

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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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>

EUROPEAN DIALOGUE ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE (EURODIG)

Europe

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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?

The European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) was created in summer 2008 in a café in Paris by about 10 enthusiastic individuals. This idea led to its first meeting four months later hosted by the Council of Europe and supported by OFCOM Switzerland.

EuroDIG understands itself as the European edition of the global United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF). It is structured as an open multi-stakeholder platform to exchange views about the internet and how it is governed. Supported by several organisations, government representatives and experts, it fosters dialogue and collaboration with the internet community on public policy for the internet. Each year, it culminates in a conference that takes place in a different European city. EuroDIG “Messages” are prepared and presented to the global IGF.

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

First stage 2008-2011: EuroDIG was truly a grassroots initiative without legal structure or any kind of administrative hierarchies. It was a loose network of enthusiastic individuals which brought forward the idea of a European Dialogue from one year to another with meetings in Strasbourg (2008), Geneva (2009), Madrid (2010) and Belgrade (2011). In the early days the biggest institutional supporters have been the Council of Europe, OFCOM Switzerland and EBU, but other supporters joined the network soon. The number of (online) registrations for the two-day event grew from 150 to 550 in that period.

Second stage 2012-2015: After four successful editions there was a need to consolidate the organisational structure also in order to set up a bank account to receive contributions and make financial transactions to organise the event. A European-Swiss not-for-profit association according

to Swiss Civil Code, Art. 60 to 79, was created on 15 June 2012 in Stockholm, under the name “EuroDIG Support Association”. The statutes have been drafted in a high level manner. Only essential rules and regulations have been introduced, in order to leave space and flexibility for the development of the EuroDIG. A secretariat has been formed.

Third stage 2015-2017: The event became bigger each year and the activities over the year did increase. Meanwhile an all year round participation process to set up the programme was established. During this period institutional partners, representing all stakeholder groups, committed to support EuroDIG by signing written agreements. It became evident that with regard to decision making processes, legal reliability and the authority to sign the statutes had to be adjusted. Also it was necessary to find ways of engaging new members in the Association. The revision process of the statutes took one year and resulted in a solid structure of checks and balances described in more detail.

Looking at the development of these three stages we should not call them difficulties. But it might be worth mentioning that the process from an initiative based on voluntary contributions, with no hierarchies, to a solid financed structure with checks and balances can be challenging.

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

One important focus will be to increase the relevance of EuroDIG and the Messages¹⁹ in particular for policy makers and the business sector. Another important task is to strengthen the relationship between the independent NRIs and the UN-led IGF; how the programme is shaped, how NRIs feed in their results to the global IGF.

¹⁹ Messages are the compendium of reports drafted of each workshop and plenary session held at EuroDIG. They relate to the particular session and to European internet governance policy, they are forward-looking and propose goals and activities that can be initiated after EuroDIG (recommendations) and are in rough consensus with the audience. These Messages are distributed among European policy makers and key institutions and forwarded to the global IGF. See: <https://www.eurodig.org/index.php?id=481>

EuroDIGers will have a retreat in January and we will discuss future aims and activities. The results which come out of this analysis will be a desirable resource and of great interest.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

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

1. Institutional partners, which support community engagement and programme development and help shaping the format and the content of the annual EuroDIG process and event:

- Council of Europe
- European Commission
- European Regional At-Large Organization (EURALO)
- European Broadcasting Union (EBU)
- European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO)
- Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
- Internet Society (ISOC)
- Federal Office of Communications of Switzerland (OFCOM)
- Réseaux IP Européens Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC).

2. The host, which changes every year; brings in new communities, local perspectives and provides the focus of each year. All former hosts²⁰ are still actively committed to help the EuroDIG to broaden the network and connect with each other.

3. Members of the EuroDIG Association (including the Board), who are responsible for the administrative oversight of the association, the financial management and the long-term planning.

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

A lot of effort is put into ensuring equal participation. Principles²¹ have been defined along with a reliable and transparent programme planning process²² which is open for everyone to join at any time.

²⁰ See a list of former hosts here: <https://www.eurodig.org/index.php?id=713>

²¹ <https://www.eurodig.org/index.php?id=113>

²² <https://www.eurodig.org/index.php?id=154>

Involvement of the business sector proved to be the most challenging stakeholder group.

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

We do measure it and it works quite well on the level of participation. One new format we introduced in this respect came at a point when we received the critique that high level (opening) panels are mainly populated by male speakers. Therefore we are now opening EuroDIG since two years ago with an open mic session, where everyone is invited to set the scene. This works also because the community in our region is quite balanced in terms of gender.

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

The last forum took place on 6-7 June 2017 (plus day zero) in Tallinn and was organised along the lines of the programme planning process.²³

Milestones have been:

- 1 October-31 December 2016: Open call for issues/topics
- January 2017: Inventory of proposals
- 31 January 2017: Public EuroDIG planning meeting in Tallinn/draft programme
- Mid February: Revised programme structure/creation of session organising teams
- March-May: Organising teams are planning the sessions.

How was it financed?

We are operating with two separate budgets. One is the EuroDIG process budget which is in the responsibility of the EuroDIG secretariat. The other one is the host country budget, which is in the responsibility of the respective local host. As we are organising EuroDIG in another European country each year, the local costs vary from year to year. The secretariat's budget is more consistent but needs to be increased each year, as EuroDIG is becoming more and more complex, with a growing number of participants per year, more need for outreach and additional tasks. A transparency report including costs and contributions of the previous year as well as the estimated

²³ Ibid.

costs for the actual year can be found in the EuroDIG donors handout.²⁴ In this handout you can also find information about the sponsors.

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

Nothing that I could think of.

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?

The role of NRIs is increasing in its importance to raise awareness for the national debates, however internet governance and the multistakeholder model are not yet fully perceived as an important way to contribute to the development of the internet. Instead if you mention “digital” or “cyber”, people understand the impact it has on their lives. However, these terms are interrelated and when discussing in depth one easily comes to the conclusion that the involvement of all stakeholders is necessary to meet the challenges of the future. Here NRIs have to keep going on with their efforts in reaching out and building capacity.

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

As a regional forum we understand ourselves as the linking element between the independent European NRIs and the UN-led IGF, in which the increasing role of NRIs is being recognised.

We help facilitating the bringing up of topics from the national to the global level and also the other way round, to support the bottom-up nature of the global IGF in shaping the programme. In this respect we work in close collaboration with the IGF Secretariat.

EuroDIG as any other NRI is an independent body and therefore we have the freedom and flexibility to experiment with new formats and processes. In the past some of these formats (i.e. messages, flash sessions) and processes (i.e. call for issues, collaboration on wikis) have been adapted by other NRIs and also the global IGF.

Where possible, we support the establishment of national IGF initiatives within Europe. We offer space for NRIs to meet and exchange during the annual EuroDIG meeting.

²⁴ https://www.eurodig.org/fileadmin/user_upload/eurodig_Tallinn/EuroDIG_2017_donors_handout_20170211.pdf

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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