

GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2017

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



GISWatch 2017
SPECIAL EDITION

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Project coordinators

Maud Barret Bertelloni
Deborah Brown
Anriette Esterhuysen

With the contributions of

Cathy Chen
Flavia Fascendini
Anja Gengo
Lori Nordstrom

Publication production

Cathy Chen and Flavia Fascendini

Proofreading

Valerie Dee
Lori Nordstrom

Graphic design

Monocromo
info@monocromo.com.uy
Phone: +598 2400 1685

Cover illustration

Matias Bervejillo

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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>

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IGF

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Valida Hromadzic • lida@oneworldplatform.net • www.bhigf.ba



NRI founding stories and development

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

The Bosnia and Herzegovina IGF (BHIGF) takes great pride in being inspired and learning from best practices of sub-regional and regional initiatives such as SEEDIG and EuroDIG, as well as the global IGF. Apart from aiming to start the dialogue on internet governance, the national IGF also aimed to create more sustainable internet-related dialogue by creating linkages between neighbouring countries' national IGF initiatives and inspiring new internet governance dialogues with fresh perspectives and approaches.

It arose from the need to gather relevant and interested stakeholders from the whole country for the first time in one same place to discuss the real current state, necessities and emerging internet-related issues in an informal manner. In order to have a bottom-up process, the existence of regional, sub-regional and national IGF processes is essential. Many different stakeholder groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are active in their own fields of expertise, but there has always been a lack of inter-stakeholder collaboration, and it was about time for BiH to join the dialogue on internet governance on the regional and global levels – starting with a national IGF initiative. Because of the strong need to bring the perspective of BiH in internet governance issues, the first Internet Governance Forum in Bosnia and Herzegovina was initiated in 2015.

The objectives of the BHIGF are to:

- Raise awareness and promote a better understanding of the internet as an open platform for all stakeholders (government, business sector, civil society, technical community, academia, media).
- Contribute to a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities stakeholders have in internet governance. Do we need a national strategy?

- Create a framework for discussions on the role of the internet in empowering the exercise of human rights and promoting the rule of law and democracy.

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

The BHIGF was initiated by the civil society organisation One World Platform Foundation. It was organised in collaboration with Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On the international level, the BHIGF initiative was supported from the start by Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), the Réseaux IP Européens Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Internet Governance Forum Support Association (IGFSA). Two years later, we still manage to get support from the above-mentioned organisations. We are very thankful for their support, but since this is a national initiative, we have to find the model for self-sustainability. Funding and support are always challenging. Another issue is how to attract certain stakeholders such as media, business and the technical community. In 2015, representation was as follows: media 5%, technical community 8% and private sector 6%. In 2016, representation was as follows: media 4.5%, technical community 5% and private sector 7.5%.

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

With great hope, for the third year in a row, BHIGF encourages all state actors to actively participate in relevant policy spaces, join regional and global processes and contribute with their views and experiences. Our vision is to actively involve a broader community of all stakeholder representatives, not only to be participants but to take an active role in shaping the forum itself. They should recognise the

forum as their own, their own space where they can bring current and relevant issues to the table and shape internet governance in BiH.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

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

Since the beginning, the core organising committee stayed the same, only the people changed.

One World Platform (NGO) was one of the initiators. People that were involved were: Aida Mahmutovic (left the organisation at the end of 2015), Belma Kucukalic (left in 2017), Valentina Pellizzer (from the beginning and still actively involved), Valida Hromadzic (from the beginning and still actively involved). One World Platform is the driving force of the forum. We are doing the fundraising, providing all logistical support, maintaining contacts with panellists. Also, some of our members were co-moderators and delivered joint conclusions together with representatives of the Regulatory Agency. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we have Mr. Nebojsa Regoje. He is our contact with the parliament since we organise a parliament tour for the students (special programme designed for students). Mr. Regoje suggests and provides us with contacts who potentially can be participants or funders. Mr. Regoje also does the press statements at the beginning of the forum.

Communications Regulatory Agency: Amela Odobasic, Suada Hadzovic and Emir Povlakic. They provide the forum with sign language translation as well as press statements. They provide the committee with the relevant telecom operators. University Tele-informatic Centre (UTIC) is the TLD. They advise on current tele-informatics development in the country and related issues. Currently, we work with Mr. Elmedin Selmanovic, director of UTIC. Previously we worked with then-director Mr. Sasa Mrdovic.

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

As mentioned before, we have difficulties to ensure that all stakeholders are represented equally. Media, the technical community, and business are not represented as much as civil society or the government.

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

Yes, we do measure gender balance. In 2015 gender representation was as follows: female 48%, male 52%. In 2016 gender representation was female 55%, male 45%.

As a civil society organisation with the focus on internet rights and women's rights, we do our best to ensure gender balance representation in panels. We cannot affect equal representation among participants very much, but for the past two years, the picture looked pretty good.

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

Aside from the main event, the forum itself, we have been organising "Day o", a day dedicated and specifically tailored for 30 students from all over the country. We had the opening presentation done by Ana Gaskon-Marcen from the Council of Europe, "What is internet freedom? – The response of the Council of Europe", which was inspired by the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on internet freedom. The presentation included a number of indicators and their statuses in BiH, such as freedom to access the internet, freedom of the media and personal data protection. We used the opportunity that the presentation was held in the State Parliament building and provided students with the tour and a short presentation. For some students, this was a unique opportunity to be in the building crucial for politics in BiH.

The last part of the agenda for students was reserved for a conversation with representatives of civil society organisations from Europe. In particular, they had the opportunity to talk with representatives from Metamorphosis (Macedonia), BlueLink (Bulgaria), GreenNet (UK), StrawberryNet (Romania), Rolf Kleef as an independent member of APC (from the Netherlands) and representatives of APC.

The main event: "What is ICANN? NextGen@ICANN – Programme for Youth" included the following:

- Panel I: Universal access – Are we all equal?
- Panel II: Security, extremism online and the freedom of media
- Panel III: Human rights and business in the internet economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The 2016 Forum was financed by Afilias, ICANN, IGfSA, APC, CoE and OSCE.

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

So far we have not had controversial topics.

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?

As a civil society organisation whose main programmes are internet rights and women's rights, we believe it is our duty to bring internet governance issues to our country. Currently, we are the only civil society organisation in our organising committee, so without us, human rights as an issue would not be presented. We also insist on gender balanced representation. Another added value is that at least one of us is always present at regional or global IGFs, therefore we are able to share learnings and trends with our community at the national level, but also we share our best practices as an NRI with other NRIs from the region. When it comes to the regional IGF (SEEDIG), One World Platform along with other civil society organisations ensure that human rights are always present on at least one panel, by proposing relevant topics.

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

As mentioned above, we are very open to cooperation with other NRIs. We have been part of other NRIs' panels, we contribute to the monthly summaries prepared on the regional level. We offer our experts to be if not on a panel, then to moderate the panels, which we have done in the past. At the same time, we do our best to promote the work of other NRIs.

Through collaboration with other NRIs we have created new connections and networks but the old ones were also strengthened. We share our knowledge but we also learn from others. When it comes to the IGF, our representative is present thanks to APC. As a civil society organisation, we would not be able to be present nor to contribute at the global level otherwise.

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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