

GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2017

*Internet governance from the edges:
National and regional IGFs in their own words*



GISWatch 2017
SPECIAL EDITION

Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words

Global Information Society Watch 2017 Special edition
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Global Information Society Watch 2017 special edition:
Internet governance from the edges: NRIs in their own words

Disclaimer: The views expressed in survey responses are not necessarily the views of APC or of its members.

This report is a special companion edition to Global Information Society Watch 2017: National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs), which can be downloaded from <https://www.giswatch.org/2017-local-and-regional-internet-governance-forums-igfs>

BELARUS IGF

Belarus

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NRI founding stories and development

What is the story of the founding of your NRI? What were its inspiration, its objectives?

Belarus is well known for its struggling for open and transparent internet governance. Two years ago we felt a strong necessity to create a platform where different multistakeholder groups can speak out and be heard. During the creation of the Belarus IGF we headed for the experience of the nearest neighbours, Russia (RIGF) and the global experience (IGF). The Belarus IGF was first held on 16 May 2016. The main objectives of the forum are:

- To create a platform for national dialogue on internet governance.
- To encourage various stakeholder groups (including representatives of government, business, civil society, media, academic and technical communities) to contribute to the development of the internet in Belarus.
- To share the best ideas and practices on internet governance and the internet developments that may be used for the development of the internet in Belarus.
- To increase participation of Belarus in the global dialogue on internet governance.

How did it develop and what difficulties did you experience along the way?

The first Belarus IGF unfortunately could not achieve the representation of different stakeholder groups within one session, despite the fact that all the stakeholders were invited and visited the event. Nevertheless, a year later we have reached that goal and different stakeholders could express their opinion within one session of the IGF. As a result, the second Belarus IGF had specific, measurable results that in particular affected the open data development in Belarus.

How do you imagine your NRI and its activities in the future?

We hope for more trust from different stakeholder groups that may allow a more open dialogue within the Belarus IGF. We are also planning to have a bigger volume of involvement of the youth into the decision making process.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

Who are the people involved in your NRI and how do they contribute to it?

The Steering Committee was created for the purpose of organising the Belarus IGF. Members of the Steering Committee represent the following stakeholder groups: government, civil society and business. The Steering Committee and its members are fully involved in the organising process: from the agenda creation to the management of the event. So, for example, this year the representatives of civil society have held a pre-event (one day before the Belarus IGF) so that all the people interested could have a better understanding and involvement into the current topics of Belarus IGF and into the IGF in general.

Have you experienced difficulties in ensuring all stakeholder groups participate fully and more or less equally?

We did not face any heavy difficulties in ensuring that all stakeholder groups participate fully and more or less equally.

Do you measure gender balance in your NRI? Did you undertake measures to encourage gender balance?

Yes, we measure gender balance during the registration of the participants.

How was your last forum organised, what were the topics chosen and the outcomes of discussion? How was it financed?

The Belarus IGF is organised in full accordance to the principles of the global IGF. The topics of discussion were:

- Internet of Things internet governance: Trends and reality
- Electronic government protection of personal data security on the internet
- Infrastructure of open data in Belarus
- Regional problems of internet development.

The outcomes of discussions are published online.¹² The Belarus IGF was supported by partners and sponsors including: ICANN, RIPE NCC, the Internet Governance Forum Support Association (IGFSA), and others. The full list of the partners can be found on the official Belarus IGF site.¹³

Are there controversial topics that have been difficult in your NRI and if so, why?

The highest attention was drawn to the e-governance and open data in Belarus sessions.

Perspectives on the role of NRIs in internet governance

What is your take about the role of your NRI in internet governance processes, at the level of your country, region and globally?

At the level of our country, the Belarus IGF is a unique platform for open dialogue between multistakeholder groups. It is the first platform of the kind, where different stakeholders can discuss their opinions personally and influence the internet governance processes. Regionally and globally, the Belarus IGF gives its indisputable contribution to the popularisation of main internet governance principles.

How do you perceive your role and position towards other NRIs, the IGF and the IGF Secretariat?

The representatives of the Belarus IGF visit other NRIs to exchange experiences on the organisation of the IGF.

¹² <https://igf.by/BelarusIGF-2017-en.pdf>

¹³ <https://igf.by>

Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words

National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs) emerged in response to the success of the first two global Internet Governance Forums (IGFs). The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, the outcome document of the final phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), alongside the call for the creation of the IGF, served as the foundations for the model of bottom-up, multistakeholder internet governance. The first NRIs were set up in 2007 and 2008, and there are now close to a hundred initiatives, comprising national, sub-national, regional and youth initiatives, which organise autonomously and cooperate with the global IGF Secretariat. The importance of NRIs has increased throughout the years, as they have grown in number and their work has expanded in scope. They have acquired such relevance within the IGF that an NRI session was included in the IGF 2016 and 2017 main sessions agendas.

This year, APC has taken the initiative to compile two editions of Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) focused on the work of NRIs. While the main 2017 GISWatch annual report provides independent and analytical perspectives on the role of NRIs in internet governance broadly, the present companion edition, *Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words*, aims to give voice and visibility to the stories of each NRI, share their experiences and achievements, and highlight their perspectives on internet governance.

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