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Youth position toward the present and future of Digital Cooperation

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YOUTH OBSERVATORY

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background

*This document was made by the participants of the session "**IGF 2021 WS #272 Youth in IG policy-making process: Let's talk about the MHLB**" that took place on Friday, 10th December 2021. In this document, the reflections were raised by the participants and they do not intend to reflect a unified opinion of youth in the Internet Governance ecosystem. This document is supported by the Youth Coalition on Internet Governance and Youth Observatory and will be published on the websites of these organizations.*

About the Youth Initiatives

Youth Coalition on Internet Governance is a recognised dynamic coalition by the IGF that serves as a platform for youth to discuss various issues.

Youth Observatory is a youth-led organisation (also called Youth Special Interest Group, from Internet Society) with international presence in the Internet Governance ecosystem.

Photo credit: PAP

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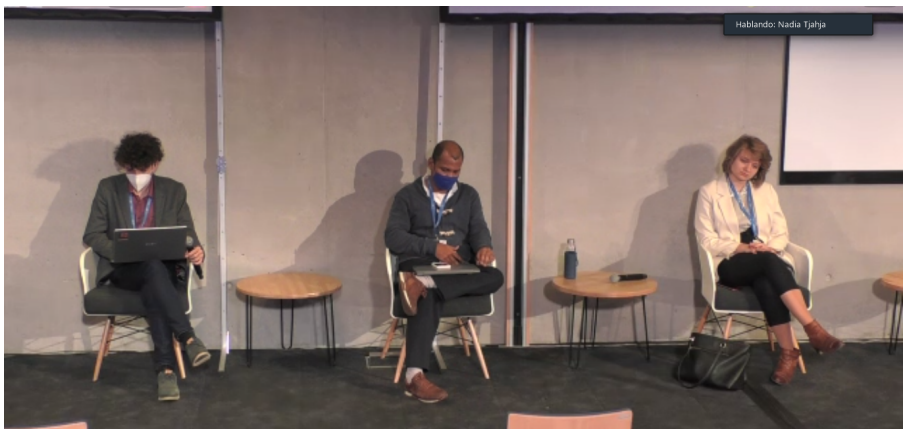
WHAT ARE THE REMAINING CHALLENGES OF INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE IGF PROCESS?

02

WHAT ROLES SHOULD YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MHLB INITIATIVE?



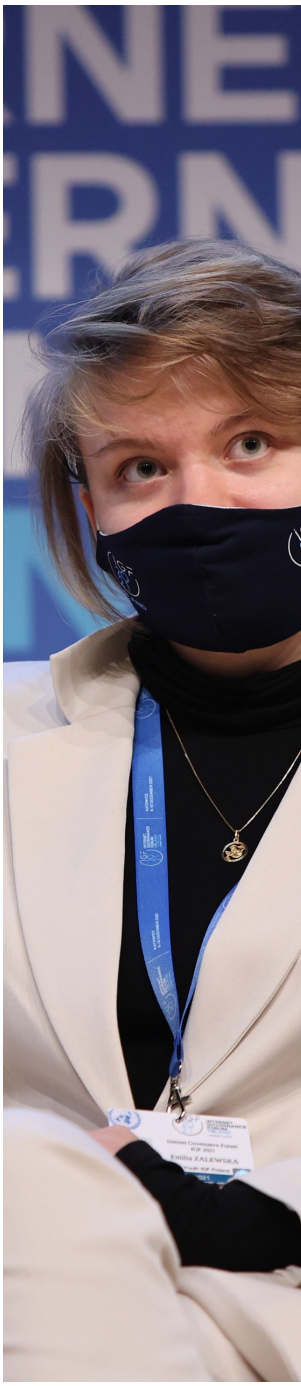
03

WHAT ARE RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS THAT CAN HELP US IMPROVE OUR PARTICIPATION AND HOW CAN WE INFLUENCE THEM?

What are the remaining challenges of including young people in the IGF process?

One of the main problems that we have today to include youth is to reach more audiences. Including people that are already part of some organizations, for example in Brazil, there are people in different countries concentrated in the same spots so everyone knows anyone, people are excluded, sometimes it is hard to include people that are not at these processes is difficult is something important to make diversified not just regionally. There are some other challenges worth mentioning, like:

- Getting more spaces of representation at the intersessional workstream of the IGF. This could be achieved by providing soft skills to youth, so we can make sure that youth have the rights skills to seat at the table, negotiation, public speaking, allowing them to bring forward the points that are important so they don't get obfuscated by things that people are fearful about. A great example is EuroDIG, as this NRI is always working together with young people, and every year its programming committee changes with new young people from previous years to keep bringing. Youth need to be able to fully participate at the IGF. We can do better, not only in the number of people building that kind of community brings a great way of engagement, not only for the Internet Governance but also for their professional growth.
- The necessity for support so we can have our youth initiatives legally registered so they can contribute meaningfully to the IGF, provide financial support to youths for traveling to forums, and create agency through online and onsite campaigns on topics youth is interested in.
- The current amount of capacity-building platforms is not enough: more capacity building to bring youth from all paths of life in the IGF. Schools on IG are a great step in this process, however, we are concerned not many of them considered other languages apart from English, which excludes the non-English speaking communities and other communities outside the main languages recognized by the United Nations.
- Moreover, the mentorship programs could provide a stronger connection of youth and non-youth participants, and enrich the Internet Governance discussion on equal footing.
- Provide access to the Internet in an equal and affordable way to youth communities especially from remote areas or low-income homes, through national plans and strategies that involve the implementation of community networks.
- Be truly included in decision-making processes, not only as a consultant person but someone that must hold the opinion. We should be the ones that make the decision as to the target community of the Internet policies. Nothing with us without us.
- Developing and testing new technologies to reach more youth communities, with an emphasis on marginalized communities, taking into consideration the gender diverse communities, because new policies can’t be created without thinking in including really the people that we think need to be included.



What roles should young people have in the development of the MHLB initiative?

On the role that young people can take in the policy-making bodies we recall these reflections:

- We call upon all the stakeholders to consider the incorporation of youth representatives in the Leadership Panel including the UN Tech Envoy and the representatives from youth-led initiatives. We have demonstrated through the hard work done of all youth initiatives on creating policy-making not only through the production of policy papers, but also being involved in the NRI Coordination committees, Dynamic Coalitions, and Best Practice Forums, just to name a few. When the IGF and the Internet Governance ecosystem refer to youth, it rarely expressed the necessity of youth in key roles. We acknowledge the existence of initiatives like UN Youth Envoy and UNDESA Youth section, however, we are still far away from our goal of true inclusion of youth.
- Provide recommendations from youth perspectives that become effective in the design of policymaking, and not as the last resource. We have seen too much tokenism over the year, and all stakeholders should take into action ways to solve this challenge with the support of youth. The Youth Messages produced in several forums should be widely distributed and recognized their value by other stakeholders.
- The necessity to receive support from the governments and other sectors to organize events like the Youth Summit and Youth NRIs. We need dedicated funding support for youth who wish to participate onsite at the IGF and connectivity funds for online participants who have connectivity issues. It is important to remark that this financial support should not impose ideas on the youth events, so we can ensure transparency and fairness in the outcomes of the youth events and initiatives.

Section 3

What are relevant stakeholders that can help us improve our participation and how can we influence them?

Youth remark several ideas to inspire stakeholders to help us to improve our agency in the Internet Governance forums:

- The implementation funding programs for NRI initiatives for instance, like the one provided by the Internet Society Foundation could definitely contribute positively to creating policymaking through Youth NRI events. Moreover, we call all the stakeholders to create more funding programs and provide flexible conditions to access these fundings, especially helping the Global South youth participation. The role of the private sector is essential to build these funding programs.
- More mentorship programs for the long term can help newcomers to strengthen their relationship to the Internet Governance ecosystem, through the provision of the above-said capacity-building tools and meaningful connections with high-level representatives of organizations like UN, ITU, etc.