

SEEDIG 5 | Online planning meetings I & II 17 & 18 December 2018

Summary Report

The SEEDIG community held two online planning meetings, on 17 and 18 December 2018, to continue preparations for the fifth SEEDIG annual meeting (SEEDIG 5). Most of the discussions focused on issues related to building the programme for SEEDIG 5, but several other topics related to the broader SEEDIG process were also addressed. The meetings were attended by 30 participants.

1. SEEDIG 2019 annual meeting

1.1. Process overview

The meeting started with an overview of SEEDIG and the planning process for the [5th annual meeting](#), which is scheduled to be held on 7–8 May 2019, in Bucharest, Romania. It was mentioned that broad support was secured for SEEDIG 5 at local level, and several public entities, business associations, technical community entities and civil society organisations have taken up the role of SEEDIG local partners in Romania. An updated list of partners can be found on the [SEEDIG 5 webpage](#).

The planning process for SEEDIG 5 started with the joint SEEDIG-EuroDIG call for issues, which ran between October and November 2018. The online planning meetings constitute the second step. Other steps are outlined in the [Planning process overview](#).

1.2. Topics proposed – overview and discussion

In response to the joint call for issues, SEEDIG received 112 proposals for Internet governance and digital policy issues suggested for discussion in Bucharest. The full list of proposals and statistical information can be found on the [dedicated webpage](#).

The online community discussions on the proposals started with the presentation of the [overview of topics](#). It was explained that, in preparing the overview, the SEEDIG Executive Committee has tried to cluster proposed issues into more general topics (based on similarities and commonalities), hoping that this would facilitate the discussions. Some issues were also re-assigned to categories other than the ones in which they were initially submitted, to help with clustering.

Bearing in mind that the annual meeting lasts two days, it was underlined that it would, unfortunately, be impossible for the programme to include all of the proposed topics. Therefore, the final issues to be included in the SEEDIG 5 programme will be based on the proposed issues and decided as a result of discussions during the planning meetings. Regardless of which issues form the final programme, all proponents, as well as any other interested community members, are strongly encouraged to take part in the planning process.

After these general considerations, participants shared their views regarding potential topics that, in their view, should be included in the SEEDIG 5 programme. Several main points stood out during the discussions:

- ‘Focus’ and ‘relevance’ should be the key words for the SEEDIG 5 meeting.
 - The programme should feature more in-depth discussions (i.e. not only tackling the surface of an issue, but going into detail as well). For example, instead of having eight sessions on completely different topics, one approach to consider could be to dedicate half-days to the same topic (or closely connected topics), to allow for more in-depth debates.
 - Discussions should be relevant for South Eastern Europe and the neighbouring area (SEE+).
 - At the same time, there should also be at least one session tackling digital policy issues in focus at global level, thus creating a bridge between the local and the global discussions.
 - The overall programme should be attractive for as many stakeholder groups as possible. Efforts should be made to include sessions that are particularly attractive for stakeholders that have traditionally been less represented in Internet Governance Forum processes.
- The programme should include topics which could be tackled from the perspective of better regional cooperation.
- The community should ensure greater youth participation as key participants in various sessions.

Main topics outlined during the discussions

Access and literacy

- Interest was expressed for exploring the issue of **basic digital literacy** in the region. It was mentioned that in order to keep the sessions more focused, issue can be framed to address groups such as youth, the elderly, disadvantaged communities, and persons with disabilities (assistive technologies).
- As relevant topics for the region, issues around **readiness for the future of work** and the **brain drain** were brought forth. They could be tackled in a session separate from one on basic digital literacy, but the two should remain closely connected.
- On the topic of **access and connectivity** three issues were stressed: **community networks**, **broadband strategies**, and **remote access** at local and regional levels.

Development of the IG ecosystem & Regional cooperation

- Participants expressed support for continuing the approach instituted at the SEEDIG 2018 meeting, when a high-level session tackled issues of digital policy priorities and digital cooperation across SEE+. It was suggested that enhancing regional cooperation in tackling Internet governance and digital policy issues should remain high on the SEEDIG agenda.
- It was generally agreed that the issue of **digital transformation** remains an important issue and could serve as a broad guiding topic for SEEDIG 5 in order to shed light on the national experiences, perspectives, and challenges.
- Going beyond the regional cooperation, a session focused on connecting the SEEDIG meeting with the global digital policy processes (such as the IGF) was proposed. This

session could act as a bridge with global discussion, and maybe address the IGF2018 theme of trust. For example, it could focus on the issue of ethics and human rights in the context of the Internet and other digital technologies.

Human rights

- During the planning meetings, proposals were made for sessions aimed at discussing:
 - **Privacy, data protection and social platforms regulation**
 - Implications of the '**EU copyright reform**' on digital rights and the functioning of the Internet
 - **Internet intermediaries' responsibilities** with regard to the enforcement of human rights. A multifaceted approach to the calls for 'privatised law enforcements' can be explored from national and regional perspectives.
- Additionally, issues focused on children and digital technologies such as **safety issues and children rights** were proposed.

Innovation and economic issues

- Continuing the last year's trend, the innovation and economics issues category received high number of proposals and this was welcomed by the participants.
- Issues addressing readiness levels for **digital transformation in SEE+** were stressed. Digital economy provides a venue for long-term sustainable growth and cooperation in the region; issues such as digital challenges faced by countries, regulation in the new digital ecosystems and harmonisation of legal frameworks pose a valuable angle to the SEEDIG discussions.
- Digitalisation and innovation offer new opportunities for the **businesses in the digital era**, and incorporating a discussion on this was proposed. Other suggestions were made to: include a debate on opportunities and trend for start-ups; offer the opportunity for sharing experiences and updates related to e-commerce at national and regional level in SEE+; discuss issues related to the deployment of 'smart cities' and other Internet of Things innovations across the region.
- As mentioned above, proposals were made to tackle **emerging and frontier technologies** in the region from two different perspectives: the region's readiness to take advantage of these technologies; and the trust, ethics and human rights implications in the development and use of such technologies.

Cybersecurity

- Support was expressed for building up on previous SEEDIG discussions related to **enhancing regional cooperation on cybersecurity-related issues**.

Technical and operational issues

- Considering proposals made by the technical community, participants were in favour of having one session focused on **topics of interest for network operators**. Such a session would allow operators to talk about the issues that concern them most, and would also tackle aspects related to the impact of Internet governance and digital policy processes on the operators' work.
- A broader session could be considered to address the **relations between technologies, standards and regulations**.
- Another suggestion was to tackle the SEE+ region's readiness for and progress in the uptake of technologies/standards such as **5G and IPv6**.

- It was also proposed that **universal acceptance, internationalised domain names (IDNs) and local languages/content** could be addressed in one dedicated session.
- The inclusion of an **'Internet 101' educational session** was suggested as well. This could be prepared in cooperation with organisations such as RIPE NCC and ICANN, and could be considered for inclusion in the programme for day 0 at SEEDIG 5.

Cross-cutting topics

- Some participants highlighted potential for one theme looking at how to take advantage of digital opportunities or how ready the region is for the digital opportunities. This could connect issues of access/connectivity, literacy and the future of work, for example.
- Likewise, it was suggested that discussions on digital technologies and standards could also tackle cybersecurity and human rights implications, thus creating the framework for another cross-cutting theme.

Flash sessions/lightning talks

During the discussions, several suggestions emerged for topics that could qualify for flash sessions or lightning talks:

- Universal acceptance and IDNs – updates (including from the national level)
- Digital technologies and the environment
- IPv4 and IPv6
- E-commerce in the SEE+ region

1.3. Programme structure and format

As in the previous years of the SEEDIG annual meetings, there was a call for more interactive sessions and less panel debates.

With regard to the structure of the programme, opinions were divided between continuing the linear approach and having parallel sessions throughout the two main days of the meeting. Some participants were of the view that parallel sessions would ensure a more diverse programme, and thus increase the chance of stakeholders finding more topics of interest for them. It was, however, stressed that a parallel sessions approach would imply higher costs and this should be kept in mind. Proponents of keeping the linear approach highlighted that it is more beneficial to have all of the attendants of the annual meeting together. They further noted that a linear approach means planning very well a few sessions, and prevents the danger of spreading efforts into too many directions and thus losing focus.

Alternative approaches were also proposed. Some participants noted that there should be more half-days on the same topics that deserve more time or have greater value if tackled from different perspectives during the meeting. Others suggested a combined approach, with keeping some sessions as the main ones, while also having a few in-depth parallel sessions (or at least world café type sessions allowing participants to tackle multiple issues in break-out groups). There were also proposals for some sessions to be shorter than the usual 90 minutes ones.

1.4. Building the programme for SEEDIG 5: Organising teams vs programme committee

Over the past four years, SEEDIG has followed the model of having individual organising teams in charge of shaping each session included in the SEEDIG meeting programme, with the Executive Committee being responsible for ensuring the overall coordination. Below is a description of this approach, taken from the Programme Guidelines:

Organising teams are formed for each session included in the final programme. The teams are open to all those who have submitted proposals, as well as to any other interested individual. The Executive Committee designate one or two team leads for each session, to facilitate the work of the organising teams. Members of the Executive Committee also contribute to the planning of the sessions, on an equal basis with all other team members.

Organising teams build the sessions (defining the focus and title, description, format, key participants, moderator/facilitator, etc.) in an open and transparent manner. The overall activity of the organising teams is coordinated by the Executive Committee, whose role is to assist the teams and to ensure compliance with the Session principles.

During the call for issues, a proposal was brought up on the SEEDIG mailing list to consider replacing the organising teams with an overall programme committee (PC). This proposal was extensively discussed during the planning meetings, and diverse opinions were shared.

Several participants supported keeping the organising team approach. They argued that it would be more difficult for community members to commit to being part of a PC responsible for the overall programme, as opposed to only being involved in the planning of a specific session. Others, however, recalled challenges that have been experienced over the past years with this approach. Examples ranged from issues related to unequal involvement of team members in the planning of sessions, to challenges related to ensuring that there is consistency and cohesion in the overall programme, that duplications (in terms of speakers, topics tackled etc.) are avoided, and that the programme is relevant and attractive for multiple stakeholder groups.

Speaking in favour of the PC approach, several participants noted that, having in mind the experience with the organising teams, it would be worthwhile trying a different method for building the SEEDIG programme, even only as a pilot project. They noted that a PC would significantly contribute to making the overall planning process more streamlined and effective, while also ensuring more consistency and cohesion within the SEEDIG meeting programme.

Participants also stressed a few elements that they considered essential to the success of a PC approach:

- Launching a call for volunteers for the PC, as soon as the draft programme is ready.
- Ensuring that, when selecting members for the PC, the Executive Committee keeps in mind the need for diversity of expertise, stakeholder groups, countries, age, and gender.
- The PC works closely with the Executive Committee on building the meeting programme, and compliance with established SEEDIG principles is ensured.
- The PC approach does not mean that community members other than those serving on the PC will be excluded from the planning process. The PC and the Executive

Committee will keep the overall SEEDIG community informed about progress made in building the meeting programme, and will consider community input to the largest extent possible.

Following these discussions, and taking into account the considerable support for forming a PC, the Executive Committee was entrusted with further refining the approach to follow and informing the community about the next steps.

1.5. Next steps in building the SEEDIG 5 programme

Participants were informed of the following indicative next steps in building the programme for SEEDIG 5:

- The Executive Committee informs the community about the approach for building the SEEDIG 5 programme
- A draft programme is prepared by the Executive Committee by the end of 2018
- The draft programme is launched for public comment by early January 2019
- The final programme outline is ready by the end of January 2019, and the work on further shaping the sessions starts immediately after.

1.6. Overarching theme for SEEDIG 5

Having an overarching theme for the SEEDIG meeting has proven valuable in doing outreach, promotion, and giving focus to the annual meeting. The overarching theme should be relevant, attractive to the general public, and reflect the focus of the particular programme and discussions to be held in Bucharest.

While participants were invited to propose suggestions for an overarching theme for SEEDIG 5, it was also agreed that a community-wide call for suggestions will be shared via the [SEEDIG mailing list](#). The call for suggestion will be launched once the draft programme for SEEDIG 5 becomes available, most likely in January 2019.

2. Regional Internet governance survey

Having a regional [survey](#) during the past years has been supported by the community, and results have been recognised as valuable. As every year, the topics should be decided based on public input, during the planning meetings and the mailing list. As a possible topic, participants noted digital literacy and the future of work.

However, participants also stressed that the regional survey as a SEEDIG activity in 2019 should remain only if a potential topic naturally arises from the work on drafting the programme. If no such topics arises during the drafting process, the community should decide if the regional survey should be left out for the year.

3. SEEDIG capacity development programmes - updates

SEEDIG Capacity development programmes and intersessional activities were briefly mentioned.

- [Youth School](#) and [Fellowship Programme](#). These two programmes are connected to the annual meeting, and are dependent on financial support from SEEDIG sponsors and supporting organisations. The Executive Committee is currently working on trying to secure such support. The Youth School call for applications is currently open and will run until 30 December 2018. From this year, the Youth School will have an expanded programme, consisting of webinars, and a three-tier approach to selecting the final list of participants.
- [Internship Programme](#). The call for applications will be open in January 2019.
- [Ambassadors Programme](#). This new pilot community programme is aimed at community members who wish to enhance SEEDIG visibility and presence at the national, regional, and international level. The call for applications closed on 9 December 2018 and the selected Ambassadors are expected to be announced in January 2019.

4. SEEDIG outreach

At the end of the meetings, participants were encouraged to act as the SEEDIG voice at national and regional level, promote SEEDIG and its activities, and encourage other stakeholders to contribute to the SEEDIG 5 meeting and the overall SEEDIG process.