

## **Contribution from the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) and Members of the European Internet Forum (EIF) to the IGF Stock Taking**

We would like to thank the IGF Secretariat, all MAG members and in particular the Mexican hosts for their efforts in organising a very successful 11<sup>th</sup> IGF. We felt very much welcome in Zapopan / Guadalajara and found it was one of the best organised fora so far. European stakeholders took back a very positive view from the IGF in Mexico and are committed to continue to support the further development of the IGF.

From the perspective of EuroDIG, the European regional IGF, we also consider the 11<sup>th</sup> IGF a successful meeting, because the work of national and regional IG initiatives was well recognised and integrated into the global IGF. The IGF in Mexico contributed to strengthening the connection and cooperation between the national the regional and the global Internet governance debate and we believe this process has just started to evolve. The European community is very much committed to further intensifying cooperation and exchanges between the national regional and the global level.

Organising the next IGF in Geneva will offer many opportunities to support the development of the global IGF as the forum for multistakeholder dialogue. In Europe, we have already a solid tradition of fruitful multistakeholder dialogue. Not only is EuroDIG one of the oldest and biggest regional IGF structure, but with more than 20 national IGF initiatives across the continent, we have the biggest concentration of IGF-initiatives worldwide.

Among others, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and officials from the European Commission participated in the IGF 2016 in great numbers. Their feedback is incorporated in this contribution.

**PROGRAMME:** A balanced and forward looking programme is a key element for the success of the IGF. Many topics which are currently under discussion in the European Parliament have been on the agenda of the IGF and helped MEPs to exchange with other stakeholders they would not easily meet otherwise. Cyber security, the digital transformation of economy and society and human rights are considered by many to be the 3 dominating topics for the next 5 years.

The process to develop the programme could be improved in terms of avoiding overlapping sessions with similar topics and repetitions of the same topics over the years. Organisers of a session should be encouraged to look at what has been discussed in the past and try to look at issues from new perspectives. This would allow generating a follow up process on certain topics over the years.

Many participants of the IGF are actively involved in the set up of a session in one or the other way. This participatory and inclusive approach is one of the unique selling points of the IGF compared to other conferences. But this should not lead to too many situations where focusing on its own duties regarding one session conflicts with the ability to attend another session just as participant. If organizers of similar sessions were encouraged to join their efforts, there would not be less diversity of issues, but actually more diversity of exchange of perspectives on the issues discussed. And this would help to reduce the number of sessions and more stakeholders would be able to contribute to one session.

As a regional IGF we recommend to better reflect the bottom up nature of the IG debate in the programme planning process. Topics on a national level are often very specific and not all of them can be brought up to a discussion on a global level. But we are convinced that giving more prominent space to regional fora at the global IGF could help identifying topics of relevance for a whole region and would make it easier to identify and work on common issues, challenges and solutions. Offering space for 5-6 regional fora, ideally at the beginning of the IGF, would help all participants of the IGF to get an easy orientation and a clearer picture about the hottest issues for people in the different regions.

**PARTICIPATION:** At the IGF 2016, there seems to have been less high level governmental participation, especially from developing economies, and some got the impression that the IGF was geographically somewhat less diverse than in previous years. Efforts should be made to improve this for the next IGF.

Members of the European Parliament consider youth participation as essential and will explore options how to support their participation at the IGF in the future.

Also the participation of business stakeholders from all regions remains to be improved. One reason could be the lack of resources especially for small and medium enterprises, but also an insufficient “outcome oriented” dialogue may have prevented some businesses from participating. Therefore, all efforts must be undertaken to make this forum more attractive for the private sector, because if we lose out on participation of one stakeholder group, the whole multistakeholder dialogue model is at stake.

Participation of civil society, however, is considered to be at an excellent level and this group brings a lot of dynamic and substance into such a conference.

**NETWORKING** opportunities remain one of the greatest values of the IGF. For instance, MEPs appreciated to connect with participants from outside Europe and they also benefitted from the opportunity to learn about and build relationships with their respective national IGFs. They are committed to engage more in the national debates and bring up topics to the European and the global level. Bilateral meetings have been found a good format to have very focused discussions, in connection with social events where participants could then follow up.

**THREADS FOR THE IGF:** With the prolongation of the IGF mandate for 10 years the urgency to prove the need for the IGF has disappeared. However, we should not reduce our efforts to make maximum use of the potential that the IGF as an inclusive bottom-up Multistakeholder dialogue platform offers and we should underline the value of the IGF compared to other meetings that are not build in such an inclusive and bottom-up manner. Success cannot be taken as granted and a strategy for the next ten years must be developed rather urgently.

**TANGIBLE OUTCOMES:** Progress has been made to produce tangible outcomes. Best Practice Forums seem to be the most vibrant tool by ensuring the multistakeholder and bottom up nature of the IGF. However we should be mindful that we are not pushing too hard to produce outcomes, as this will undermine the free and open debate. We have to find a balance here. The way the EuroDIG messages are drafted might be a model case how to get an overview of the discussion of the conference, but without entering into negotiations about wording.

**LOGISTICS:** The conference centre offered all facilities for a one week conference and in addition a cosy atmosphere to find a relaxing moment during a busy day.

The IGF village was well designed and equipped and this level should be kept for the future. Stands functioned as a meeting point and with a round table and four chairs they were even a good place for a working meeting. However the location of the village within the conference centre was not ideal. The distance to workshop rooms was too far and many participants only walked through the village upon arrival (being mostly in a hurry then). The village should be located at a place where participants pass by many times a day. The village should be the central meeting point. This would be the best revenue for the organisations hosting a booth, which put a lot of effort into this.

The situation with the gala was unfortunate during the otherwise very friendly atmosphere of the IGF. Whilst everyone understands that one Government would like to meet with other governmental representatives, it should not appear in the main programme if only a very limited group of people is invited. It would have been nice to invite all delegates for some Margaritas and Burritos just at the conference centre. As said above, the networking aspect of the IGF is a key element of this forum and the tradition of bringing together all delegates at one time should be kept.

Leipzig, 3 February 2017