

SEEDIG Strategic Plan

2018 – 2020¹

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Introduction

The South Eastern European Dialogue on Internet Governance (SEEDIG) is a (sub)regional Internet Governance Forum initiative dedicated to facilitating discussions and collaboration on Internet² governance³ issues among stakeholder in South Eastern Europe and the neighbouring area (SEE).⁴

SEEDIG was launched in a bottom-up manner, in 2014, in response to a need, as perceived by the regional Internet community, for a regional platform that would:

- Bring together relevant stakeholders (academia, civil society, governments, intergovernmental organisations, private sector, and technical community) and foster open and inclusive dialogue on Internet-related challenges that are common across the region.
- Promote collaboration and exchanges of experiences and good practices in addressing such challenges, as well as in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Internet and digital technologies; and
- Help ensure that the region is better represented in European and international Internet governance processes.

Importance of Internet governance for SEE

The Internet has been of significant value for the SEE region. As a catalyst for innovation, communication, economic growth, and social development, it is important for the sustainable development of the region, as well as for the protection and promotion of its rich cultural heritage. It also has the potential of facilitating democratic processes and bringing more efficiency and transparency into decision-making and policy-making processes. But the Internet also comes with challenges, many of which are common across SEE countries – from the persistent digital divide, to cybersecurity and the protection of human rights online. Maximising the opportunities offered by the Internet and minimising the risks cannot and should not be the task of one single stakeholder group, as all of them (academia, civil society, governments, intergovernmental organisations, private sector, and technical community) have roles to play and responsibilities to take, both at national level and beyond national borders.

¹ Feedback on this document is welcomed via e-mail at execom@seedig.net or through direct comments on the Google Docs version at <https://goo.gl/bB8MQE>.

² For the purpose of this document, and in relation to SEEDIG activities, ‘Internet’ is understood as meaning ‘Internet and digital technologies’.

³ SEEDIG uses the term ‘Internet governance’ as defined in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society: ‘the development and application by governments, the private sector, and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet’. SEEDIG also adheres to the taxonomy of Internet governance issues developed by DiploFoundation, which includes more than 40 issues, classified under the seven broad clusters, or baskets: infrastructure, security, human rights, legal, economic, development, and sociocultural.

⁴ For the purpose of this document, and in relation to SEEDIG activities, SEE stands for ‘South Eastern Europe and the neighbouring area’.



SEEDIG functions as a process, which includes an annual meeting and related preparatory steps, as well as year-long intersessional activities. The process is planned and run in a bottom-up, open, inclusive, and transparent manner, by the SEEDIG community. Membership of the SEEDIG community is determined by voluntary participation in a designated public and open mailing list, and/or by participation in SEEDIG activities. The community, which includes stakeholders from all groups and from various countries in the region, is open-ended, and anyone interested is welcome to join at any time. Coordination of SEEDIG activities is done by an executive committee, which is also multistakeholder and regionally diverse.

Vision, Mission, Beliefs, Practices

Our vision

SEEDIG is a recognised and trusted multistakeholder platform that serves as: the main facilitator of dialogue and cooperation on Internet governance issues of relevance for SEE countries; a bridge between the regional community and the wider Internet governance ecosystem; and a reliable source of information on regional practices, developments, and trends concerning Internet governance and digital policies.

Our mission

SEEDIG's mission is to facilitate effective and efficient multistakeholder dialogue on, and cooperation in the development and implementation of principles, rules, policies, and programmes that guide the use of the Internet and related digital technologies in SEE.⁵

Our beliefs

- The Internet has an important role to play in the sustainable economic and social development of SEE.
- Addressing Internet governance challenges, in a multistakeholder fashion, should be one of the region's top priorities.
- Collaboration across stakeholder groups and countries is key for tackling regionally specific Internet governance challenges.
- Access to comprehensive information about Internet governance practices and developments in the region improves stakeholders' understanding of its importance, and facilitates the development of better digital policies.
- Strengthening the voice of SEE in European and international Internet governance processes, is a must if we want our interests to be among the ones shaping the evolution of the Internet.
- Transparency and accountability are key to earning our community's trust, therefore we cherish both in all of our activities.

Our practices

- We provide a platform for regional dialogue and collaboration on Internet governance issues in SEE, through annual meetings and intersessional activities that encompass multistakeholder discussions, exchanges, and collaboration.
- We raise awareness and promote a better understanding of Internet governance issues among SEE stakeholders.
- We strengthen the capacity of regional stakeholders to meaningfully contribute to Internet governance processes (including in the development of digital policies).
- We inspire and encourage communities throughout the region to launch national initiatives, and to get involved in regional, European, and international Internet governance processes.
- We build partnerships within the region, and at the European and international levels, with entities that help us fulfil our mission.
- We preserve our credibility by remaining independent, objective, and neutral, and by respecting the different views of our stakeholders.
- We make all our resources and information available to our community for free.

⁵ Inspired by the Internet governance definition, as included in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

Our strategic priorities

Foster collaboration among stakeholders in SEE in addressing Internet governance issues

Empower the SEE community through capacity development programmes

Encourage greater participation of stakeholders in SEEDIG

Build effective partnerships at regional, European and international levels

Contribute to the European and global Internet governance processes

Develop a body of knowledge about regional Internet governance practices and developments

Ensure SEEDIG's effective and efficient organisational foundation

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Foster collaboration among stakeholders in SEE in addressing Internet governance issues

SEEDIG holds annual meetings in different countries across the region. These meetings are the central element of the SEEDIG process, and they are aimed at fostering dialogue, collaboration, and exchanges of experiences between regional stakeholders, with the participation of international actors.

The preparatory process for annual meetings is open to all interested stakeholders, and it is run in a bottom-up and inclusive manner, in line with a series of guidelines and principles. The planning process includes various steps, such as the call for issues, online planning meetings, public consultations on a draft programme, and open-ended organising teams who take responsibility for building the sessions and other elements of the meeting programme.

The main output of SEEDIG meetings are the SEEDIG Messages. They reflect the discussions, are endorsed by participants, and outline main takeaways, possible goals, and proposals for future actions.

Goals

Evolve SEEDIG annual meetings as the central element of the SEEDIG process

- Evolve the structure, format, and content of the meeting, to better cater to the interests of the community.
- Bring innovations into the programme, to ensure that there is more dialogue on a broader range of topics (more interactive session formats, stronger emphasis on practical aspects, orientation towards possible solutions, recommendations, etc.).

Strengthen the participation of stakeholders at annual meetings

- Strengthen the community involvement in the planning process (e.g. call for issues, building of sessions).
- Ensure balance between traditional contributors and new voices.
- Attract more participation at annual meetings, across stakeholder groups, including from the host country. Focus on those stakeholder groups that have traditionally been less represented at SEEDIG meetings.

Improve the outreach of annual meetings

- Enhance the SEEDIG Messages concept by improving the process for elaborating the messages (e.g. better-prepared rapporteurs, more meaningful community endorsement).
- Better promote the Messages within and beyond the region (by the Executive Committee and community members, through participation in national, regional, and global events; proactive communication to national, regional, and international entities, etc.).
- Create more content during meetings (e.g. video interviews, in situ surveys).
- Enhance the Evaluation survey (traditionally conducted online after the meeting) concept with an in situ dimension, allowing the collection of feedback during meetings.
- Develop partnerships with local (in the host country) and regional media for the promotion of the annual meeting.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Empower the SEE community through capacity development programmes

One of the initial goals of SEEDIG has been to contribute to building and developing the capacity of regional stakeholders to actively contribute to national, regional, and international Internet governance processes. In addition to the annual meeting, SEEDIG has launched capacity development programmes, in partnership with supporting organisations.

The **SEEDIG Youth School** aims to offer students from the region a space to learn, network, exchange views, and prepare to participate in SEEDIG and other Internet governance processes.

The **SEEDIG Fellowship Programme**, targeted at all stakeholder groups, is aimed at diversifying and consolidating the SEEDIG community, by giving individuals from the region the possibility to attend the annual meeting, and to get involved in intersessional activities.

The **Internship Programme** is a year-long initiative that offers mainly young individuals from the region the opportunity to learn more about Internet governance and digital policy, by being closely involved in SEEDIG activities, and supporting the work of the Executive Committee.

In addition, the *SEESummary* (see Section F below) also has capacity development dimension, as it provides members of the Editorial Team with the opportunity to develop research and editorial skills in the field of Internet governance.

Goals**Strengthen existing capacity development programmes**

- Further develop the Youth School and *Fellowship Programme*, in terms of content, duration, number of participants, and output.
- Periodically rotate the composition of the *SEESummary* Editorial Team, and consider introducing some forms of 'perks' for the editors, to further motivate them.
- Further develop the *Internship Programme*, including in terms of 'perks' and further engagement of the interns, at the end of their internship.
- Secure long-term partnerships and funding to ensure the sustainability of the Youth School, *Fellowship Programme*, and *Internship Programme*.

Ensure the integration of alumni in the SEEDIG process

- Revise Terms and Conditions of the Youth School and Fellowship Programme to include active contribution to planning the annual meeting, acting as SEEDIG ambassadors in their local communities and overall networks, contributing to intersessional activities such as the *SEESummary* or local projects.

Build partnerships for new capacity development programmes

- Explore options for new capacity development programmes, year-long, in collaboration with community members, supporting organisations, and institutional partners (e.g. webinars on specific topics, and lectures and workshops at national level, on different topics, and targeted at specific stakeholder groups).

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Encourage greater participation of stakeholders in SEEDIG

The SEEDIG community has an open-ended nature, and it includes representatives of governments, intergovernmental organisations, private companies, technical community, academia, and civil society. The community is the driver of the SEEDIG process, as it plans and runs the annual meeting and the various intersessional activities.

Traditionally, certain stakeholder groups have had a stronger representation within the community, as compared to others. As SEEDIG evolves, more attention should be paid to expanding and strengthening the community, in particular through attracting less represented stakeholder groups.

Special attention should be on national activities within SEE. Many SEE countries have developed national IGF initiatives over the past years. There are also several countries which are on the way of launching such initiatives. SEEDIG has inspired the creation of national IGFs, in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Slovenia. And it has been working on fostering communication with and between these initiatives, while offering to support them in their activities.

Goals

Expand and strengthen the SEEDIG community

- Identify the least active/represented stakeholder groups in SEEDIG and try to engage/target them with intersessional activities and social media ads.
- Create a monthly Highlights from the SEEDIG Community section on the SEEDIG website, where we shine the spotlight on individual or organisational accomplishments, projects, initiatives from the community.
- Develop and implement a medium-to-long term communications plan to better promote SEEDIG activities and attract new stakeholders.
- Add mandatory clauses to the Terms and Conditions of the capacity development programmes, requiring alumni to substantially contribute to SEEDIG activities (e.g. provide post-event reports, two months of contribution to the SEESummary, mentoring newcomers at next years' meetings).

Enhance relations with national IGF initiatives

- Hold periodic online meetings with national IGFs, as opportunities to discuss and exchange information on issues such as challenges and success stories.
- Further explore ways in which SEEDIG could support existing national IGF and help the creation of new ones (support IGFs annual meetings, develop local projects with them, etc.)
- Enhance the contribution of national IGFs to the SEEDIG process (annual meeting and intersessional activities). Specific activities could include: offering spaces for national IGFs to present their messages and work at the SEEDIG annual meetings, having national IGFs host SEEhub meetings, distributing SEESummaries through national IGFs.

Increase the visibility of SEEDIG

- Identify high-profile individuals/influencers from each stakeholder group with strong networks online and offline and approach them to be SEEDIG High-Level Ambassadors.
- Ensure the representation and active contribution of the SEEDIG Executive Committee in meetings and activities of national IGF initiatives in the region.
- Ensure the representation and active participation of SEEDIG community representatives (not only the SEEDIG Executive Committee, but also alumni, interns, other community members) in major European and international Internet governance processes.
- Create SEEDIG Fellowships for regional and international Internet governance processes.
- Create a network of National SEEDIG Ambassadors in countries in the region. Identify active community members and invite them to take up such roles, for a determined period of time.
- Engage SEEDIG supporting organisations and institutional partners in the promotion of SEEDIG activities. Likewise, ensure that SEEDIG better promotes, at regional level, the activities of its supporting organisations and institutional partners.
- Develop partnerships with local (in the host country) and regional media for the promotion of SEEDIG activities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Build effective partnerships at regional, European and international levels

Throughout its existence, SEEDIG has been supported by several international entities, including: Council of Europe, DiploFoundation, European Commission, European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG), Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Secretariat, Internet Governance Forum Support Association (IGFSA), Internet Society, and RIPE Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC).

In addition, a number of regional entities have also contributed to SEEDIG's efforts: Association for Technology and Internet (Romania), Internet Society Armenia, Internet Society Serbia, and Serbian National Internet Domain Registry (RNIDS).

The support granted has ranged from donations, to contributions to annual meetings and intersessional activities, and outreach activities.

The SEEDIG annual meetings have been possible also thanks to the support from local hosts and local institutional partners (ranging from governmental bodies to technical organisations and business associations).

Goals

Enhance and strengthen relationships with existing supporting organisations

- Improve communication and collaboration with supporting organisations (e.g. agree on elements of the SEEDIG process they should be consulted on, ensure consistent communication year-long).
- Explore further options for joint initiatives at annual meetings, as well as in intersessional activities and capacity building programmes.
- Identify projects of supporting organisations that have similar objectives as those of SEEDIG activities, and offer collaboration.
- Promote activities of supporting organisations within the region.

Expand the network of supporting organisations (within and beyond the region) and secure support for SEEDIG

- Identify potential new supporting organisations beyond the region, and reach out to them. Attract support for SEEDIG, and engage them in SEEDIG activities, while also offering SEEDIG support for and/or contribution to their activities.

- Reach out – in a focused and consistent manner – to governments, parliaments, regulatory authorities, ccTLD registries, business associations, civil society organisations, universities, and other entities within the region. Attract support for SEEDIG and engage them in SEEDIG activities, while also offering SEEDIG support for and/or contribution to their activities.

Expand the network of supporting organisations (within and beyond the region) and secure support for SEEDIG

- Maintain close relations with hosts and local institutional partners after each annual meeting.
- Initiate local activities – within the mission of SEEDIG – in collaboration with hosts and local institutional partners, outside the framework of annual meetings. Involve hosts and local institutional partners in the planning of subsequent annual meetings, by providing advice and support to entities in future host countries.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Contribute to the European and global Internet governance processes

SEEDIG has been inspired by the IGF and EuroDIG, and is maintaining close connections with them. There are several ways in which SEEDIG contributes to the global IGF: submission of annual reports, active participation in annual meetings, contribution to intersessional activities. Since its creation, SEEDIG has been working together with EuroDIG on building and strengthening synergies between the two initiatives. These efforts have materialised in several ways: joint call for issues, presentation of SEEDIG messages at annual EuroDIG meetings, contributions to building EuroDIG sessions, etc.

As it moves forward, SEEDIG needs to strengthen these relations, but also work towards more enhanced cooperation with other supporting organisations.

Goals

Strengthen the representation of SEE voices in pan-European and international Internet governance processes

- Strengthen relations with EuroDIG and IGF (e.g. through initiating joint programmes, for example in the field of capacity development).
- Actively encourage the SEEDIG community to contribute to these processes (e.g. appoint SEEDIG fellows to EuroDIG and IGF meetings).
- Work with other supporting organisations (ICANN, Internet Society, RIPE NCC, etc.) on enhancing the existing cooperation and define possible joint activities, to help ensure that SEE voices are better represented and heard within

their activities. (Examples could include: engaging Internet Society chapters in the SEESummary, the SEEhub, and regional surveys; joint capacity development programmes with the regional ICANN office(s); back-to-back meetings with RIPE SEE events).

Contribute to policy development processes conducted by regional and international organisations

- Engage in consultations run by organisations such as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, ICANN, and coordinate the elaboration and submission of input from the SEE community.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Develop a body of knowledge about regional Internet governance practices and developments

In addition to the annual meeting, SEEDIG also runs year-long intersessional activities. Regional surveys on Internet-related issues are conducted before the annual meeting, and results are fed into the meeting. For example, a survey on Internationalised Domain Names was conducted in 2017, before the Ohrid meeting. In 2016, SEEDIG, in partnership with DiploFoundation, launched the Internet governance developments in SEE initiative, which includes the SEESummary (monthly overviews of Internet governance and digital policy developments and activities across the region) and the SEEhub (monthly webinar briefings on regional developments).

Goals

Strengthen existing intersessional activities and develop new ones

- Continue and evolve the SEESummary. (Specific activities could include: building searchable web version in addition to the .pdf version; introducing, in addition to overviews of developments and events, articles analysing trends and developments in Internet governance and digital policy; better promoting the summary with the region; further engaging the community, through assisting the Editorial Team in identifying developments, and providing feedback and suggestions for improvements.)
- Continue and evolve the SEEhub. (Specific activities could include: reinstating in situ meetings, and having them hosted around the region, by partners/community members; rethinking and strengthening the format to be better suited for dialogue and exchanges.)
- Bring more sustainability to the SEESummary and SEEhub initiatives, for example identifying

partners among other supporting organisations, and developing a system of 'perks' for contributors (beyond the ones related to capacity development).

- Continue to conduct regional surveys before annual meetings, and feed the results into the meetings. Work towards enhancing participation in the surveys, and improving the communication and outreach of results.

Develop new intersessional activities

- Identify community needs.
- Work together with the community, supporting organisations, and institutional partners on new activities across the region. (Examples could include studies on policies, strategies and legal frameworks in specific areas (e.g. cybersecurity, privacy and data protection) and compilations of good practices in certain domains (e.g. management of country code top-level domains, initiatives for bridging the digital divide).

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Ensure SEEDIG's effective and efficient organisational foundation

SEEDIG is supported through voluntary contributions (both monetary and in-kind) from international organisations, private companies, and public entities. SEEDIG's main sponsors have been the Internet Society, ICANN, RIPE NCC, IGFSA, and Afiliis. RNIDS was a SEEDIG sponsor in 2017, after hosting the 2016 annual meeting. Additional monetary and in-kind support has been provided by the hosts and institutional partners of the annual meeting. As it continues to grow, SEEDIG needs to enhance its financial sustainability, and work more consistently towards engaging regional stakeholders in the process.

SEEDIG is a community-driven process, and its activities are run by the community itself, under the coordination of the Executive Committee. In 2017, an open elections process was run, which led to the election of a five-member Executive Committee (representing five countries and four stakeholder groups), whose role is to coordinate the planning and execution of SEEDIG activities. Moreover, a set of Terms of Reference for the Executive Committee was adopted, following a bottom-up and inclusive process involving an open-ended working group, and input from the overall community.

The community itself does not have an institutional set-up, nor does the Executive Committee. Donations to SEEDIG have so far been channelled and managed through local partners (ISOC Serbia in 2016) and EuroDIG (in 2017 and ongoing). In the absence of a legal structure, there are challenges related to the management of legal and financial aspects (i.e. agreements with supporting organisations and sponsors, direct management of funds, liability, etc.). In 2016, a process was launched for the creation of a SEEDIG association, but it was paused before the Ohrid meeting, as it was felt that the community might not yet be ready for such a step.

Goals

Secure financial support for SEEDIG

- Secure support from traditional donors and sponsors.
- Expand the network of donors and sponsors, especially within the region, but also at the European and international level. Actively and continuously look for new sponsors, year-long.
- Focus fundraising activities on annual meetings, capacity building programmes and intersessional activities (identify partners for various activities or projects).
- Put special emphasis on fundraising activities in host countries.

Reconsider foundations for institutional sustainability

- Resume a step-by-step process for creating a legal entity for SEEDIG, as a means to address current legal and financial challenges, and enhance sustainability and credibility of the initiative:
 - Consult the community to determine whether still supports the idea of a legal structure.
 - If broad support exists, explore possible jurisdictions, and compare advantages and disadvantages.
 - Once a jurisdiction is chosen, start a bottom-up and inclusive process for drafting the statute of the legal structure.

- Ensure that sensitive issues (such as responsibility and liability for the person who would lead the legal process for setting up the structure, and would assume responsibility in the country of jurisdiction) are addressed properly before major decisions are made.
- Incorporate the legal structure.
- In parallel, keep open the possibility to explore alternative options, should they be suggested and supported by the community (such as finding an institutional home for SEEDIG within an existing organisation).