Internet Governance Forum 2021

Parliamentary track: Legislative approaches for a user-centric digital space
Concept note

CONTEXT

From 6 to 10 December 2021, the Government of the Republic of Poland will host the United Nations 16th Internet Governance Forum (IGF 2021) under the overarching theme *Internet United*. Participants from around the world are expected to take part in this event in Katowice, Poland and online.

In recent years, the IGF has sought to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the forum by facilitating the participation of parliamentarians in discussions on some of the most pressing issues related to the use, evolution and governance of the Internet and related digital technologies. Participants in the 2019 and 2020 parliamentary roundtables recommended, among other issues, that national parliaments cooperate and exchange good practices on dealing with digital policy issues.

At the 16th IGF, a parliamentary track will take place on 7–8 December 2021 on the theme *Legislative approaches for a user-centric digital space.* Building on previous experiences and in the spirit of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/304, the event will be **jointly organised by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the lower chamber of the Polish parliament, the Sejm**. Support will also be provided by the Department of Digital Policy in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, acting as co-facilitator and overall coordinator of the IGF 2021 from the Host Country's side.

In the lead-up to IGF 2021, a series of preparatory sessions will be held online allowing Members of Parliaments to become familiar with the IGF and the broader Internet governance ecosystem and to engage in dialogue and exchanges of experiences on key digital policy issues. The main

points emerging from these discussions will form the basis for the output document from the parliamentary track at IGF 2021.

KEY TOPICS: LEGISLATIVE APPROACHES FOR A USER-CENTRIC DIGITAL SPACE

The technologically-oriented world we live in is abundant in contradictions and divergent policy approaches, making it increasingly difficult to enact appropriate and future-proof legislation. Should we merely accept these challenges as being inherent to the digital world, or seek more interoperable and convergent policy and legislative approaches to building digital trust and enabling a more user-centric digital space? When we consider ways to address pressing digital policy issues, can we envision solutions that work across jurisdictions, while being mindful of specific national and cultural differences?

How can we keep the Internet and the broader digital space open, and, at the same time, safe and secure? How can parliaments contribute to ensuring that the solutions we devise to digital policy challenges are human-centric and have users at their core? Having in mind the conclusions of the parliamentary roundtables at IGF 2019 and IGF 2020, we invite parliamentarians to exchange views and share good practices on tackling three key digital policy challenges.

DATA | Privacy rights and legitimate uses of personal data

More and more entities providing services in the digital world – be they private entities or public bodies – request our personal data. They persuade us that it is necessary to either better customise their services to our needs, or to protect the public interest, in particular public safety or security. Is the processing of an increasing amount of personal data really necessary for such purposes? If so, under what conditions should personal data be collected, analysed and shared? And how can we avoid abuses of personal data by both private and public entities? Can we enjoy high-quality digital services without jeopardising our privacy and data protection rights? What legislative solutions have been put in place around the world to tackle such challenges, and how do they work together in the framework of a borderless digital space? What is still missing?

CONTENT POLICY | Balancing freedom of speech and the fight against harmful content: the role of Internet platforms

Diversity of opinions, freedom of speech and exchanges of views form the core of democracy. The Internet has made it easier to exercise these rights, but it has also created new opportunities for abuse. Harmful content – such as misinformation and disinformation – is now easily spread online, sometimes with dire consequences for democracy itself and for human rights. How do we ensure a proper balance between guaranteeing freedom of expression and fighting harmful content? What are the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders (online platforms, governments, etc.) in assessing what harmful content is and

how to deal with it? Are current legal frameworks (especially those establishing liability regimes for Internet intermediaries) fit for purpose or do they need adjustment?

AI GOVERNANCE | Automated decision-making and human-centric approaches

Artificial intelligence (AI) is now at the core of multiple digital services and products, from guiding our online experiences to powering smart devices. Some of the choices we now make in the digital space are influenced (to various degrees) by AI algorithms, often in ways that we are not aware of. Algorithms also influence (or even determine) some of the decisions others make about us (e.g. in the context of hiring processes). What are the parliamentary actions that could maximise the potential benefits of AI while limiting the risks? Do we need to place some limits on when and how AI is used? How can we ensure that human rights are not an after-thought in the context of AI-based decision-making?

OUTPUT FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY TRACK

Parliamentarians from around the world are invited to discuss these issues with experts, share their views on the proposed topics, explore the questions at hand, and exchange opinions and experience on (existing or potential) legislative solutions. The main messages that emerge from these exchanges (with potential guidelines, suggestions and recommendations for parliaments) will be captured as the formal output of the IGF 2021 parliamentary track.

PLAN OF ACTIVITIES

Preparatory sessions: September – November 2021, online

In a series of online meetings spread between September and November, parliamentarians will have an opportunity to:

- Familiarise themselves with the IGF and the Internet governance ecosystem, and
- Discuss the three key topics, during interactions with renowned subject-matter experts.

Parliamentary events at IGF 2021: 7–8 December 2021

During a dedicated track on 7–8 December, parliamentarians will:

- **Continue the debates on the key topics (Katowice & online)**

  Building on the discussions during the preparatory sessions, parliamentarians will continue their exchanges about legislative action to address the digital policy challenges highlighted.

- **Convene in a parliamentary roundtable (Katowice & online)**

  This public session will be built around the outcomes of the discussions on the three key themes of the IGF 2021 parliamentary track.

Participation in IGF 2021: 6–10 December 2021, Katowice & online

Parliamentarians are invited to actively participate in all other IGF 2021 sessions and contribute their views and experiences to the discussions. The overall programme will be made available on the IGF website.

Calendar of activities	
Date	**Focus**
Preparatory sessions for the parliamentary track (online)	
23 September, 12:00 – 14:00 UTC	[optional] **The Internet governance ecosystem** ● How the Internet works ● Key elements of the Internet Governance ecosystem
7 October, 13:00 – 14:30 UTC	**Privacy rights and legitimate uses of personal data**
21 October, 15:00 – 16:30 UTC	**Balancing freedom of speech and the fight against harmful content: the role of Internet platforms**
4 November, 12:00 – 13:30 UTC	**AI governance: automated decision-making and human-centric approaches**
18 November, 13:00 – 14:30 UTC	[optional] **Meet the Internet Governance Forum** ● Overview of IGF processes ● Discussions with the Multistakeholder Advisory Group, Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practice Forums, Policy Networks, and National, Regional and Youth IGF Initiatives.
Parliamentary events at IGF 2021 | 7–8 December (Katowice & online) Times are in CET (UTC+1)	
6 December, 19:00 – 20:00 & 20:00 – 21:30	**Ceremonial music concert & Cocktail reception**
7 December, 10:00 – 11:30	**IGF 2021 Opening Ceremony**
7 December, 14:00 – 15:30	**Parliamentary session 1: Privacy rights and legitimate uses of personal data**
7 December, 16:15 – 17:15	**IGF 2021 parliamentary roundtable**

7 December, *time and location tbc*	**Parliamentary reception**
8 December, 09:30 – 11:00	**Parliamentary session 2: Balancing freedom of speech and the fight against harmful content – the role of Internet platforms**
8 December, 11:30 – 13:00	**Parliamentary session 3: AI governance – Automated decision-making and human-centric approaches**
MPs are also cordially invited to participate in other IGF 2021 activities.	