

Internet Governance Forum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH IGF) 2023

– Final Report





INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

Bosnia and Herzegovina

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What is the Internet Governance Forum?

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was initiated as a direct result of the World Summit on Information Society (UN World Summit on Information Society, WSIS) which began under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva in 2003 and continued in Tunisia in 2005. The IGF event on a global level has been convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations since 2006.

The IGF is an international policy forum for discussions and cooperation on topics related to the development of the information society, Internet management and challenges around the Internet in general. The IGF is not a decision-making body, but a forum where defined problems and discussed approaches can be shaped into public, international or national policies and forwarded to other bodies - whether within the UN or other international organizations or governments - for consideration.

IGFs, especially at national and regional levels, tend to produce practical ideas for intersessional activities by participants themselves and result in changes and successes which are then presented in the next yearly gathering. For several years now, IGFs are, in addition, resulting with key messages from sessions held which shape both national and regional IG agendas as well as feed into global IG-related discussions.

This year, the global IGF is held in Kyoto (Tokio) under the overarching theme "Internet We Want - Empowering All People". It is organized as a multistakeholder platform to discuss Internet governance issues in a bottom-up, open and inclusive manner. It welcomes representatives from civil society, government, the private sector, the technical community, academia, as well as the media.

Principles on which the IGF is based are:

- openness and transparency (including allowing all interested parties, and public at-large to participate in the IGF from shaping the agenda to discussing, public insight into all segments of the IGF work)
- inclusivity (enabling active involvement of all interested parties)
- bottom-up approach (involving public at-large in creation of the IGF program)
- not intended for sale of goods and services
- multi-stakeholder model (academia, business sector and industry, civil society organizations, state and public administration, and [more often in recent years] media)

BH IGF: History and Why It Matters?

The IGF in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH IGF) took place in [2015](#), [2016](#), and [2017](#). It is part of the national and regional initiatives (NRIs) network of the global IGF. It has been organized in the multi-actor spirit of the IGF, as a joint initiative of several organizations and institutions. In 2015, the initiative started when a small group of individuals and enthusiasts from BiH, who attended other IG events regionally and globally, recognized the value, understood the importance of shaping human rights-based policies around the Internet, and felt the need for such an event on the national level for inclusive discussion. From 2015, for three consecutive years, the BH IGF became an important and unique country platform, for its openness to all stakeholder groups as well as for giving the opportunity to young audiences to participate in such an event, including to attend introductory training on Internet governance before the event itself.

Overarching themes over the years:

[2015](#): "Internet for All – Opportunities and Challenges within Internet Governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina"

[2016](#): "BH Internet - Open and Secure?"

[2017](#): "The Network Effect: from infrastructure to children"

With the five years of gap and the fast pace of technology and considering how Internet policy and human rights related issues are developing and being affected, which consequently affects citizens of BiH through freedom-shrinking laws being pushed forward and adopted, and with the lack of a unique space for discussion for all relevant stakeholders on these topics - there was a clear need to (re)create such a space. In BiH, media plays a significant role in informing the public on these topics and is equally affected by the laws which are posing a clear threat to rights and freedoms both online and offline. Given the complexity of the country's set-up, the non-existence of a strategic approach and the growing challenges facing the country as regards digital rights, cyber-security, infrastructure, and other issues concerning the online sphere, BIRN BiH with its partners has decided [to relaunch](#) the IGF platform in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As the report will show, the BH IGF 2023 achieved great participation, grabbed media attention, as well as brought to the attention IG topics and has provided some solutions for ways forward.

BH IGF 2023 - Preparatory Process

The preparatory process for the 2023 annual event began in August 2023. BIRN BiH as the lead for the BH IGF 2023 reached out to other relevant institutions and organizations. The Organizing Committee [see: *BH IGF 2024 Organizational and Executive Committee*] was formed in the first ten days upon the start of the initiative. Its first task was to prepare and publish an online [call for topics](#)¹ and, based on the proposals received from the public, prepared a BH IGF program consisting of four panel discussions and a lightning talk.

The call has been published on BIRN BiH's media flagship website [detektor.ba](#), which has been acting as the main communicator of the BH IGF news and activities for the BH IGF from which other media and public has been receiving timely information.

46 individuals selected the below topics during the public call for feedback. Each individual was able to suggest the maximum of two topics.

The following topics have been selected:

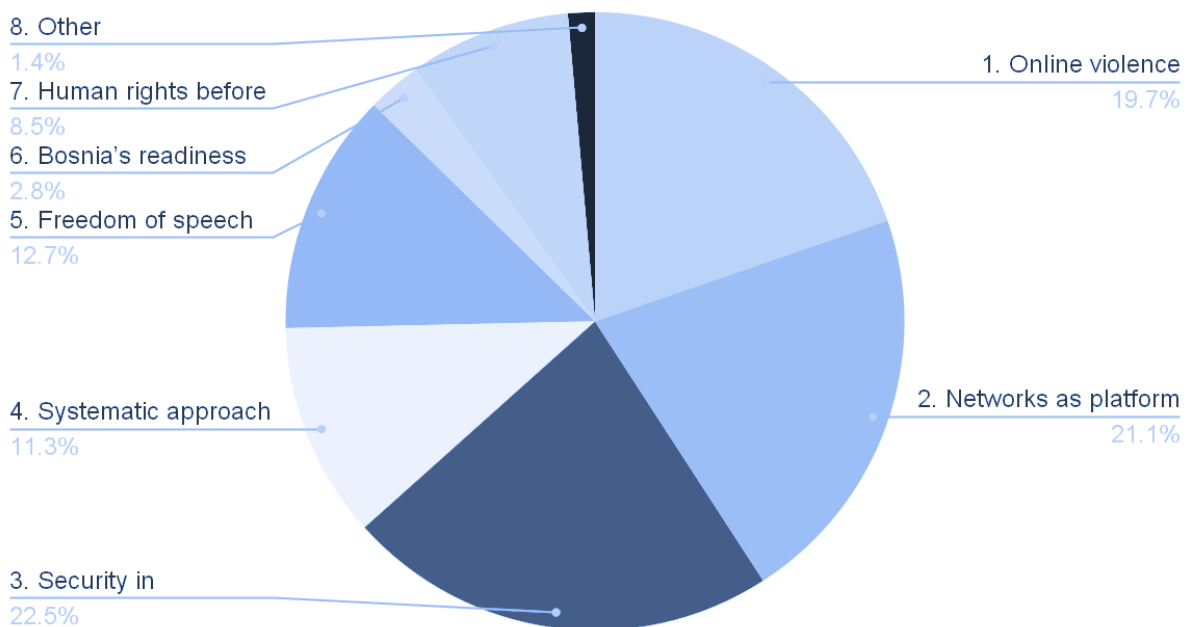
- Online violence
- Networks as platform for hate speech, genocide and war crime denial and disinformation
- Security in cyberspace (security of institutions, private companies, citizens' data etc.)
- Systematic approach to the Internet-related issues
- Freedom of speech on the Internet, vs repressive laws restricting it
- Bosnia's readiness for artificial intelligence (AI)
- Human rights before digitalization
- Other²

In parallel, funding support was fundraised for reaching out to both national and international organizations which have the internet, policies, and human rights at its core.

¹ <https://detektor.ba/2023/09/13/forum-za-upravljanje-internetom-ponovo-u-bih/?lang=en>

² *Digital education as a pillar of cybersecurity improvement*

% reflecting seleted topics



BH IGF 2023 - Organizing and Executive Committee

1. [Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (BIRN BiH), represented by Denis Džidić (executive director) and Aida Mahmutović (project manager) - **NGO/Media** [lead organizer]
2. [Cyber Security Excellence Center in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (CSEC) [Academic CERT], represented by Predrag Puharić (director) - **Technical community, Academic Community**
3. [BHNIX.ba](#), represented by Enes Halilović - **Technical community**
4. [Centre for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), represented by Arben Murtezić (director) - **Government**
5. [Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo](#), represented by Sead Turčalo (Dean) - **Academia**
6. [Logosoft](#), represented by Damir Dizdarević (director) - **Private sector**

BH IGF 2024 is supported by the [British embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Internet Society Foundation](#) (ISOC), and [Hanns Seidel Stiftung](#) in Sarajevo

BH IGF 2023 - Program and Visibility

The fourth BH IGF was held in Sarajevo on October 2, 2023.

BH IGF underwent the revamping of its former logo [see: *BH IGF logo 2015-2017 below*]. The new logo [see: *BH IGF logo revamped 2023 below*] was created by the well known designer in BiH, Filip Andronik.



BH IGF logo 2015-2017



BH IGF logo revamped 2023

BIRN BiH's flagship website [detektor.ba](https://www.detektor.ba) is a well known media for its investigative pieces and daily reporting on transitional justice, corruption, extremism, malign influence and disinformation, human rights and the rule of law, including in the digital sphere for several years now. In 2022 only, Detektor had 559,410 users and almost 1.8 million page views; published more than 2.000 articles, recorded more than 9.000 republications of its content by other media.

BIRN BiH reported extensively about the BH IGF 2023 from the preparation of public call for input until informing the public about sessions' key messages, capturing both website reads, social media public attention and other media republishing.

Based on the input received from the public, the organizing committee focused the agenda around the topics on cyber-security, freedom of expression and the media on the Internet, historical revisionism online, and violence against women and marginalized groups through information and communications technologies.

BH IGF web site was created and made publicly available bilingually at:

- [English] <https://www.bhigf.ba>
- [Bosnian] <https://www.bhigf.ba/bs>

Speakers' names, affiliations and pictures, have been updated continuously and are available on the website.

The following agenda with distinguished speakers, experts in the field, was created and published:



INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Agenda

9:30 - 10:00 **Arrival and registration**

9:30 - 10:00 **Media statements**

10:00 - 10:15 **Opening remarks**

- Denis Džidić, Executive director, BIRN BiH/detektor.ba
- Dr. Ingrid MacDonald, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Julian Reilly, British ambassador

10:20 - 11:45 **Plenary session (hall Banjaluka)**
Moderator: Zvonko Komšić, journalist

Absence of systematic approach to Internet governance and human rights issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Video-message, Melissa Fleming, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications

Panel:

- Arben Murtezić, Director, Center for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (CEST FBIH)
- Jurica Banić, Chief Infrastructure Officer, CSEC
- Sabina Baraković, Expert Adviser, Sector for IT and Telecommunication Systems, Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Lejla Huremović, communication specialist and activist for the human rights of LGBTIQ+ community
- Sead Turčalo, Dean, Faculty of Political Science University of Sarajevo

11:45 - 12:00 **Coffee break**

12:00 - 13:30 **Breakout sessions**

I: Cyber security in BiH - state of affairs (hall Sarajevo I)

Moderator: Semir Mujkić, Editor-in-Chief, BIRN BiH/detektor.ba

Presentation of the Cyber security threat report for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Intro: Enes Hodžić, journalist, BIRN BiH/detektor.ba

Panel:

- Danijel Čolo, Head of the Performance Audit Department, Office for the Audit of BiH Institutions
- Sabina Baraković, Expert Adviser, Sector for IT and Telecommunication Systems, Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Damir Dizdarević, CEO, Logosoft
- Predrag Puharić, CEO, Cyber Security Excellence Centre (CSEC)
- Jasmin Emrić, MP, Club of Representatives for EU Integration and Security (IRI - EISC)

Panel podržan od:



IRI INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE
Advancing Democratic Governance

Key messages: Feđa Kulenović, Department of Information Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo



12:00 - 13:30

II: Historical revisionism, denial of genocide and war crimes, and hate speech online (hall Sarajevo II)

Moderator: Džana Brkanić, Deputy-editor, BIRN BiH/detektor.ba

Video-message, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide

Genocide denial [in BiH] on TikTok, and what has TikTok done about it?

Intro: Tarik Moćević, Project coordinator, MediaCentar

Panel:

- Bojana Kostić, researcher and advocate on the topics of human rights and technology, Pen to Paper
- Hikmet Karčić, Research associate of the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, University of Sarajevo
- Lejla Gačanica, Legal advisor and independent researcher
- Edin Ikanović, Srebrenica Memorial Centre

Key messages: Jasminka Džumhur, Human Rights Ombudsman of BiH

12:00 - 13:30

III: How the lack of legal wording and management system betrays victims of online violence (hall Banjaluka)

Moderator: Adnan Rondić, journalist

Video-message, Irene Khan, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Panel:

- hvale vale, Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
- Kemal Maksumić, Prosecutor, Cantonal Prosecutor's Office of Hercegovina-Neretva Canton
- Elif Sariaydin, Department for Violence Against Women, Secretariat of the Monitoring Mechanism of the Istanbul Convention, CoE
- Anida Sokol, Coalition for Freedom of Expression and Moderation of Content in BiH, MediaCentar
- Aida Mahmutović, Project manager, BIRN BiH/detektor.ba

Key messages: Emina Bošnjak, Executive Director, SOC

13:30 - 13:45

Digital Services Act (DSA) in the countries of the Western Balkans

13:45

Tijana Cvjetičanin, Zašto ne

Key messages & step forward

Denis Džidić, Executive Director, BIRN BiH/detektor.ba

14:00

Lunch

Podržali:



Organizacioni odbor:

- **Keynote**

Julian Reilly, the British ambassador to BiH, underscored the significance of the BH IGF, which was supported by the British Embassy, emphasizing its focus on crucial societal challenges facing the country. He placed particular emphasis on the issue of cyber security, which affects not only the authorities but also businesses and the general public.

“One proof of this is the 15 million attempted cyberattacks that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the last few months. The forum will identify potential solutions and opportunities to address these attacks,” stated Reilly. He also noted the special attention given to other critical topics at the IGF, including abuse, gender-based violence, historical revisionism, and genocide denial, all of which persist in the online sphere.

The resident coordinator of the United Nations in BiH, Ingrid Macdonald, expressed her organization’s satisfaction at being able to contribute to the forum and called on people around the world to unite to improve the internet.

“Our lives have been completely changed by the internet and what it represents in our lives. It’s very important that we recognize the opportunities and the risks, because despite it affecting our lives every day, cyberspace remains largely unregulated and that is problematic,” said Macdonald.

She pointed out that while the internet serves as a platform for public discussion and increased access to information, it is frequently misused to spread misinformation, discrimination, hate speech, revisionism, and various forms of violence. These narratives, she observed, are particularly pervasive in BiH, where hate speech encompasses the denial of war crimes and the Srebrenica genocide, necessitating a broader dialogue to on issues that divide people in the country and hinder reconciliation.

In a video message, **Melissa Fleming, UN Under-Secretary for Global Communications**, expressed concern about the alarming trends, especially in light of the rise of artificial intelligence, which is developing more rapidly than any previous technological innovation.

“This is just one of the reasons that the UN is now addressing the information crisis as a global priority, dramatically scaling up its response,” Fleming noted, adding that her team is developing a code of conduct for information integrity on digital platforms, with the goal of creating a global “gold standard.”

The audience was greeted by **Denis Džidić, director of the Balkan Research Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIRN BiH)**, emphasized the importance of events like these is important because they expose the alarming trends that BiH has been facing over the past two years, especially those pertaining to cyber threats and the digital rights of citizens.

“The idea of this approach is to involve the entire community in resolving the issue of cyber threats, and violations of digital rights online, in order to come up with better solutions and exert pressures on government institutions to effectively tackle these issues,” explained Džidić.

- **Plenary: Absence of systematic approach to Internet governance and human rights issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- Plenary session had four speakers and was moderated by Zvonko Komšić, a well known producer and TV host currently at the public broadcaster BHRT. *[for more details on speakers see under BH IGF 2023 - Program and Visibility section]*

During the plenary session, participants discussed the lack of a systemic approach to internet governance and human rights issues in BiH, a global challenge which is shared by other countries worldwide.

Arben Murtezić, director of the Center for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of the Federation of BiH, argued that this country is likely the least equipped in the region to combat cyber-attacks, pointing to the absence of a number of strategic and legal documents necessary for this struggle. Speaking about practical attacks, such as the one on the Parliamentary Assembly, he noted that even larger and better prepared states struggle to find solutions. Murtezić suggested that embracing knowledge and experience from the private sector could provide viable solutions to these complex challenges.

“In today’s world, if you don’t have a CERT [Computer Incident Response Team], it’s like not having a State Department. That’s such an important point,” Murtezić added.

The importance of having such a body in BiH was also emphasized by Jurica Banić from the Cyber Security Excellence Center (CSEC), who believes that the complexity of state administration effectively hinders the establishment of such a team in the country.

“We have so many levels of government where everyone wants to grab their share of the pie. I’m not sure what pie, I think we all have the same interest – the protection of all, including the nation as a whole,” he remarked.

Sabina Baraković, an expert advisor in the Information and Telecommunications Systems Sector of the BiH Ministry of Security, pointed out that efforts to establish CERT have been ongoing for years, but that several decisions stand between BiH and the finalization of this important body. She cited the major challenge of recruiting experts, given that the civil service isn’t attractive to IT experts, who find better conditions in the private sector.

The central focus of this session was on human rights issues in the online sphere. [Lejla Huremović](#), an activist for the human rights of the LGBTQ+ community, highlighted the numerous hateful narratives, usually with right-wing nationalism and religious undertones, are used to spread animosity.

“They’re part of the nationalist package that has been initiated and given a green light through the political narratives in our public space, emanating from those in power,” explained Huremović.

[Sead Turčalo](#), the dean of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo, spoke about the connection between these attacks, their real sources, and their impacts. He said that the content altering our emotional relationship with reality has the greatest influence on various online incidents.

He described cyber security as collateral damage of the political dynamics in BiH and stressed the need to separate this issue from the narratives of everyday politics.

Media report from this session [available here for sharing](#).

- **Panel 1.1: Cyber security in Bosnia and Herzegovina - state of affairs**
 - Panel had five speakers and was moderated by Semir Mujkić, Editor-in-Chief of BIRN BiH/detektor.ba. The introductory presentation on the second Cyber security threat report for Bosnia and Herzegovina was given by Enes Hodžić, investigative journalist. *[for more details on speakers see under BH IGF 2023 - Program and Visibility section]*

The panel on cyber security in BiH stressed the urgency of forming a CERT and addressing the major dissonance between legislative and executive authorities. The participants concluded that while BiH is facing intense and complex cyber-attacks, the country must contend with numerous limitations. Notably, the absence of systems for exchanging information and knowledge hinders the ability to learn from the attacks and incidents that have already occurred.

“This number speaks to the alarming nature of the situation and the urgent need for a response,” said [Enes Hodžić](#), one of the authors of the recent report compiled by CSEC and BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIRN BiH).

Hodžić explained that the cyberattacks predominantly originated from France, the United States, Russia, Bulgaria, and Estonia, but that attackers often use Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to conceal their actual locations. He added that certain countries, including the US and some EU nations, have robust VPN infrastructures that attackers exploit, giving the false impression that the attacks are coming from these locations.

The report identified a shift in the cyberattacks most frequently perpetrated cyberattack. While Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks were previously the most common, the current trend is towards attempts to breach private telephone networks. These attacks can inflict substantial costs on private companies and disrupt the operations of state institutions.

In addition to data on the attacks detected using decoy systems, the report offers illustrative examples of the real impact these cyber assaults have on their victims. After being targeted in an attack, the public utility company Sarajevogas received insufficient support from law enforcement but managed to resolve the issue on their own and recover their data. The media outlet Nezavisne Novine faces constant attacks, which they believe are aimed at undermining their readership.

[Predrag Puharić, the director of CSEC](#), emphasized the absence of a systematic approach to cyberattack protection, stating that even if only a small fraction of the 15 million attempted attacks succeeds, the damage caused will be significant.

“The problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that we don’t have any exchange of information. We know what happened at a hospital in Maryland, the standard data is available. We know what methods were used. But when something happens in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we’re left in the dark,” Puharić stated.

[Sabina Baraković from the Ministry of Security](#) described a structural change which the ministry adopted in May, the formation of the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) after years of waiting. However, she noted that there are still many steps and decisions to be made before the team becomes a reality.

Baraković highlighted the challenges of attracting experts to the team, given the more attractive conditions in private companies as compared to state institutions. This, coupled with bureaucratic procedures, is likely to prolong the process for months.

“Another problem is the lack of qualified staff, because you have to have a person with the right skills,” Baraković explained. She noted that BiH still doesn’t even have a list of the critical infrastructure requiring protection, including cyber space, but that efforts are underway to address this.

[Jasmin Emrić, a representative in the State Parliament](#), said that he sees the formation of CERT as a significant step forward, despite the fact this initiative began 12 years ago. According to Emrić, state legislators are often distracted by daily politics. As a result, topics that impact citizens’ lives, such as cyber security, are rarely addressed.

Reflecting on last year’s cyberattack on the Parliamentary Assembly, [Damir Dizdarević, the director of Logosoft](#), described it as a new-generation attack but said that there was never any report on the incident or on the lessons learned. A report on it and the lessons learned was never presented. He explained that his company assisted with recovery efforts without charge.

"The parliament didn't have the capacity to fight back," Dizdarević stated, expressing uncertainty as to whether a procedure to handle future attacks was established after this incident.

The report audit underscored the insecurity and vulnerability of the system, aligning with previous claims that only a fifth of the recommendations outlined in the Strategy for Information Security had been implemented.

Media report from this session [available here for sharing](#).

- **Panel 2.1: Historical revisionism, denial of genocide and war crimes, and hate speech online**
- ➔ Panel had four speakers and was moderated by Džana Brkanić, Deputy-editor of BIRN BiH/detektor.ba. The introductory presentation on the "Genocide denial [in Bosnia and Herzegovina] on TikTok and what has TikTok done about it?" was given by Tarik Moćević, project coordinator at MediaCenter and the author of the TikTok and genocide denial on genocide in BiH report. *[for more details on speakers see under BH IGF 2023 - Program and Visibility section]*

The revisionist narratives surrounding the violence committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not originate with the widespread availability of the internet. As [Tarik Moćević from the Sarajevo Mediacenter](#) pointed out, the denial of these atrocities began immediately after they were committed. Describing the conclusions of a recent report on genocide denial on the TikTok social network, Moćević stated that "the narrative of denial has become part of popular culture and a trend among young people. They spread hate speech, deny genocide, and glorify war crimes, with triumphalism." He added that figures like Ratko Mladić are being romanticized and portrayed as victims in a manner that appeals to young audiences. Moćević underscored the real-world consequences of TikTok videos in which genocide is denied and the perpetrators of atrocities are celebrated.

[Edin Ikanović, a representative of the Srebrenica Memorial Center](#) and an author of the report, expressed his lack of surprise that such content isn't being reported in BiH, given that, more than a year since the criminalization of denial, there has yet to be a single indictment in the country for this offense. For him, the fact that elected officials are among those denying the genocide is most troubling. Ikanović emphasized the impact that online denial has on the returnee community in eastern BiH, stating, "There's definitely fear and panic because everyone interprets each message sent to the returnees differently, and we are also seeing frequent physical attacks. When organizations make posts supporting war criminals and publish congratulatory messages, it's impossible for a returnee in Bratunac to remain indifferent. On online platforms, we have brutal threats, terrible hate speech, which we can detect."

The holdup in the prosecution of genocide denial results from a mixture of political and judicial influences, according to [Hikmet Karčić, a research associate at Sarajevo University's Institute for Research on Crimes Against Humanity and International Law](#). Karčić doesn't believe that this is a matter of incompetence on the part of the staff at the state Prosecutor's Office. Instead, he suggests that they avoid dealing with denial-related charges because it isn't worth the potential threat to their careers.

"A number of prosecutors at our Prosecutor's Office respond primarily to pressure. I think that's the key issue – a mixture of politics and prosecutorial inaction. Unfortunately, this topic has become normalized in our area. Today, there is a polarization of society, where denial is normalized because you have 50 reports filed against Milorad Dodik and not a single indictment," said Karčić. He adds that in Republika Srpska, denial has become "*mainstream*."

According to [legal advisor and researcher Lejla Gačanica](#), denial and glorification of genocide and war crimes can be proved, but there is a lack of commitment to pursuing criminal charges. She clarified, "The norm itself makes clear that not every denial is a criminal offense, but these actions can incite violence and hatred. And that shouldn't be difficult to prove at all." Gačanica pointed out that there are similar regulations in other European countries, arguing that the issue has become political rather than legal. She added that while denial was present before its classification as a criminal offense, the situation has become worse because now the law and positive norms exist, but state institutions fail to implement them.

[Bojana Kostić, a researcher and advocate specializing in human rights and technology at Pen to Paper](#), highlighted the lack of knowledge about the strategic priorities for cooperation with social network companies. She pointed out that recent research revealed that social networks are more inclined to remove content reported by trusted organizations rather than ordinary citizens. "The topic of denial and glorification should be a top priority for all those who are dealing with it. By consolidating cases, we can affect movement and believe in our ability to do so. We need to move away from a merely observational position," stated Kostić.

The participants agreed that combating genocide denial requires a multi-faceted approach, emphasizing the necessity of educating citizens and rebuilding trust in the functioning of the judiciary and institutions.

While acknowledging a decrease in instances of denial due to the amendments to the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the participants argued that convictions would have reduced these instances to a minimum or diminished their presence in public discourse. Additionally, they emphasized the need to regulate the digital media space and enact media-related laws to enhance the accountability of editors and journalists.

Media report from this session [available here for sharing](#).

- Panel 3.1.: How the lack of legal wording and management system betrays victims of online violence

→ Panel had five speakers and was moderated by Adnan Rondić, TV host of AlJazeera Balkans. *[for more details on speakers see under BH IGF 2023 - Program and Visibility section]*

The panel highlighted the necessity of raising awareness among citizens and judicial representatives to combat gender-based violence, violence against children, and the dissemination of intimate personal content on the internet.

Kemal Maksumić, a prosecutor at the Herzegovina-Neretva Cantonal Prosecutor's Office, described his professional experience dealing with cases often mislabeled as child pornography. He underscored the importance of recognizing the internet's dangers, and that it has a dark side.

"We have to keep in mind that social networks are outside the jurisdiction of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a prosecutor, I have to act in accordance with the law and be humane," Maksumić stated, adding that relevant statistics should be made more accessible. He went on to note that as internet users, children are exposed to billions of people, including predators. He also mentioned a case in which an intimate recording of a high school teacher was maliciously published online.

Maksumić clarified that law enforcement agencies, courts, and prosecutor's offices can only function within the confines of existing laws. He noted the absence of specific legislation in the Federation penalizing the publication of private content, contrasting it with the legal changes implemented in the Republic of Srpska. Maksumić stressed the need to instill a system of values within the entire society to ensure that people do not feel vulnerable and that victims are empowered to report incidents.

Elif Sariaydin, representing the Department for Violence Against Women and the Secretariat of the Monitoring Mechanism of the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe, warned that every digital innovation creates new opportunities for perpetrators of violence, and that women are disproportionately affected.

"It's not just a legislative deficiency, it's often a lack of awareness. All online violence, carried out through technological devices, has serious consequences. It can be committed by partners or ex-partners, which is a frequent occurrence. Perpetrators use smart devices," Sariaydin remarked. Referencing the pillar of the Istanbul Convention concerning the protection of victims, she emphasized that awareness is implied in this protection. Sariaydin pointed to the challenges victims frequently encounter and called on states to provide sufficient training to law enforcement. She also encouraged international cooperation among law enforcement agencies as well as at the state level, given the international character of this type of violence.

"There must be a systematic application of the provisions that are in place and greater awareness among the judiciary and law enforcement, in order to identify shortcomings – whether it's victims not reporting cases, or prosecutors or courts," she asserted.

Anida Sokol, a researcher at the Sarajevo Mediacenter, is a member of the Coalition for Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was founded in June of this year as part of the UNESCO project "Social Media 4 Peace."

Sokol highlighted the difficulty in reaching social network representatives and the lack of transparency in content removal mechanisms. "It's very important to distinguish between harmful and illegal content, which require different mechanisms. This is problematic because there are many different laws in BiH, some of which are not aligned with international standards," she stated.

Sokol also referenced the recently adopted Law on Freedom of Access to Information, where international community and civil society criticisms were disregarded. She recalled the Gradačac femicide case, when the murder of a woman was live-streamed on social media, explaining that one of the coalition's first actions was to send a letter to the social media network demanding information on the number of moderators working in the local languages and an inquiry into the prolonged availability of the video.

Aida Mahmutović, project manager of the Balkan Research Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIRN BiH) and co-author of a report on the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, conducted by BIRN BiH and the Geneva Center for Security Sector Management, highlighted the misuse of the term "revenge pornography." She emphasized that the support provided to victims is still inadequate. Mahmutović referred to a specific case in the report where a girl's intimate video was published online, noting that while this victim had the parental support that the perpetrators were convicted, this is not commonly the case.

"The system did its job, but it didn't fully consider what it means to be a victim in the online sphere," said Mahmutović, adding that the online aspect was not mentioned at all in the verdicts.

Hvale vale³ from the Association for Progressive Communications emphasized that there is no distinction between what happens in the digital sphere and what happens in real life.

"When someone hurts you online, you feel pain," said *hvale vale*, who has been dealing with violence against women through technology since 2009.

She argued that this issue is not taken seriously and described solidarity as her motivation for getting involved in addressing violence. She concluded that the

³ Name that the person goes by, *hvale vale*, written all in small letters

state must recognize the diversity of its citizens and acknowledge the responsibility to provide equal care and protection to all.

Media report from this session [available here for sharing](#).

- Flash session: Digital Services Act (DSA) in the countries of the Western Balkans
- Audience was addressed by Tijana Cvjetićanin from Zašto ne. [for more details on speakers see under BH IGF 2023 - Program and Visibility section]

Tijana Cvjetićanin from Zašto ne, a fact-checking NGO, spoke about the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the importance of the Balkans region, to which BiH belongs to, aligning its laws to in order to create a safer digital space in which the fundamental rights of all users of digital services are protected and to establish a level playing field to foster innovation, growth, and competitiveness, both in the European Single Market and globally. The DSA includes rules that govern gatekeeper online platforms. Gatekeeper platforms are digital platforms with a systemic role in the internal market that function as bottlenecks between businesses and consumers for important digital services.

Apart from many benefits which come hand in hand with digital transformation, challenges also exist. One of the main concerns is trade and exchange of illegal goods, services and content online. Online services are being misused by manipulative algorithmic systems for, for e.g., amplifying the spread of disinformation. Such and similar challenges with the way platforms address them have a significant impact on fundamental rights online.

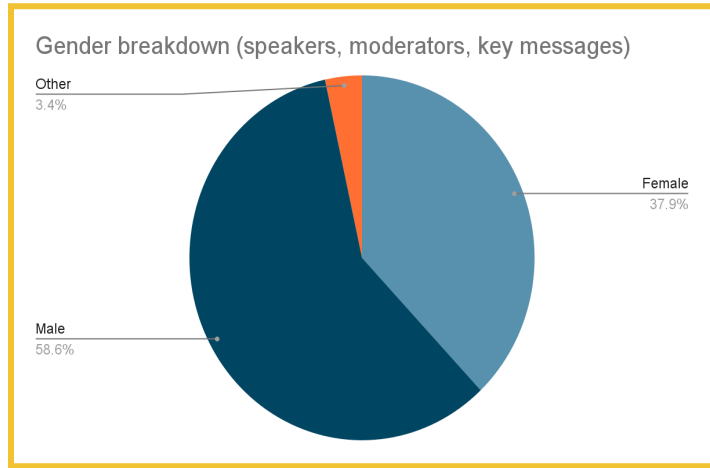
Each parallel session had distinguished members of the community which play a significant role in the human rights and/or technology sphere, which delivered key messages towards the end of the Forum:

- Feđa Kulenović, Department of Information Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo
- Jasminka Džumhur, Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Emina Bošnjak, Executive Director, Sarajevo Open Center

The following chart gives a visual overview of the gender representation concerning all - speakers, moderators and individuals who delivered key messages.

Female	11
Male	17

Other	1
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- BH IGF 2023 On Social Media, detektor.ba and other media

Posts include links, pictures, and videos.



- [Forum o upravljanju internetom](#) (promotional video)



- <https://www.facebook.com/Detektor.ba/posts/pfbid02HRhSui1yAifVjoUmvq5fub8HTTkPnvuPcMt2zcMvYtXqv4kPXJB5SSq29Mss3aq5l>
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- <https://www.facebook.com/aida.mahmutovic.35/posts/pfbid02EJxLw4HrszALDQ83mfc38Ez8U5gSMuLBjqDRWo9LC7rneaeSBU6uqpsqv87TVm4hl>
- <https://www.facebook.com/Detektor.ba/posts/pfbid0q6BBczYG4oDbrnk1n4N9H3kH2rGWCygp1UdSNBmm9yHBparFiuMN1t7U85JfVN9mBl>
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- https://www.instagram.com/p/Cx7Y3uwN3S4/?img_index=1
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyTWMl7NBkk/>

Detektor

- [Forum za upravljanje internetom ponovo u BiH - Detektor](#)
- [Internet Governance Forum to Be Held in Bosnia Again - Detektor](#)
- [Nakon pet godina, u Sarajevu diskusija o upravljanju internetom i ljudskim pravima u BiH - Detektor](#)
- [Forum za upravljanje internetom istakao zabrinjavajuće trendove, ali i preporuke za poboljšanje cyber prostora u BiH - Detektor](#)
- [Internet Governance Forum Identifies Alarming Trends and Offers Recommendations to Improve Cyber Space in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Detektor](#)
- [Žrtve dijeljenja intimnih sadržaja ostaju nezaštićene u Federaciji: Forum za upravljanje internetom - Detektor](#)
- [Internet Governance Forum: Victims of Non-Consensual Private Content Dissemination Remain Unprotected in the Federation](#)
- [Negiranje genocida na internetu zbog nekažnjivosti postaje dio kulture i trenda mladih - Detektor](#)
- [Impunity for Genocide Denial Spurs Youth Pop Culture Trend Online - Detektor](#)
- [BiH i dalje bez državnog cyber tima i dokumenata, dok broj napada raste - Detektor](#)

- [BiH Still Lacks a State Cyber Team and Crucial Documents as Cyberattacks Surge - Detektor](#)

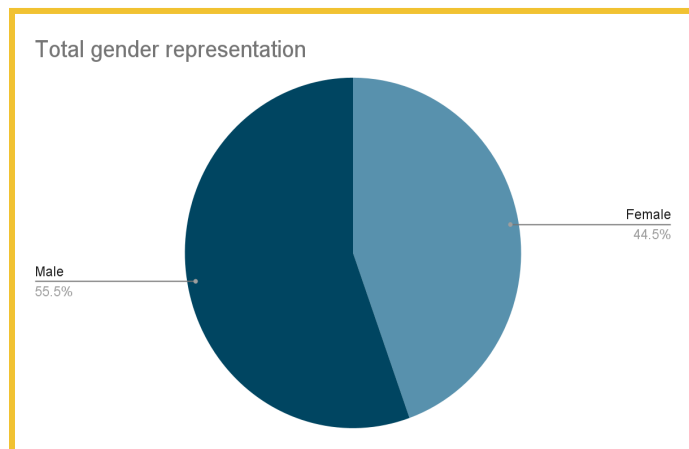
Republications/coverage by other media

- [Žrtve dijeljenja intimnih sadržaja ostaju nezaštićene u Federaciji: Forum za upravljanje internetom - BH PORTAL](#)
- [Forum za upravljanje internetom istakao zabrinjavajuće trendove, ali i preporuke za poboljšanje cyber prostora u BiH - BH PORTAL](#)
- [Nakon pet godina, u Sarajevu diskusija o upravljanju internetom i ljudskim pravima u BiH - BH PORTAL](#)
- [Forum za upravljanje internetom u BiH | MC ONLINE](#)
- [Forum za upravljanje internetom ponovo u BiH - BH PORTAL](#)
- <https://www.mreza-mira.net/vijesti/seminari-treninzi/forum-za-upravljanje-internetom-u-bih/>
- <https://birn.eu.com/news-and-events/internet-governance-forum-identifies-alarming-trends-and-offers-recommendations-to-improve-cyber-space-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>
- <https://www.mreza-mira.net/vijesti/clanci/vise-od-15-miliona-prijetnji-cyber-sigurnosti-u-bih-do-augusta-2023-2/>

BH IGF 2023 - Audience

BH IGF 2023 attended over **110 participants**, out of which, per the signature sheet, **49 females and 61 males**.

Attendees come from government institutions, NGOs, private sector, media, academia, technical community, as well as students.



BH IGF 2023 - Thank you to

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Bosnia and Herzegovina as the BH IGF 2023 lead gives a special note of appreciation on behalf of the BH IGF 2023 Organizing and Executive Committee to the general public for shaping the agenda by submitting their topic proposals, to all the speakers, moderators, key

session message carriers, audience who attended, and supporting entities which enabled the Forum to resurface and again become a key policy space on Internet governance discussion in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

BH IGF 2023 - More information and contact

- <https://www.bhigf.ba>
- aida.mahmutovic@birnnetwork.org (on behalf of the Executive and Organizing Committee)