

# SOUTH EASTERN EUROPEAN DIALOGUE ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE (SEEDIG)

## 9<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING - SEEDIG 9

25-26 November 2024

Mona Plaza Hotel  
Belgrade, Serbia

### ABOUT SEEDIG

The **South Eastern European Dialogue on Internet Governance (SEEDIG)** is a leading regional multistakeholder platform dedicated to fostering dialogue and collaboration on internet governance and digital policy issues across South Eastern Europe (SEE). Established in 2014 through a bottom-up, community-driven process, SEEDIG was conceived in response to the regional internet community's call for a dedicated forum to address internet-related challenges and opportunities.

SEEDIG operates as a **recognized sub-regional initiative** of the **United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF)**, engaging **stakeholders from 18 countries**: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Kosovo\*, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

### SEEDIG MISSION

SEEDIG's mission is to support the sustainable and inclusive digital development of the SEE region by facilitating multistakeholder dialogue, capacity-building, and knowledge-sharing on internet governance and digital policy.

To achieve this mission, SEEDIG:

- Provides a collaborative platform for discussing internet governance and digital policy issues through annual meetings and intersessional initiatives.
- Raises awareness and enhances understanding of digital policy matters among SEE stakeholders.
- Empowers regional stakeholders to meaningfully engage in national, regional, and global digital policy processes.
- Encourages and supports local communities in launching national internet governance initiatives and engaging with international digital policy spaces and processes.
- Builds strategic partnerships across the SEE region and globally, strengthening the digital governance ecosystem.

SEEDIG does not make binding decisions, but it influences policy and decision-making by fostering open, informed, and solution-oriented discussions. Insights from SEEDIG's annual meetings are synthesized into **session messages** – highlighting key takeaways, priorities, and recommendations – which are shared with national, regional, and global stakeholders.

## SEEDIG 9 ORGANIZING TEAM

SEEDIG 9 was made possible through the dedication of a committed organizing team representing diverse stakeholder groups:

**Olga Kyryliuk** | Senior Advisor, Digital Governance, Internews | Civil Society

**Bogdan Banjac** | Advisor, Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Serbia | Government

**Dušan Stojićević** | Marketing Director for Eastern Europe, Gransy | Technical Community

**Kateryna Bovsunovska** | Legal Consultant, UNIDROIT | Intergovernmental Organization

**Tetiana Kyryliuk** | Marketing & PR Manager, Gransy | Technical Community

## SEEDIG 9 PREPARATORY PROCESS

The preparatory process for SEEDIG 9 was guided by SEEDIG's core principles of inclusivity, bottom-up participation, and community-driven decision-making. As in previous years, the planning of the annual meeting began with an open call for session proposals, inviting stakeholders from across the SEE region to contribute their ideas on emerging digital policy issues, pressing regional challenges, and innovative governance solutions.

To ensure broad outreach and maximum participation, the call was widely disseminated through multiple channels, including the SEEDIG website, SEEDIG's mailing list, and a dedicated outreach list comprising participants from previous SEEDIG meetings and intersessional activities. Recognizing the importance of reaching new voices and underrepresented groups, the Organizing Team took a proactive approach, leveraging their professional networks and stakeholder communities to further expand the call's visibility and encourage diverse contributions from across the region.

Through this process, community members had the opportunity to suggest session topics, propose discussion formats, and recommend expert speakers who could bring valuable insights to SEEDIG 9. The diverse range of submissions received reflected the region's evolving digital landscape and the priorities of different stakeholder groups, ensuring that the program was both relevant and reflective of community needs.

Based on the submitted proposals, the SEEDIG Organizing Team carefully reviewed and curated the SEEDIG 9 agenda, ensuring a balanced, multistakeholder, and forward-looking program. Individuals whose proposals were identified as the most relevant and impactful were invited to take the lead in shaping and moderating their respective sessions, fostering greater ownership and direct engagement from the SEEDIG community. Additionally, efforts were made to facilitate collaboration between proposers and speakers, allowing for a dynamic exchange of perspectives and stronger regional representation in session design and execution.

To effectively coordinate and manage the event preparation, the Organizing Team maintained a structured and consistent workflow. Meetings were held on a monthly basis starting in January 2024, transitioning to biweekly meetings as of June, and further increasing to weekly meetings from October onward as the event approached. This progressive meeting structure ensured efficient decision-making, continuous

engagement with session organizers, and a well-coordinated execution of tasks, reinforcing SEEDIG’s commitment to an inclusive, transparent, and participatory process.

This inclusive and transparent approach has long been a defining feature of SEEDIG, reinforcing its role as a truly community-driven initiative where local voices shape regional and global internet governance discussions. The collaborative agenda-building approach not only enhances the quality and impact of the annual meeting but also strengthens long-term engagement by empowering stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to SEEDIG’s mission.

## SEEDIG 9 ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting is the flagship event of the South Eastern European Dialogue on Internet Governance (SEEDIG), uniting regional and international stakeholders to discuss critical digital policy and internet governance challenges. SEEDIG 9, held on 25–26 November 2024 in Belgrade, Serbia, and online, served as an inclusive, action-driven forum where policymakers, civil society, the private sector, academia, and the technical community collaborated to shape the region’s digital future.

Under the **overarching theme “SEE Potential: Digital Turning Points and Responsible Governance,”** SEEDIG 9 highlighted South Eastern Europe’s role in fostering inclusive and accountable digital policies, emphasizing the importance of regional participation in global internet governance discussions. The event provided a unique space for open dialogue, strategic collaboration, and tangible action, ensuring that SEE stakeholders are not just passive observers, but active contributors in shaping digital governance now and in the years to come.

**SEEDIG 9’s two-day agenda** was designed to maximize engagement, foster meaningful discussions, and drive concrete outcomes. A key feature of the program was the variety of session formats, aimed at making discussions interactive, diverse, and easy to follow. In addition to traditional panel discussions, the agenda included keynotes, fireside chat, lightning talk, public-private policy dialogue, and hands-on workshop, ensuring a dynamic and engaging experience for participants.

### **The agenda featured:**

- 7 panel discussions covering key regional and global internet governance challenges, including freedom of expression, cybersecurity, digital markets regulation, AI governance, and labor rights in the digital economy.
- 1 keynote speech delivered by Isabel de Sola, focusing on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and its relevance to the SEE region. This keynote, organized in close cooperation with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology (OSET), aimed to bring the GDC implementation closer to the regional community and ensure that SEE stakeholders are actively engaged in shaping the future of digital governance.
- 1 keynote dialogue led by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) on AI & Emerging Tech: Preventing Misuse and Advancing Regulation, addressing the urgent need for stronger regulatory frameworks to combat misuse of AI by criminal and terrorist groups. This session marked the beginning of SEEDIG’s cooperation with PAM, an important step toward

deepening engagement with parliamentarians across the region and ensuring that legislative bodies are actively involved in digital governance discussions.

- 1 lightning talk presenting the latest findings from the IDN World Report 2024, offering a deep dive into Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and their impact on digital inclusion.
- 1 fireside chat featuring key experts discussing the role of the Coalition for Digital Inclusion (CODI) and its significance for South Eastern Europe. This early-stage presentation of CODI was particularly unique, as it introduced the initiative to the SEE region for the first time, providing stakeholders with a rare opportunity to engage with and influence its development from the outset.
- 1 public-private policy dialogue hosted by the Council of Europe, focusing on the partnerships between governments and the private sector to uphold human rights and democracy online. The Council of Europe's strong engagement in SEEDIG 9 reinforced its commitment to strengthening digital rights protections across the region.
- 1 workshop tackling cyberattacks against civil society, with insights into state-sponsored hacking and cyber mercenary tactics and strategies for enhancing digital resilience.

This diverse and carefully curated program ensured that SEEDIG 9 remained highly relevant and impactful, addressing emerging regional concerns.

### **Strengthening Regional and Global Collaboration**

A defining feature of SEEDIG 9 was its strong engagement with key global and regional actors, reinforcing SEE's position within the broader internet governance ecosystem.

Cooperation with the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology (OSET) ensured that SEEDIG 9 contributed directly to discussions on the Global Digital Compact (GDC), offering SEE stakeholders a platform to engage with UN-led processes and influence global governance discussions.

The establishment of cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) strengthened SEEDIG's engagement with parliamentarians, recognizing their critical role in shaping national and regional digital policies.

Unique partnership with Freedom House, which for the second year in a row, hosted the only dedicated presentation of the Freedom on the Net (FOTN) report in the SEE region. This exclusive session provided a valuable opportunity to assess digital freedoms and restrictions across SEE, reinforcing SEEDIG's role as a key regional forum for digital rights advocacy.

Strong interest and engagement from the Council of Europe, whose active contributions to the agenda underscored its commitment to the region and the protection of digital rights and freedoms.

Through these strategic collaborations, SEEDIG 9 reinforced its role as a regional platform bridging local, national, and global digital policy discussions, ensuring that SEE remains actively engaged in shaping the future of internet governance.

## Institutional and Community Support

The success of SEEDIG 9 was made possible through strategic partnerships and strong institutional backing. The event was supported by eight partner organizations, including:

- UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia
- Council of Europe
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Serbia
- Serbia's Commissioner for the Protection of Equality
- Serbia's Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection
- Freedom House
- Internews

Additionally, SEEDIG 9 received crucial financial and institutional support from a group of sponsors, demonstrating the continued commitment of international and regional organizations to strengthening digital governance in SEE. Among SEEDIG 9 sponsors were:

- UN IGF Secretariat
- Internet Society Foundation
- RIPE NCC
- ICANN
- EURid
- Serbian National Internet Domain Registry Foundation (RNIDS)
- Serbian Open eXchange (SOX)

SEEDIG 9 provided a collaborative platform for stakeholders across government, civil society, the private sector, academia, and the technical community to discuss and address key digital policy challenges in South Eastern Europe. The key messages from the meeting summarize the most pressing issues, policy recommendations, and regional priorities, offering a valuable resource for decision-makers, industry leaders, and digital rights advocates. These insights will be shared at national, regional, and global levels to ensure that perspectives from South Eastern Europe contribute to broader policy discussions and digital governance developments. By facilitating regional cooperation and engagement, SEEDIG 9 continues to strengthen the role of SEE stakeholders in shaping the digital landscape.

## SEEDIG 9 YOUTH SCHOOL

The SEEDIG Youth School, held as a pre-event to SEEDIG 9 on 24 November 2024, was hosted by the OSCE Mission to Serbia, with support from the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and sponsorship from RNIDS, RIPE NCC, and EURid. This initiative is a cornerstone of SEEDIG's capacity-building efforts, designed to empower young professionals and students from South Eastern Europe with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to engage meaningfully in internet governance and digital policy discussions.

The SEEDIG Youth School is a long-term investment in the future of digital governance. By equipping young professionals with a solid foundation in internet governance, policy processes, and digital rights, the Youth School aims to:

- Increase youth participation in internet governance at the national, regional, and global levels.
- Develop the next generation of experts, advocates, and policymakers who can contribute to shaping digital policy in SEE.
- Bridge the gap between young professionals and established internet governance actors, providing mentorship and networking opportunities.
- Strengthen multistakeholder engagement by ensuring that youth voices are represented in decision-making processes.

This year, the Youth School attracted strong interest, with 70 applications from across the region. Following a rigorous selection process, 30 outstanding individuals from 13 SEE countries were chosen to participate in both the Youth School and SEEDIG 9 meeting, ensuring that they not only gained theoretical knowledge but also had the opportunity to engage directly with key regional and international stakeholders.

To ensure a smooth onboarding experience and foster early connections among participants, the SEEDIG Organizing Team hosted an introductory call for all selected Youth School participants ahead of the event. This virtual gathering provided a space for participants to meet each other in an informal setting, learn more about SEEDIG's mission and activities, and set the stage for their engagement in Belgrade.

As part of this onboarding process, participants were divided into mini-groups and given their first collaborative task, designed to enhance interaction, team spirit, and practical learning before the in-person event. Each group was tasked with developing an advocacy campaign around one of the Global Digital Compact (GDC) goals of their choice. This assignment not only encouraged critical thinking and creativity but also linked their engagement to the broader SEEDIG 9 agenda, reinforcing the importance of regional youth involvement in shaping global digital governance discussions.

To support participants in refining their ideas and campaign proposals, the SEEDIG Organizing Team offered individual mentoring sessions, providing constructive feedback, strategic guidance, and technical insights. These sessions allowed participants to fine-tune their messaging, advocacy strategies, and presentation skills, ensuring they were well-prepared to showcase their work.

The culmination of this effort took place at the SEEDIG 9 reception, where Youth School teams had the opportunity to present their advocacy campaigns in front of the SEEDIG community, engaging with a diverse audience of policymakers, experts, and digital governance professionals. This was followed by a certificate ceremony, where all Youth School participants were formally recognized for their contribution and commitment, while also getting exposure to the broader SEEDIG network.

By selecting the Global Digital Compact (GDC) as the central theme for the Youth School engagement, the Organizing Team sought to align the initiative with the SEEDIG 9 keynote and showcase the potential

of SEE youth to meaningfully contribute to GDC implementation. This approach also served to demonstrate to the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology (OSET) the readiness and enthusiasm of young professionals from SEE to actively engage in shaping the global digital governance landscape.

The Youth School curriculum was designed to be interactive and hands-on, ensuring that participants not only learned about internet governance concepts but also developed practical skills in policy analysis, advocacy, and negotiation. The agenda featured expert-led discussions, workshops, and case studies.

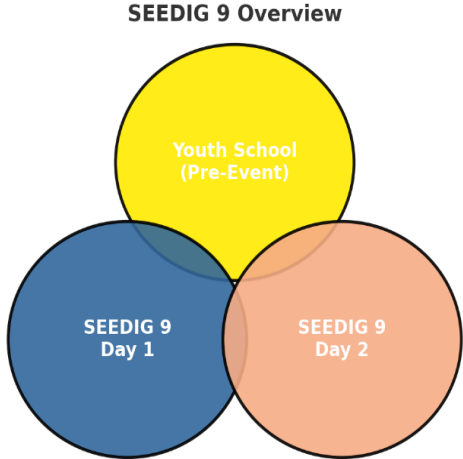
A key highlight of the Youth School is its direct link to SEEDIG 9, allowing participants to apply their knowledge in real-world discussions. By attending high-level sessions, networking with experts, and engaging in policy debates, Youth School graduates gained firsthand experience in shaping digital governance conversations.

SEEDIG recognizes the importance of youth engagement in internet governance and strives to ensure that young professionals have opportunities to contribute to policy discussions at regional and international levels. Many past participants of the SEEDIG Youth School have gone on to become active members in national and regional digital policy initiatives. The detailed application process, agenda, and list of selected participants can be found on the dedicated [Youth School webpage](#).

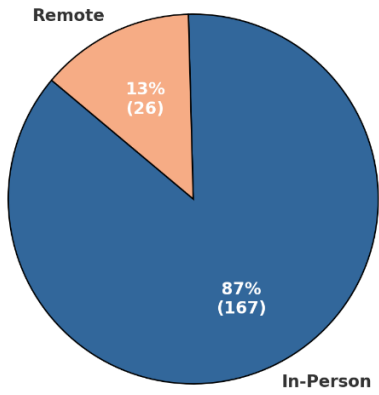
### SEEDIG 9 STATISTICS

SEEDIG 9 brought together **193 participants**, representing a diverse mix of stakeholder groups, countries, and backgrounds. The event featured strong regional participation, with attendees joining both in-person and remotely. A key focus was on ensuring inclusivity, with balanced gender representation, active youth engagement, and contributions from across South Eastern Europe and beyond.

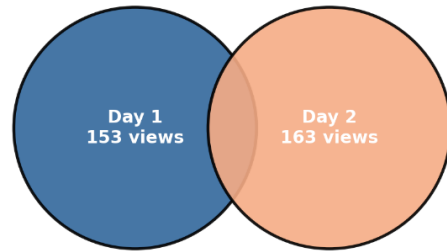
The following data provides a detailed breakdown of SEEDIG 9 participation, including stakeholder representation, country distribution, gender balance, youth involvement, and online engagement, offering insights into the event’s reach and impact.



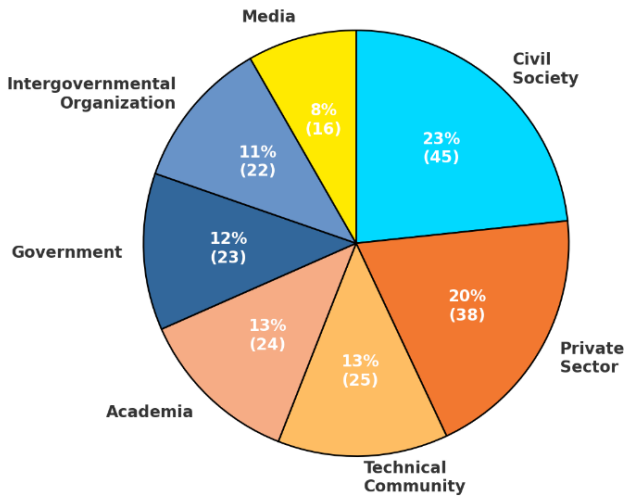
**Participation Breakdown**



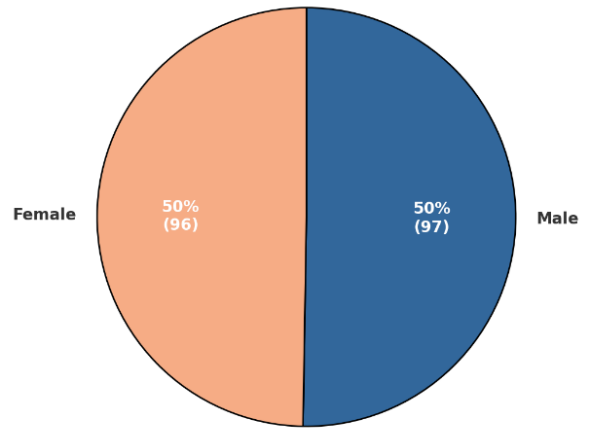
**YouTube Live Stream Followers**



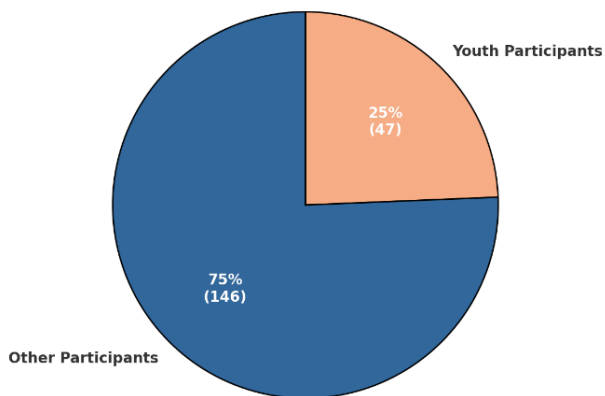
**Stakeholder Breakdown**



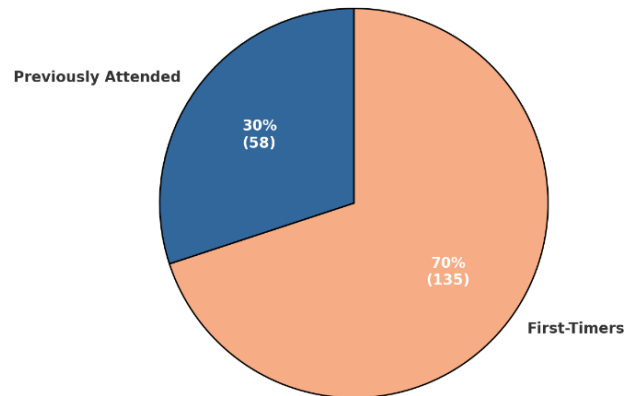
**Gender Breakdown**



**Youth Participation Breakdown**

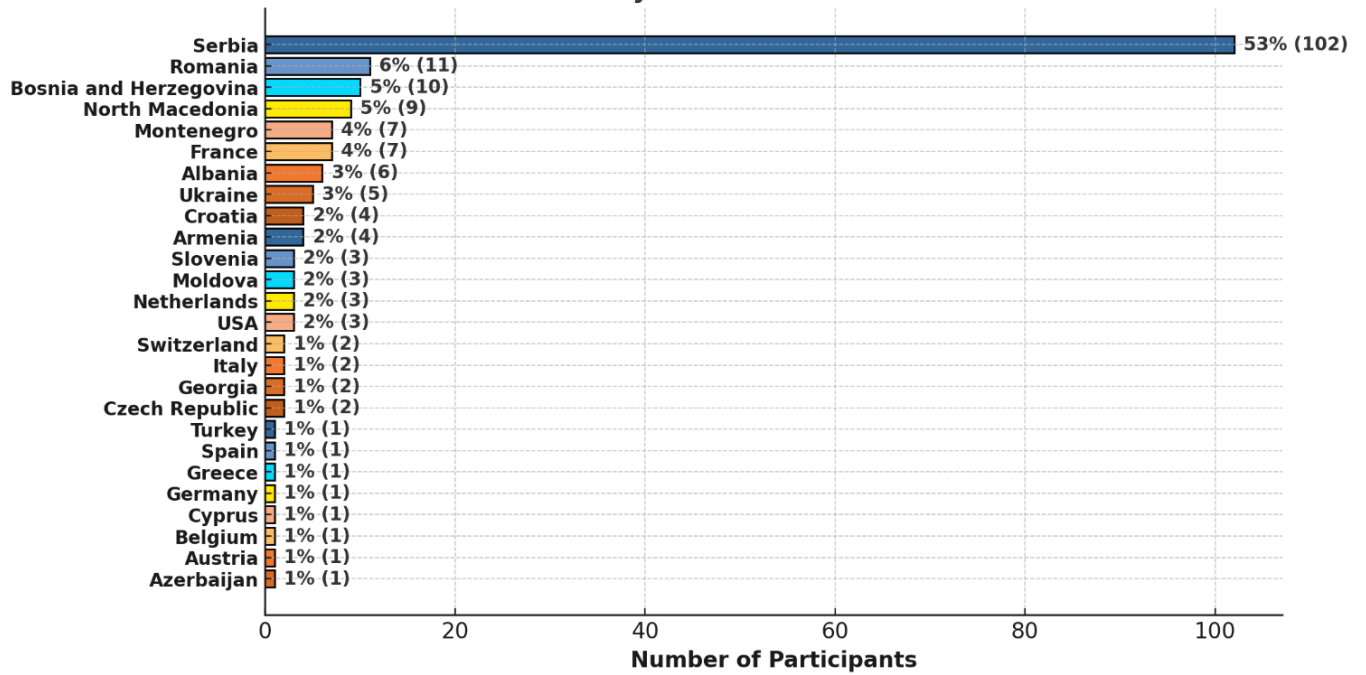


**Previous Engagement with SEEDIG**

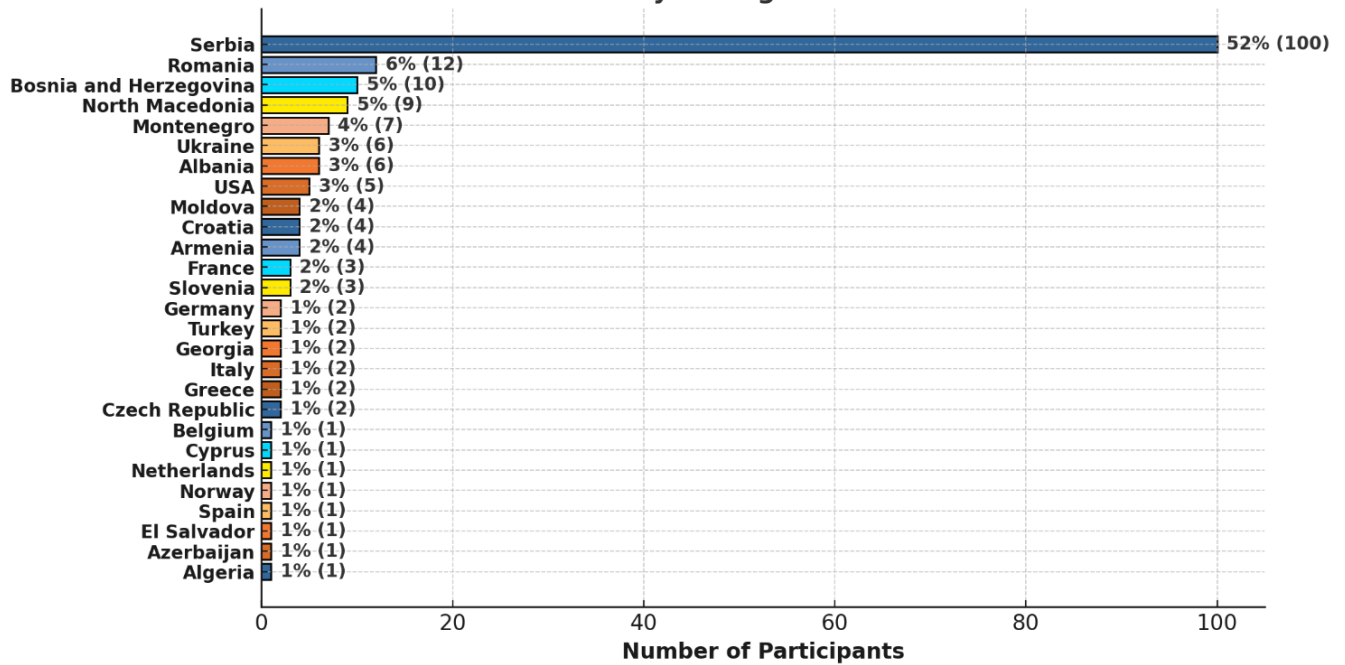




### Country of Residence Breakdown



### Country of Origin Breakdown



## SEEDIG 9 KEY SESSION MESSAGES

### Overarching Theme “SEE Potential: Digital Turning Points and Responsible Governance”

#### DAY 1 - 25 NOVEMBER

#### Panel Discussion | Council of Europe Digital Agenda in Action

##### Session Host: Council of Europe

- The Council of Europe (CoE) employs a triangular methodology focusing on Standards, Assistance, and Monitoring to guide digital governance and human rights efforts, supporting the development of digital regulation, helping member states implement key initiatives, and ensuring progress assessment through surveys and monitoring mechanisms.
- The Council of Europe’s Digital Agenda 2022-2025 aims to consolidate existing digital regulations, address emerging challenges in digital technologies, and support member states’ digital transitions while upholding European values and human rights standards.
- The Budapest Convention remains central to international cooperation on cybercrime, with the Second Additional Protocol enabling exchange of electronic evidence between parties. However, challenges persist in aligning national legal frameworks with digitalization efforts, particularly in combating emerging forms of cybercrime such as ransomware, online child exploitation, and financial crimes.
- Addressing digital hate speech and AI-related discrimination is a key priority. Member states are encouraged to implement national strategies, adopt best practices, and ensure AI systems are fair and transparent. Member states can strengthen efforts to combat hate speech by using ECRI country monitoring reports and CoE Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16, while ensuring AI legislation aligns with international standards through cooperation programs and upcoming CoE Recommendations. States are also encouraged to adhere to the newly launched framework Convention on AI and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.
- Protecting freedom of expression and journalists’ safety, especially against gendered threats, remains a priority. The “[Journalists matter](#)” campaign was launched in 2023 to support this cause. The Council of Europe advocates for clear legal frameworks to ensure inclusive, trustworthy and safe digital spaces where freedom of expression and information can be exercised, while tackling [online harmful activities](#), including hate speech, mis- and disinformation, and risks from emerging technologies, such as [generative AI](#) and [metaverse](#).

#### Keynote Speech | Global Digital Compact and SEE Region

##### By Isabel de Sola - Geneva Liaison, Office of Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology (OSET)

- The GDC is a visionary UN initiative aimed at strengthening digital cooperation by consolidating principles, commitments, and implementation actions under a unified framework. It introduces new priorities, such as open-source technology, digital public infrastructure, and tech-facilitated gender-based violence, alongside existing issues like AI governance, misinformation, and data privacy.

- The GDC reaffirms the role of the multistakeholder model, emphasizing the importance of inclusive participation from governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, technical community, and academia. It also recognizes the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as the primary platform for global internet governance discussions and calls for increased support for its activities.
- Stakeholders in South Eastern Europe (SEE) are encouraged to actively participate in GDC implementation by mapping its objectives to national and regional realities, convening policy dialogues, and fostering collaborations. The momentum generated by the GDC offers an opportunity to expand engagement with new actors in digital governance and strengthen regional contributions to global policy discussions.
- The GDC is a voluntary and open process where stakeholders can endorse its principles and commit to action. Implementation commitments will be tracked through a mapping process, with a progress report scheduled for April 2025 as part of the WSIS annual progress report.
- The GDC provides an entry point for SEE actors to align efforts with global digital governance priorities, contribute to the implementation mapping process starting in January 2025, and ensure that regional perspectives are reflected in the global digital policy landscape.

### **Lightning Talk | Key Insights from the IDN World Report 2024**

#### **Session Host: EURid**

- The use of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) continues to expand, particularly in countries with non-Latin scripts where IDNs enhance accessibility and local-language representation online.
- Despite progress, technical limitations, low awareness, and slow business adoption remain key obstacles. Ensuring universal acceptance of IDNs across digital platforms is essential for broader adoption.
- IDN uptake varies significantly worldwide. Asia and the Middle East are leading in adoption, while Western countries lag behind, often due to established Latin-script domain preferences and technical interoperability issues.
- The potential misuse of IDNs, including phishing attacks and homograph spoofing, highlights the importance of robust security measures, and awareness campaigns to mitigate risks.
- As awareness grows and technological support improves, IDNs are expected to play an increasingly significant role in digital inclusion, making the internet more linguistically and culturally diverse. Continued collaboration among governments, registries, and technical communities will be crucial in accelerating global IDN adoption.

## Fireside Chat | What is CODI?

- CODI's goal is to promote digital inclusion by using language to bridge the digital divide, preserve cultures, and expand economic opportunities for speakers of underrepresented languages.
- Many languages are excluded from digital spaces, risking cultural erosion and limiting access for non-English speakers. Data-poor languages face an increased risk of becoming endangered.
- Collaboration with organizations dedicated to digital inclusion is essential to making language a central design element. Real change can be achieved through educating stakeholders, conducting research, and advocating for multilingualism in policies and digital systems. Establishing a platform for collaboration among individuals and organizations can help accelerate progress.
- CODI unites diverse groups to achieve common goals and drive tangible change in advancing digital inclusion, ensuring broader representation and participation of underrepresented languages online.

## Panel Discussion | IPv6 Uptake in SEE Region: Challenges and Opportunities

### Session Host: RIPE NCC

- Approximately 53% of networks in South Eastern Europe (SEE) have deployed IPv6, according to RIPE NCC survey. Google traffic measurements indicate that 45-50% of global internet traffic now runs on IPv6. Countries like Greece and Czech Republic have shown notable progress, with the latter consistently improving IPv6 deployment.
- The cost of maintaining dual-stack networks, reluctance from decision-makers to invest in infrastructure upgrades, and the need to replace outdated equipment remain major hurdles for full adoption. Many businesses and policymakers do not yet see the urgency of the transition, slowing deployment efforts.
- Migrating from IPv4 to IPv6 can significantly reduce costs associated with Carrier Grade NAT, which is becoming increasingly expensive due to higher operational costs and legal compliance requirements. IPv6 also improves network efficiency and lowers latency, particularly for platforms like Google, Facebook, and Microsoft, which have fully transitioned and actively optimize IPv6 traffic.
- While all RIPE NCC members can obtain IPv6 addresses, the challenge remains in ensuring effective implementation and network-wide deployment. Some countries with high IPv6 allocations still lag behind in actual deployment and usage.
- While some EU countries have mandated IPv6 adoption for state institutions in the next five to ten years, IPv6 adoption policies remain fragmented across the region. RIPE NCC continues to support operators and policymakers by providing best practices and training. Given that IPv4 addresses are fully exhausted, IPv6 is essential for long-term internet infrastructure stability. Users are encouraged to demand IPv6 support from their Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to accelerate adoption and improve connectivity performance.

## **Panel Discussion | A Deep Dive into Internet Freedom: Lessons from Freedom on the Net 2024**

### **Session Host: Freedom House**

- It is recommended that governments address the harmful impact of internet shutdowns, particularly during conflicts, to prevent further disruption and protect fundamental rights.
- Governments should be held accountable for the increasing suppression of online freedoms, including arrests for online political and religious speech, physical attacks on individuals, and the growing use of disinformation and manipulation tactics during elections.
- Efforts should be strengthened to counter government-supported influence operations and disinformation campaigns. Civil society organizations would benefit from additional resources and protection to combat online manipulation and defend freedom of expression.
- In countries where laws targeting foreign-funded civil society organizations are on the rise, it is essential to advocate for legal reforms that protect civic space. International actors should support these efforts and work against restrictive laws that undermine human rights.
- Governments are encouraged to implement stronger regulations to protect privacy and prevent the misuse of surveillance tools, ensuring that digital rights are upheld.
- There is a pressing need to challenge growing media manipulation and censorship in countries where government-controlled media distort public discourse. Protecting digital rights and press freedom should focus on safeguarding independent media and ensuring transparency in information dissemination.

## **DAY 2 - 26 NOVEMBER**

### **Panel Discussion | Investigative Media Findings on Digital Rights and Freedoms Violations in SEE Region**

#### **Session Host: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)**

- There is a need to prioritize digital literacy education and training, particularly for youth, to build resilience against misinformation. Journalists must be trained to identify and report on AI-generated and manipulated content to ensure media integrity.
- Stronger regulatory frameworks and more consistent content moderation practices are needed to ensure harmful content, like revenge porn, hate speech, and live-streamed violence, is removed quickly. Platforms must be held more accountable through increased transparency and enforcement.
- AI tools and fact-checking efforts must be more widely used to detect and debunk misinformation across digital platforms. Collaborative efforts between fact-checkers, media organizations, and AI developers are essential to improve the effectiveness of these tools.
- There is a need for greater collaboration between civil society organizations, governments, tech companies, and media outlets to protect digital rights and ensure that digital spaces are safe, inclusive, and uphold freedom of expression.

- More urgent action is required to prevent and address online violence, including femicide live-streams and exploitation, particularly targeting vulnerable groups like women and children. Laws against illegal content need to be enforced more consistently.
- There is a pressing need to regulate harmful viral trends on platforms like TikTok and prioritize youth safety. Social media platforms must enforce stricter safety policies to curb dangerous behaviors such as self-harm challenges, and ensure consistent moderation of harmful content.

## **Panel Discussion | Navigating Global and National Labor Markets: What Gigmeter Reveals about Serbian Online Platform Workers**

### **Session Host: Public Policy Research Centre**

- According to the 2023 World Bank report, up to 425 million people worldwide have registered as freelancers on digital labor platforms. However, regional trends, such as the decline in Upwork users in 2024, demonstrate the variability in platform usage across different markets.
- Gigmetar, a platform analyzing labour markets in South Eastern Europe since 2019, has revealed regional disparities in hourly rates, with Croatia leading at \$26/hour and North Macedonia averaging below \$20/hour. Serbia has the largest number of digital workers, influenced by higher unemployment rates.
- Key challenges include gender identification due to lack of explicit data, with Genderize.io used for estimation. Additionally, fake profiles remain an issue, as exemplified by Croatia's 2,000 fake profiles out of 5,000 total.
- The lack of systematic measurement and regulation of digital labour platforms, aside from initiatives like Gigmetar, highlights the need for stronger frameworks to address disparities, platform dominance by men, and education-related inequalities.
- During crises, digital labour platforms provide critical opportunities for work on global markets. This underscores the importance of improving platform governance and leveraging cross-country experiences to inform policy and market predictions.

## **Public-Private Policy Dialogue | Council of Europe Digital Partnership with Business**

### **Session Host: Council of Europe**

- Strengthening partnerships between the Council of Europe and private sector actors contributes to the promotion of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in the digital environment in the long term.
- Businesses can actively engage in Council of Europe initiatives by contributing to policy development, sharing best practices, and addressing challenges such as disinformation and content transparency.
- More targeted training and educational resources are needed to improve the understanding of digital governance among policymakers and prevent the creation of ineffective or counterproductive regulations.

- Inclusive and multistakeholder approaches in global governance processes, such as the Global Digital Compact, lay ground for integration of diverse perspectives into internet governance reforms.
- Supporting regional initiatives like the EU-Western Balkans roaming agreement and infrastructure investments contribute to economic growth and digital integration in underserved regions.
- Collaboration on innovative tools and frameworks, such as C2PA, has potential to enhance media authenticity, enable provenance tracking, and combat misinformation effectively.

### **Keynote Dialogue | AI & Emerging Tech: Preventing Misuse and Advancing Regulation**

#### **Session Host: Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)**

- Timely and effective regulation of AI and emerging technologies is essential to prevent risks to democracy, societal stability, and security. Frameworks like the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, the Council of Europe Framework Convention on AI, and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, and the Global Digital Compact are critical steps toward aligned governance.
- Disinformation, malinformation, and malicious cyber activities have escalated, impacting elections, climate change efforts, and global stability. Initiatives such as the Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change are key to countering these threats.
- Cooperation among PAM Member States, UN agencies, parliaments, law enforcement, civil society, academia, and the private sector is crucial to promote and ensure the safe utilization of AI and emerging technologies at the service of democracy and collective utility.
- PAM, in collaboration with CGS and CTED, has finalized a report on the malicious use of AI and emerging technologies by terrorist and criminal groups. The report, conceived as a “living document,” will be regularly updated and made available on the PAM and CGS websites. The report constitutes a basis for the identification of principles and criteria for the future drafting of parliamentary guidelines on the regulation of the application of AI and emerging technologies.
- Criminal organizations are increasingly targeting minors online via social media, using coded messaging, slang, and gamification tactics to recruit them for violent acts, extortion, and murder. There is a need for stronger social safety networks and effective educational programs to help youth recognize the dangers of the internet.
- PAM will continue to engage and cooperate with all relevant stakeholders, including the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and its strategic partners, to help ensure a coherent and coordinated approach towards a well-regulated technological landscape, leaving no one behind.

### **Workshop | Cyber Attacks Against Civil Society as a Critical Issue**

#### **Session Host: CyberHUB**

- Strengthening technical, human, and organizational defenses is needed to protect civil society organizations (CSOs) and independent media from increasing cyberattacks, particularly from state-backed actors.



- Comprehensive cybersecurity solutions, including training, risk management, and physical security, are needed for organizations handling sensitive data, such as investigative journalism work, to mitigate risks.
- Increased awareness and guidance on free resources, like CiviCERT, are needed to help CSOs access support and improve their cybersecurity preparedness.

## **Panel Discussion | Bridging the Gender Gap: Advancing Cybersecurity Careers for Women in South Eastern Europe**

### **Session Host: Critical Infrastructure Digitalization and Resilience (CIDR) Program**

- Building on successes achieved to date, it is crucial to actively raise awareness about cybersecurity career opportunities for women and ensure they are informed about available resources and career pathways.
- Expanding partnerships between educational institutions, the private sector, and government bodies can help create synergy and maximize the impact of existing initiatives. Partnerships like those demonstrated by the Cyber Pathways for Women (CPW) initiative, part of the Critical Infrastructure Digitalization and Resilience (CIDR) program implemented by DAI, show how collaboration can foster meaningful change. CPW has achieved significant milestones, such as developing a gender-sensitive curriculum at the University of Kragujevac in Serbia and establishing STEM and Academia Task Forces in North Macedonia. These efforts provide replicable examples of good practices for gender-inclusive growth in the cybersecurity field.
- Pushing for scholarships, internships, and mentorship programs, alongside encouraging male allies to support gender inclusion, will further ensure the retention of women and girls in cybersecurity, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive digital future.

## **Panel Discussion | Digital Regulation in Transition: Preparing the Western Balkans for the DSA and DMA**

### **Session Host: NGO 35mm**

- The Digital Services Act (DSA) needs to be implemented in a way that improves transparency, accountability, and user empowerment. Civil society should drive transparency on platforms' practices and advocate for appeal mechanisms and user rights.
- Public participation needs to be strengthened, with civil society monitoring platforms' compliance, educating the public on users' rights, and fostering engagement to ensure accountability for harmful content.
- National regulations must align with the DSA's principles and avoid overreach. Governments should refrain from adding complex requirements that could undermine the EU's approach and risk misuse in regions with weaker democratic practices.



- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) need support to comply with DSA regulations. Regional cooperation and shared resources can reduce compliance costs, while policymakers should introduce incentives like tax relief for early adoption.
- Collaboration across sectors is needed to support DSA implementation. Partnerships between educational institutions, the private sector, and governments can reduce burdens on SMEs and help create a level playing field for small businesses in the digital marketplace.

## **SEEDIG 9 RESOURCES & CONTACT INFORMATION**

- **SEEDIG Website** – [Click Here](#)
- **SEEDIG 9 Webpage & Interactive Agenda** – [Click Here](#)
- **SEEDIG 9 Youth School Webpage** – [Click Here](#)
- **SEEDIG 9 Recording**
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- **SEEDIG 9 Photos**
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  - Youth School – [Go to Flickr](#)
- **Contact Email:** [execom@seedig.net](mailto:execom@seedig.net)