Organization was very valuable and very important in organizing CRO-IGF 2023 event. Thanks everyone!

More Information and Contact

It is possible to contact the Croatian multi-stakeholder community for Internet governance issues by email: cro-igf@carnet.hr

Zagreb, 15 June 2023