

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
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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>

YOUTH IGF TURKEY

Turkey

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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 Youth IGF Turkey started out of a partnership of the Turkey-Europe Foundation and Network of European Digital Youth as part of an Erasmus+ project of the European Union for a period of two years in 2015. The objective of the NRI was to initiate a public discussion on issues related to internet governance and bring salience to the notion of the multistakeholder principle in Turkey, and a plurality of voices that affect policies, while presenting youth with a platform to discuss problems and possible solutions in the area of digital rights and liberties in the country.

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

While in the first year the number of applicants to join the forum and participate in the discussions was much higher, in the aftermath of the 15 July coup attempt in Turkey and the declaration of State of Emergency Rule, both interest in application to the forum and participation in discussions has dropped significantly. Although there was still a covert intention by various people, developments regarding arrest of citizens for social media activities and shutting down of digital portals and news platforms have had a discouraging effect on possible participants. Although many problems and delays have taken place, the forum has been conducted successfully and grown even bigger in its second year; with an extended capacity for the third year.

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

The growth of Youth IGF Turkey – despite all the negative developments of the past year and State of Emergency Rule – the organising team has grown to a bigger capacity and more solid partnerships have been founded for the third year of the NRI,

which has become a sustainable forum by now. In the future, the NRI has the possibility of initiating bi-monthly discussion forums and the creation of a national IGF in Turkey, training more young people in the field of internet governance and multiplying the effects of IGF discussions in the wider region and European continent, echoing in Turkey.

NRI internal governance and initiatives

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

Journalists, researchers, members of civil society, lawyers, young professionals and students have taken active part in planning, coordinating and conducting the Youth IGF Turkey meetings so far. Organisers dedicate their time, energy and efforts to the actualisation of annual plans to prepare the forum for young participants; starting with drafting the call for issues-submission, agenda setting, outlining the timeline of activities, setting the forum and moderating discussions, as well as reporting and monitoring activities.

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

Due to the tense atmosphere under the State of Emergency Rule, invited representatives of the private sector showed unwillingness to participate in the forum “in order not to risk investigation, financial fines or persecution” as any critical comment or evaluation during the forum “might be linked to businesses and this would harm the professional image.” This tendency was linked to the detention and arrest of thousands of civilians under the State of Emergency Rule; and has contributed to under-representation of state-related or business-related stakeholders.

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

Gender balance is highly aimed for at the Youth IGF Turkey. During the selection process of participants from among applicants through the open call, a 50% quota for male/female ratio has been applied. However, as participation has not been confirmed in the first two years of the forum, in the first year there was a much higher presence of female participants while in the second year there were more males. In 2017 this imbalance will be overcome through confirmation calls to accepted applicants.

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

The funding of the latest Youth IGF Turkey has been through the Erasmus+ project between the Network of European Digital Youth (NERDY) and Türkiye Avrupa Vakfı (TAV), a NERDY partner organisation. Pirate Party MEP Julia Reda sent a message to the forum meeting prior to the event, and her statement was also forwarded to participants. There were three sessions at this year's event: e-entrepreneurship, data, and rights on the net. The first session was on e-entrepreneurship, and Canan Dö lü of Kidimami App presented her business as a start-up; the discussion focused on opportunities and hardships in investments and starting a business in Turkey. Later Gökhan Biçici of Dokuz8 Citizen-Journalism News Agency talked about the media in Turkey and the need for citizen-based initiatives, expanding the circle of network and building trust among readers. Professor Aslı Telli Aydemir also briefly mentioned the Güniversite initiative,¹⁴ designed to give e-trainings and online lectures to people at university level by academics without time and place limitations. As a final statement in the e-entrepreneurship session, there was also mention of an important topic of last year's Youth IGF, when there was a session on fact-checking and verification of news sources. There was a participant from "Do ruluk Payı" (Some Truth) at the IGF and Teyit.org (a recent initiative set up to verify news) was mentioned.

The afternoon session started with the first topic of data. Two lawyers who are also Youth IGF Turkey organisation committee members, Bentley Yaffe and Selin Kaledelen, opened the discussion.

Among the topics discussed in this session were storage of data by private and state sources, uses of data, advertising, data leaks and hacking, underage presence and protection of underage children's information online. There was also mention of Manuel Castells' "Network Society" works and writings in this session. Finally, as part of data and protection of private data, the "right to be forgotten" was talked of, starting with the case of Mario Costeja Gonzalez and addressing the issue from a right to information vs. right to be forgotten aspect regarding more recent examples.

The third and last session was on rights on the net, and opening remarks were made by activist Murat Çekiç who talked of his knowledge and experiences on the right to exist on the internet beyond rights advocacy. In this session there were discussions on anti-LGBTI censorship online, nationalisation on the net, internet nostalgia, as well as hate speech and free expression. Final remarks mentioned the repeated will to initiate a national IGF for 2017, which was not possible due to many reasons in 2016; and monthly digital talks initiating a deeper discussion for each sub-topic in the coming year as well as having extended relations in terms of approaching digital issues from multidisciplinary perspectives.

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

The rights on the net theme was a popular one among the participants theoretically; however, when the time came for discussion, many were reluctant to speak during forum hours. This was in connection with the application of the State of Emergency Rule mostly, as the same participants actually continued discussion in break times.

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?

Youth IGF Turkey participants currently continue their research, writing and studying. There are several people who have represented the NRI in regional and international events, sharing local experience and knowledge with their peers. However, this could be extended to an even higher level. Moreover, the level of contribution to the national internet governance

agenda has practically been non-existent so far, yet this is due to civil society's lack of leverage in policy-making processes currently. In the coming years this has the potential to change and participants of the Youth IGF Turkey will then be ready to share their expertise with other stakeholders.

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

It is quite significant to continue organising forums in Turkey, discuss and debate issues related to internet

governance and digital rights and liberties; mainly due to the severity of the situation in Turkey and to compile Turkish internet users' practical and official channels of solution-finding processes, so that this can be shared globally. The level of discussion in Turkey under these conditions might be appearing not at the desirable level, yet the growing interest in the culture of discussion and creative solutions to practical internet governance-related problems within Turkey would contribute to the working mechanism of various other NRIs and even come up with new themes/topics for the IGF in the future.

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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