

Internet Governance in South Eastern Europe

INTERNET GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENTS

Telecommunications infrastructure



Report gives insights into 4G availability in SEE countries

OpenSignal's global report on The State of LTE looked at the availability and performance of 4G networks in 88 countries around the world, including countries in **South Eastern Europe and the neighbouring area (SEE)**. Regarding 4G availability, measured as the proportion of time users have access to a 4G network, the report places countries between scores of 97.49% and 40.94%. SEE countries have the following scores: The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – 82.62%, Croatia – 80.44%, Slovenia – 79.22%, Greece – 76.04%, Serbia – 75.19%, Georgia – 74.54%, Bulgaria – 73.96%, Romania – 72.88%, Turkey – 67.95%, Albania – 67.94%, Armenia – 59%, and Belarus – 56.99%. 4G speeds for the 88 countries, measured as the average download connection speed, vary between 44.31 Mbps and 6.07 Mbps. The speeds in SEE countries are as follows (in Mbps): Bulgaria – 33.34, Serbia – 32.22, Croatia – 32.21, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – 30.53, Romania – 28.03, Greece – 27.39, Slovenia – 26.69, Albania – 25.78, Armenia – 24.08, Turkey – 28.78, Georgia – 20.70, and Belarus – 14.02.

Regulatory authorities in seven countries sign frequency coordination agreements

Electronic communications regulatory authorities in **Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia** held a multilateral meeting in Budapest, on 14–15 February. During the meeting, the regulators signed several technical agreements on the coordination of frequency bands dedicated to mobile services in border areas: (1) Agreement between Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia on frequency coordination in the 700 MHz band; (2) Agreement between Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia on frequency coordination in the bands 790–862 MHz; (3) Agreement between Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia on frequency coordination in the band 1452 – 1492 MHz; (4) Agreement between Austria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia on the coordination of frequencies in the bands 1920 – 1980 MHz and 2110 – 2170 MHz; and (5) Agreement between Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia on frequency coordination in the band 2500 – 2690 MHz.

Orange to test 5G in Romania

As part of its preparations for launching 5G technology, telecom company Orange announced three new 5G tests, one of which in **Romania**. Orange's 5G technology is based on three components: improvement of high-speed mobile broadband, high-speed fixed broadband access, and new applications to support the digital transformation of business. The tests to be conducted in Romania in the second half of 2018, in partnership with Samsung and Cisco, will use the 5G technology as an alternative to fibre-optic broadband networks. As part of the tests, selected customers will be invited to test fixed-line web access with 5G at two different locations. The company explained that 5G could help address challenges related to the deployment of fibre optics especially in suburban areas.

Child safety online charter signed in Croatia

Marking the Safe Internet Day in **Croatia**, the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM), three Croatian mobile operators (Hrvatski Telekom, Vipnet, and Tele2), the Centre for Safer Internet, and the Center for Missing and Abused Children signed a Charter for child safety on the Internet. Co-signatories committed to working towards raising awareness about the importance of child safety online and creating a better and safer environment for children on the Internet. HAKOM also presented its brochure How to protect a child in the world of Internet, network technologies and mobile phones, which contains practical advice for children and parents on dangers and security on the Internet. The brochure also includes the results of the first national comparative research on child safety on the Internet, conducted as part of the EU Kids Online project.

Safer Internet programme launched in Armenia

Safer Internet **Armenia** 2018 is a six-month programme aimed at raising awareness of the safe and effective use of web resources and digital technologies among children. Schools and colleges in Yerevan and regions of Armenia will host open lessons on Internet safety, as well as meetings with parents, during which issues related to the safer use of the Internet and digital technologies will be discussed, and educational materials will be disseminated. The programme which will also include workshops, the release of videos, games, and books, and media events, is expected to involve over 5000 pupils and 300 college students. It is being implemented by STEM Center and Internet Society Armenia, under the sponsorship of several local companies.

Child safety online



Cybersecurity



CERTs in Romania and Cyprus sign memorandum of understanding

The **Romanian** National Computer Security Incident Response Team (CERT-RO) and the national Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT.CY) of **Cyprus** concluded a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of cybersecurity, for a five-year period. The MoU opens the doors for broader cooperation in tackling cybersecurity threats, and represents the first collaborative initiative of this kind between the two CERTs. CERT-RO has also committed to supporting CSIRT.CY's application for joining FIRST (the Global Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams). To this aim, the Romanian counterpart submitted a FIRST report around CERT-CY's capabilities as well as the body's technical and operational procedures.[\[1\]](#)

Macedonian and Kosovan CERTs conclude memorandum on cybersecurity

The Agency for Electronic Communications in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Regulatory Authority of Electronic and Postal Communications in Kosovo* signed a Memorandum of understanding for cooperation in the field of cybersecurity between the Macedonian National Centre for Computer Incident Response (MKD-CIRT) and Kosovan National Unit for Cyber Security (KOS-CERT). The document foresees cooperation in dealing with incidents in cyberspace, exchanging experiences in the field of cybersecurity through joint training programmes for staff, and identifying opportunities for academic exchanges and cooperation in research and development. The signing parties paid particular attention to the role of both regulatory bodies and national CERT teams in improving cybersecurity and coordinating activities against cybercrime.[\[2\]](#)

CERT-RO launches project to enhance national cybersecurity capabilities

Authorities in **Romania** launched the Enhanced National Cyber Security Services and Capabilities for Interoperability (eCSI) project, to consolidate the country's cybersecurity capabilities. The project, to be implemented by CERT-RO, is co-funded through the EU's Connecting Europe Facility programme. It will focus on expanding CERT-RO's cybersecurity abilities and services. The project will also involve connecting the institution with the European cybersecurity cooperation platform, and will help to ensure the compliance of CERT-RO with the requirements of the EU Directive on network and information security. eCSI has an implementation period of two years.[\[3\]](#)

Ukraine opens Cyber Threat Response Center

The State Communications Agency in **Ukraine** established a Cyber Threat Response Center (CRC), to serve as the core element of the country's national cyber defence system. CRC is expected to detect cyber threats, but also to promptly warn about them, analyse vulnerabilities, anomalies, malware, viruses, and immediately implement countermeasures. The Centre is a technical platform for interaction between the State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine, the Security Service of Ukraine, and the National Police, which are the structures that ensure cybersecurity in the country. The creation of the CRC is also aimed at substantially improving the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in countering and investigating cybercrime.[\[4\]](#)

Ukrainian power distributor working on cyber defence system

Ukrenergo, **Ukraine's** state-run power distributor, plans to invest up to USD\$20 million in a new cyber defence system. The company has been subject to several cyber-attacks in the past, including the NotPetya ransomware, and it hopes that the investment would better protect it from such threats. CEO Vsevolod Kovalchuk stated that Ukrenergo had identified 20 cybersecurity risks to be addressed via the new cyber defence system. The system, to become operational in 2020, will include both software tools and administrative actions, with the overall goal of 'making it physically impossible for external threats to affect the Ukrainian energy system'.[\[5\]](#)

Romanian central bank discourages the use of virtual currencies

The National Bank of **Romania** issued a press release outlining its position towards virtual currencies. Reiterating a position taken in 2015,[\[6\]](#) the bank warned investors about the potential financial and reputational risks associated with the use of virtual currencies, determined, among others, by a lack of supervision and regulation. As such, it discouraged any involvement in virtual currencies schemes. Given the exponential growth in the value of virtual currencies, as well as their fluctuations over short periods of time, the bank classifies virtual currencies, such as bitcoin, as speculative coins. Even if the volume of virtual currency schemes is not very high in Romania, the bank will continue to monitor them to determine whether they pose a threat to the country's financial stability.[\[7\]](#)

Law to legalise cryptocurrency mining proposed in Armenia

Lawmakers in **Armenia** are proposing legislation to legalise cryptocurrency-related activities. A draft law on the development of digital technologies has been put forward in the country's parliament, and one of its aims is to liberalise the cryptocurrency industry, by eliminating 'unnecessary bureaucracy' and 'avoiding monopolisation'. If adopted, the law would introduce tax exemptions and other incentives for miners, and allow individuals and businesses to operate mining facilities without the need to apply for any special licenses or permits. Miners would be exempted from taxation until the end of 2023. Proponents of the draft law, who took inspiration from similar regulations in countries like Belarus and Estonia, noted that the cryptocurrency industry should be encouraged and supported with legislation, as it could be a source of revenue for Armenia.[\[8\]](#)

E-money and virtual currency



Access



Report highlights stats on the use of digital technologies in SEE

Digital in 2018 is a yearbook which contains data about Internet, social media, and mobile use around the world in 2018. The report includes in-depth country reports for 15 countries in SEE, grouped in two categories: Digital in 2018 in Southern Europe covers **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo*, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia**, while Digital in 2018 in Eastern Europe covers Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. The reports show that the Internet penetration rate is 77% in Southern Europe and 74% in Eastern Europe, which puts both regions above the global average Internet penetration rate of 53%. Social media penetration is at 56% in Southern Europe and 45% in Eastern Europe, with both regions above the global average of 42%. Mobile connectivity in Southern Europe is at 126%, which makes it the third scoring region in this category, and at 157% in Eastern Europe, the highest scoring region; both rates are higher than the global average of 112%.

Development-other issues



Slovenian authorities discuss benefits and risks of blockchain

High-level representatives of the government of **Slovenia** – including the country's Prime Minister and the Minister of Economic Development and Technology – met several companies working in the field of blockchain, to discuss the benefits and risks of blockchain technologies. During the discussions, it was noted that public-private cooperation is essential to support the development of blockchain technologies and encourage innovation. The companies present at the meeting – among which Viberate, InsurePal, ICONOMI, and Sun-Contract – underlined measures that the government could take to help make the country friendlier towards blockchain companies. Slovenia recognises blockchain as an exceptional opportunity for its export-oriented and small-scale economy, the Prime Minister stated, and 'will pursue moderate, gradual, and appropriate regulation that will protect stakeholders from the highest risks'.

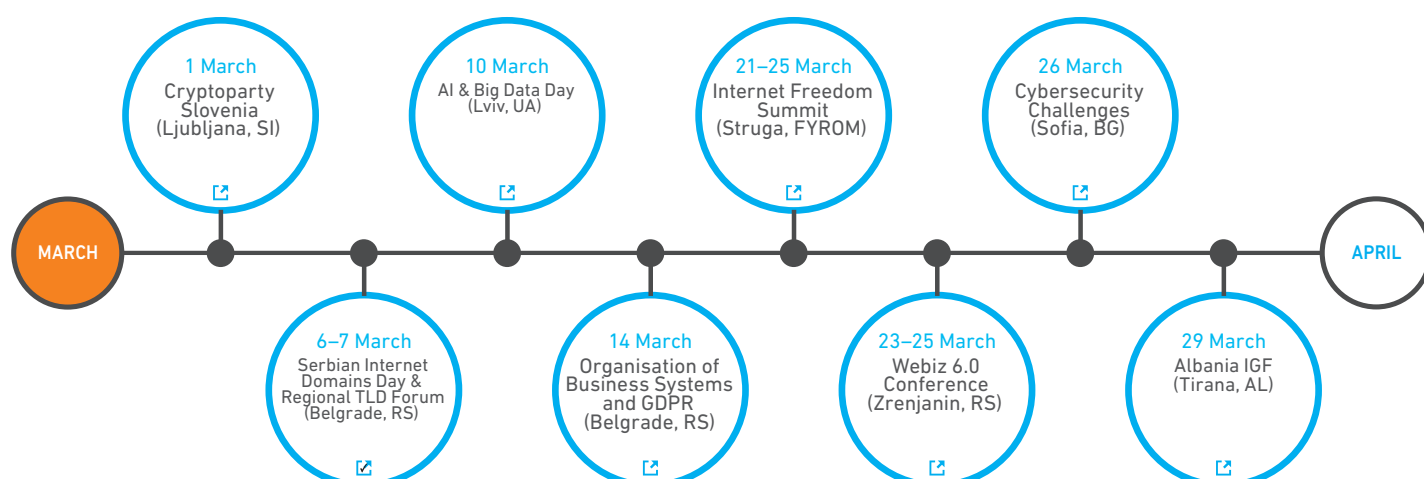
Freedom of expression



OSCE concerned about the detention of social media users in Turkey

Harlem Désir, Representative on Freedom of the Media of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) sent a letter to **Turkey's** Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu outlining concerns about the detention of social media users in Turkey. According to Turkish authorities, 449 individuals were arrested on claims of spreading terrorism propaganda after writing in social media about Turkey's military operations in Afrin, Syria. Désir called on Turkey to reconsider its practices and allow individuals to exercise their right to freedom of expression and express dissenting views on social media. 'Disagreeing with actions taken by the government should not be punished with imprisonment. Freedom of expression must be respected, even in times of conflict or war', he noted.

AHEAD IN MARCH



EVENTS ACROSS THE REGION



Development - other

Albanian ICT Awards | 2 February 2018 | Tirana, Albania

The 6th edition of the Albanian ICT Awards rewarded successful ICT professionals, business leaders, innovators, and enthusiastic youth. Awards were granted in six categories: ICT Innovation, ICT Mobility, ICT Year Diploma, ICT Growth Star, Women in ICT, and ICT Public Service. The event concluded with a panel discussion on digital development and sharing of success stories in the field.

New World Order – Talks on Blockchain | 15–16 February 2018 | Rijeka, Croatia

The event included talks, lectures, and an exhibition dedicated to showcasing the potential of blockchain technologies in areas other than cryptocurrencies. Introductory presentations outlined the technology behind blockchain, and were followed by discussions on the implementation of blockchain in domains such as sustainable development, humanitarian works, social and financial assistance, and modalities for financing cultural productions. An exhibition of experimental artworks depicted how many aspects of life can be automated and transferred to blockchain.

Open Source Design Workshop | 17 February 2018 | Tirana, Albania

The workshop was hosted at Open Labs Hackerspace in Tirana, and was aiming to help educate a new generation of designers about the potential of open source design tools. Young designers learnt how to use open source design applications, and how to join communities of designers working with open source, as a way to exchange experiences.



Child safety online

Safer Internet Day | 6 February 2018 | Worldwide

Safer Internet Day was celebrated globally under the slogan 'Create, Connect and Share Respect: A better Internet starts with you'. This year's initiative was dedicated to encouraging stakeholders to play their part in creating a better Internet for children and young people. It was coordinated by the joint Insafe/INHOPE network, with the support of the European Commission, and national Safer Internet Centres across Europe. Activities were organised at national level, including in SEE countries.



Privacy and data protection

GDPR: Challenge and Opportunities | 9 February 2018 | Zagreb, Croatia

The conference, organised by the Croatian Data Protection Agency, was dedicated to discussing challenges and implications of the EU GDPR. Participants from public authorities, companies, business associations, and civil society organisations explored the changes brought by the Regulation and noted that both public and private entities which process personal data have to be ready to comply with the new requirements by May 2018, when the Regulation enters into force.



Internet of things

Smart Building Forum | 22–23 February | Kyiv, Ukraine

The conference focused on showcasing advances in the field of intelligent systems and automation, energy efficiency, and smart solutions for smart home and smart city systems. It brought together large companies and experts, representatives of state authorities and start-ups, and other stakeholders working on or interesting in developing smart technologies and applying innovations in their field of work. Six key topics were discussed: smart home, smart city, energy efficiency, building automation, Internet of things (IoT) solutions, and audio/video



Cybersecurity and Cybercrime

5th Information Security Conference | 15 February 2018 | Marousi, Greece

The conference, attended by more than 200 information security specialists, highlighted trends in information security, and looked at how public and private entities could implement efficient integrated information security strategies. Topics discussed included the impact of technologies such as machine learning on digital security, security challenges in the context of IoT, the use of zero-day vulnerabilities, and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

IDC IT Security Roadshow 2018 | 13 & 22 February 2018 | Istanbul, Turkey & Kyiv, Ukraine

The International Data Corporation (IDC) conducted two security roadshows – in Istanbul and Kyiv – that covered areas such as secure applications, cloud security, incident response, secure apps and agile development, cyberwar, and risk assessment. Both events facilitated open discussion around cyber threats and vulnerabilities of companies and ways to address them.

Training Course on Dark Web and Virtual Currencies | 12–16 February 2018 | Tirana, Albania

The course, organised by OSCE, the Albanian Security Academy, and EUROPOL's Cybercrime Centre, was attended by 22 members of criminal justice institutions from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Participants learnt about encryption and anonymisation technologies, the Tor network, dark web, and cryptocurrencies. The aim was to enhance participants' understanding of how such technologies could be abused by cybercriminals.

Public-Private Cooperation for Fighting Cybercrime and Online Crime Proceeds | 13 February 2018 | Podgorica, Montenegro

The meeting, organised in the framework of the iPROCEEDS project of the Council of Europe and the EU, brought together representatives of public institutions, law enforcement agencies, Internet services providers and banks in Montenegro. The objective was to raise awareness on potential cyber-risks, provide information on new threats and cyber-criminal activity in the country, and identify possible solutions to prevent and detect cybercrime through the establishment of partnerships and trust.



Join us in preparing the next issue. Send us updates about Internet governance developments and/or events in your countries. Comments on this issue are also welcome.