

**SEEDIG and national IGF initiatives
in South Eastern Europe and the neighbouring area**

**Virtual meeting I
21 December 2015**

Summary

Participants: Iliya Bazlyankov, Veronica Crețu, Lianna Galstyan, Anja Gengo, Su Sonia Herring, Zdravko Jukić, Ana Kakalashvili, Fotjon Kosta, Aida Mahmutović, Michael Oghia, Dušan Stojičević, Sorina Teleanu.

The aim of the meeting was to initiate discussions between SEEDIG and national IGF initiatives from South Eastern Europe and the neighbouring area on issues such as: creating a channel of communications between SEEDIG and national IGF initiatives (existing or under creation); experiences and good practices from national IGFs and from SEEDIG; whether and how SEEDIG could contribute to building or strengthening national IGFs; and modalities in which national IGFs could contribute to the SEEDIG process.

1. Overview of SEEDIG

A quick overview was given on SEEDIG and the planning process for the 2016 meeting. It was explained that the programme for SEEDIG annual meetings is built in a bottom-up, open and transparent manner, by the SEEDIG community. Participants were reminded that a call for issues to be discussed at the meeting was underway; they were encouraged to respond to the call by proposing discussions on Internet governance related issues that are seen as important at national level, for example. National IGF initiatives were also invited to promote the call for issues within their communities.

It was noted that SEEDIG aims to function as a process that includes not only the annual meeting and the related preparatory steps, but also inter-sessional activities (such as webinars and surveys). As defining inter-sessional activities for SEEDIG should also be the result of community input and discussions, participants were encouraged to propose any such activities that they see as relevant and useful.

2. National IGF initiatives – sharing of experiences

Participants in the meeting shared experiences about their existing and planned IGF initiatives: what worked well, what lessons were learnt and what challenges they faced. A discussion was held on how the identified challenges could be addressed, and a number of suggestions were made in this regard, building upon existing experiences and knowledge, both from national IGF initiatives and from SEEDIG. A summary of the issues raised and discussed is presented in the Annex.

It was agreed that continuing such exchanges would be helpful, as this would give IGF initiatives the chance to learn from each other, as well as to try to work together on identifying possible solutions for shared challenges. SEEDIG could act as a 'soft catalyst' in this regard, providing the (virtual) space for future meetings with national IGFs.

3. Future engagement between SEEDIG and national IGF initiatives

The following points were made with regard to modalities for future engagement between SEEDIG and national IGF initiatives:

a. It was reiterated that SEEDIG counts on IGF initiatives and their national communities to contribute to shaping the programme for SEEDIG 2016. Participants were once again invited to consider submitting proposals for SEEDIG, on Internet governance issues that are of particular interest within their local communities and that, in their view, should also be discussed at SEEDIG.

b. It was noted that SEEDIG would also welcome any idea or suggestion related to the overall SEEDIG process, such as possible inter-sessional activities for SEEDIG to engage into.

c. IGF initiatives were also invited to participate in the SEEDIG 2016 meeting (to be held in Belgrade, on 22 April), and to contribute to SEEDIG-related outreach activities within their countries. They were also encouraged to bring in Belgrade any conclusions and/or reports from their national events (in case they would want to distribute such materials at a sub-regional level).

d. SEEDIG's executive committee underlined that it stands ready to further discuss with IGF initiatives on possible modalities in which SEEDIG could assist in building or strengthening national initiatives.

4. Next steps

It was agreed that similar virtual meeting would be held periodically, so that SEEDIG and national IGF initiatives continue to communicate with each other. The next such meeting will be held in late January or early February 2016 - to be agreed upon jointly, at a later stage. SEEDIG's executive committee will reach out to those IGF initiatives from the region that did not attend this first call, in order to invite them to join future meetings.

Annex
Experiences shared by national IGF initiatives - summary

| IGF initiative | What worked well? | Lessons learnt | Challenges | Possible ways of overcoming the challenges |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Armenia IGF | Having a group of individuals to launch the initiative. | Budget/availability of funds is key. | Reach out to potential participants and engage them in the initiative. | |
| | | A bottom-up and inclusive approach (reaching out to and inviting representatives of all stakeholders group) is essential. | | |
| | | Using social media helps in delivering the message and raising interest. | | |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina IGF | Outreach - done only in three months, but with very positive results. | Budget/availability of funds is key. | | |
| | Support from international organizations (like the Council of Europe and ICANN). | | | |
| Croatia IGF | Involvement of public and private sector. | | Engaging civil society. | Reach out via social media. |
| | | | | Reach out to NGOs not necessarily involved in ICT and IG discussions, but focused on more general issues such as human rights, consumer protection, etc. Explain why participating in IG discussions would be relevant for their work. |
| | | | | Involve bloggers. |

| IGF initiative | What worked well? | Lessons learnt | Challenges | Possible ways of overcoming the challenges |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------|---|--|
| Youth IGF - Turkey | | | Budget - where to find money. | Consider applying for sponsorship from IGF Support Association (IGFSA) - http://www.igfisa.org/ |
| | | | Engaging more entities in supporting the initiative, even with the aim of transforming it into a national IGF initiative. | Get in touch with the national regulatory authority, which has been key in the organization of the ninth IGF in Istanbul, in 2014. They should be interested in supporting a national IGF. |
| | | | Bringing youth from outside the city where the event took place (Istanbul). | |
| Georgia (IGF under formation) | Funding from international organizations. | | Engaging the private sector; explaining why IG is relevant and why an IGF initiative would be important. | |
| | | | Funding from local stakeholders. | |
| | | | Engaging people in planning the initiative. | Maybe reach out to students/students' organizations - they could be interested in contributing |
| | | | | Reach out to international organizations which have national programmes in some countries (like the CoE). |

| IGF initiative | What worked well? | Lessons learnt | Challenges | Possible ways of overcoming the challenges |
|--|-------------------|--|--|--|
| Moldova (IGF under formation) - the event to take place early 2016 (by March) | | Trying to anchor an IGF initiative into a wider ICT-related event did not prove to work well. | Involvement of government: how to best explain why IG issues should be discussed at a national level and why an IGF initiative would be important. | 1) Create a multistakeholder organizing committee, where the roles and responsibilities of the members would include outreach, moderation, and contribution (both financial and in-kind, dissemination, media presence, etc.); 2) Organize a pre-IGF event to test the ground and see whether there is a critical mass of IG practitioners/experts, whether or not this community could be further mobilized into organizing the national IGF event; 3) IGF (at least the first national event) should be a one-day event, with few competing parallel sessions and few international experts. The rest should be national contributors. 4) Agenda has to be co-created with the community of IG practitioners/experts and be based on specific needs 5) Work with potential partners including international organizations. |
| | | Have the event under an overarching theme that reflects an IG issue important at a national or even regional level. Continue to reference to the event as being an IGF initiative, but do not make this the "headline," at least not for the first event, when | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | people are not very much aware about IG and the IGF. | | |
| | | Engage with the local community to get to know it better, to see the level of interest in an IGF initiative, and to understand what the community considers as priority for an IGF initiative. | | |