

Internet Governance in South Eastern Europe

INTERNET GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENTS

Access



Serbia: 2016 statistics show a slight increase in Internet penetration rates

The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia has published the results of two surveys on the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by households, individuals, and enterprises in the country, in 2016. According to the surveys, 64.7% of the households in Serbia are connected to the Internet (an increase of 0.9% compared to 2015): 72.5% in urban areas, and 53.8% in rural areas. More than half of all households (57.8%) have broadband Internet connection, an increase of 1.8% compared to the previous year. The overall number of Internet users in the country increased by 1.4% compared to 2015, reaching 67.1% of the survey respondents. One interesting finding was that only 19.4% of the Internet users identified themselves as being users of cloud services for data storage and exchange. The survey conducted among enterprises showed that 99.8% of them have Internet connection, with 99.1% using broadband connections.

Infrastructure



Georgia: Internet Exchange Point launched

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Georgia have joined efforts and launched the country's first Internet Exchange Point (IXP). By keeping local traffic local and avoiding international links, the Georgian IXP (GIX) is aimed to contribute to improving Internet quality at national level, while reducing operational costs for providers, as well as prices for end users. GIX is also seen as a fundamental condition and a high priority for a strong and steady development of the information society within the country. In addition, the IXP is expected to help improve competition on the Georgian telecom market, by reducing entry barriers and making the market more attractive for newcomers and investors. At its launch, GIX included 12 local companies, with seven more having later express interest in joining.

Development



Moldova: Ongoing governmental initiatives aimed at strengthening the information society

In Moldova, the government has been working on several initiatives aimed at creating an enabling environment for the further development of the information society in the country. A *Start-up Moldova* initiative, led by the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications, in partnership with USAID Moldova, is up for debate in the Parliament. Its goals include the creation of a new fund for supporting information technology (IT) companies in the country, and the elimination of bureaucratic barriers in obtaining visas by foreign IT specialists. The Ministry of ICT is also in the process of preparing a public policy aimed at improving IT companies' access to financial instruments. This follows a recently adopted initiative on fiscal incentives for IT professionals for 2017–2020. In addition, two programmes on ICT universal service and broadband development, and an initiative on mandatory cybersecurity requirements for public bodies are in the final stage of approval by the government.

Development



Serbia: Study shows limited availability of and demand for open data. Government plans to publish reports from independent authorities in open format

A study published by the European Policy Centre on 'Demanding open data in Serbia' shows that the availability of open data in Serbia is limited both in terms of datasets and the number of government institutions that release their data. The study explored the extent to which think tanks and research-based civil society organisations see the value of open data and are involved in demanding open data, and found out that only few civil society entities are actively engaged with the topic. The study includes recommendations on how entities can improve their demand for open data, as well as their knowledge and use of open data sets. Suggestions are also made on how civil society groups can collaborate with other stakeholders (government, academia, private sector, technical community, and media) in demanding and utilising open data.

On the public sector side, the Serbian government launched a new website intended to become a one stop shop for the publication of annual reports from independent state authorities (mainly entities dealing with protecting and promoting human rights, fighting against corruption, and promoting accountability of public institutions and officials). The reports are to be published in an open format, allowing the information to be easily accessed and re-used.



Child safety online



SEE: Child Protection Index explores governmental practices and policies in the area of child safety online

The Child Protection Index (CPI), [a new tool](#) created jointly by World Vision and ChildPact, was launched on 28 September. The index measures government efforts to protect children, and it covers: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo*, Moldova, Romania, and Serbia. Individual country briefings look, among others, at practices and policies related to ensuring child safety online and tackling online child abuse material (mechanisms for identifying, tracking, and removing child abuse material; online tools for reporting on such content; standards and rules in relation to the categorisation of commercial content online). Recommendations are made for several countries to expand their legislation to cover such aspects, especially in relation to protecting children from exposure to, or involvement in unlawful sexual practices via electronic communication tools.

Human rights



Montenegro: Telecom operators asked to prevent the use of online messaging services on the elections day

On the day of parliamentary elections in Montenegro (16 October), the country's Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services ordered telecom operators to prevent the use of online messaging services like Viber and WhatsApp. [It was argued](#) that the order was intended to protect users from receiving 'unsolicited communications' (i.e. the legal term for spam), including mass messages sent on behalf of candidates and political parties engaged in the election process. Along these lines of reasoning, the order was based on provisions in the country's law on electronic communication, according to which the use of electronic communication tools for marketing purposes is only allowed with the prior consent of users. Telecom operators were required to prevent the use of the aforementioned services until the issuance of a new order suspending the measure. Access was restored later in the day, after polling stations closed.

Convergence



Romania: Tech startup launches country's first 3D bioprinter

A technology startup in Romania has launched the country's first 3D bioprinter, [thus marking](#) a significant regional development in additive manufacturing in the medical field. The printer is already used in research conducted by the Center for Gene and Cellular Therapies in the Treatment of Cancer (OncoGen), for the creation of samples of cartilage and experimenting with the use of epithelial cells and stem cells. The company plans to further develop the technology in order to allow the 3D printing of more vascularised and complex human tissues, such as human skin, and, later on, of organs, bones, and muscles.

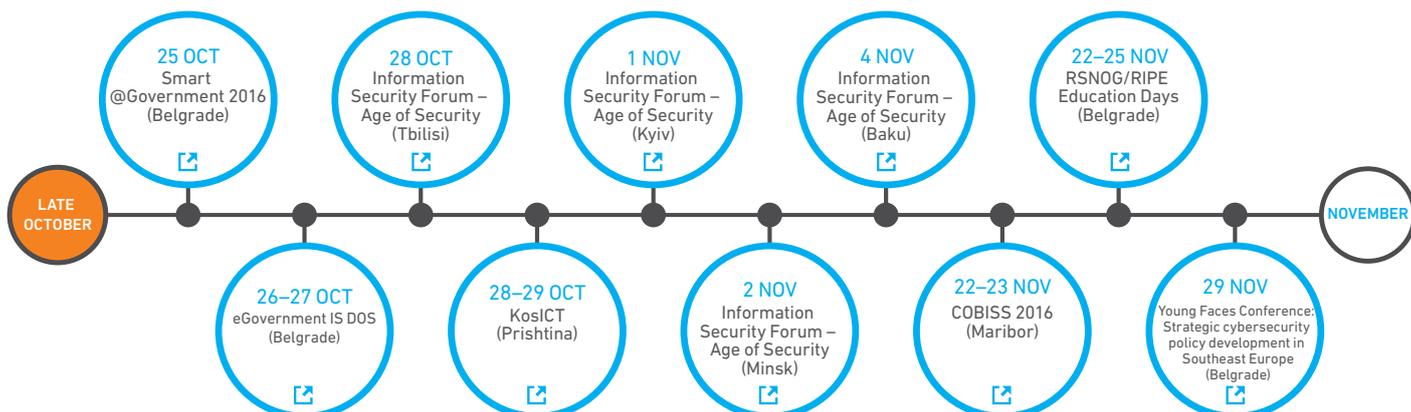
Policy making



Greece: General Secretariat of Digital Policy created to prepare a national digital policy

In Greece, a General Secretariat of Digital Policy was established, which reports directly to the country's prime minister. Created on the basis of a law adopted in May this year, the Secretariat is to be responsible for the design and preparation of an overall National Digital Policy. Other tasks include monitoring the implementation of this policy, as well as supervising and coordinating the work of different ministries with responsibilities in implementing the policy's various components. The Secretariat is also tasked with representing Greece in European and/or international fora dealing with digital policy issues.

AHEAD IN LATE OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER



EVENTS ACROSS THE REGION

Global Risk Leadership Conference – Europe

On 26–29 September, Split (Croatia) hosted the Global Risk Leadership conference, organised by MasterCard. The event featured discussions on emerging tools and techniques for minimising fraud risks in online payments and e-commerce, while maximising digital safety and security. Identity theft, data privacy, a multi-layered approach to addressing security, and trends in payment systems were some of the topics addressed. The underlying message was that user confidence and trust is the most important aspect to consider by providers of electronic payment systems, who need to develop appropriate instruments for securing their services. Replacing traditional authentication methods (such as passwords) with new techniques (such as those involving biometric authentication) was seen as one important step in this direction.

ENOG 12 / RIPE NCC Regional Meeting

On 3–4 October, the European Network Operators Group (ENOG) held its 12th meeting in Yerevan, Armenia, in conjunction with a regional meeting of the Réseaux IP Européens Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC). The event brought together over 150 participants from the Commonwealth of Independent States and Eastern Europe, as well as international guests, to discuss core operational issues and share views on the evolution of the Internet in the region. Debates revolved around challenges, experiences, and best practices in areas such as: Internet critical resources (Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6), the Domain Name System (DNS), and the IANA stewardship transition), Internet access (IXPs and Internet connectivity), cybersecurity (Computer Emergency Response Teams, mitigating Distributed Denial of Service attacks, best practices in the deployment of the DNS security extension – DNSSEC), and the Internet of Things.

Armenian Internet Governance Forum

The second annual meeting of the Armenian Internet Governance Forum, held on 5 October, in Yerevan, was organised under the overarching theme *Internet governance for sustainable and inclusive development*. The meeting featured debates on: over-the-top services and regulatory challenges, social networks as business tools, challenges in cybersecurity and possible solutions, and the implications of unverified or false information circulating in the online space. These issues were tackled from both global and national perspectives, with over 150 Armenian participants and foreign guests engaging in interactive debates and exchanges of experiences. Presentations were also delivered on: IT labour market challenges, updates regarding the .huji Internationalised Domain Name (IDN) country-code top level domain (ccTLD), personal data protection, post-transition IANA, and capacity development in Internet governance.

CENTR Registrar Day 2016

On 5 October, the Council of European National Top-Level Domain Registries (CENTR) held the third edition of its Registrar Day, hosted by the Serbian National Internet Domain Registry, in Belgrade, Serbia. The event brought together more than 80 participants (including registries and registrars) who exchanged experiences and good practices, discussed challenges and opportunities for ccTLDs in a world of generic top-level domains (gTLDs), and explored modalities for strengthening partnerships. The Registrar Day was held in the framework of CENTR's 56th General Assembly (6–7 October), which featured discussions on: implications of the IANA stewardship transition for ccTLDs; the applicability of the EU Network and Information Security Directive for registries and registrars; activities and initiatives of CENTR members; and the strategy, action plan, and budget of the organisation.

Eurocloud Forum

The EuroCloud Forum, an annual event dedicated to the future of cloud computing in Europe, moved to South Eastern Europe (SEE) for its seventh edition, held on 5–6 October, in Bucharest, Romania. Under the theme *Digital Single Market – Creating New Frontiers*, the event focused on policy, legal, and technology aspects of cloud computing: legal requirements and regulatory frameworks for cloud services; the state of the cloud sector in Europe, and trends for 2017; security, privacy and data protection in the cloud; hybrid cloud and open cloud. Two case studies from the SEE region were also presented: the private national health cloud in Slovakia, and the ICT and cloud sector in Romania. Participants included: cloud providers, start-ups, research organisations, policy makers, government representatives, and users of cloud services from across Europe.

ICANN-Studienkreis

ICANN-Studienkreis – an open network of individuals representing various stakeholders in the Internet community – met for the 16th time, on 6–7 October, in Dubrovnik, Croatia. The programme of the two-day event included discussions on topics of high interest on the global Internet governance agenda: Internet governance and the challenge of global diplomacy, the IANA stewardship transition and the new accountability mechanisms within the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), developments related to new gTLDs, Internet security, and perspectives for Internet governance processes over the next years. Co-hosted by the Croatian Academic and Research Network, the meeting also featured a presentation and discussions on the policy, legal, and commercial landscape for the development of Internet in Croatia.

Bulgaria PHP Conference

Programming languages for web development represented the focus of the second edition of the Bulgaria PHP Conference, held on 7–9 October, in Sofia. The event brought together members of the PHP community from across the SEE region, to discuss developments in the field of PHP, and share experiences and good practices. The main theme of the event was retro gaming, and the venue was customised to match this theme, with arcade machines, old PCs, and organisers dressed as Super Mario. Keynote speeches, workshops, and lightning talks tackled issues such as machine learning, rewriting legacy code, innovative applications for content management, graphs analytics, and asynchronous programming. A hackathon was also held in the framework of the conference, participants being tasked with the creation of a multiplayer web-based game with a back-end implemented with PHP.

Data Science Conference 2.0

Held on 11–12 October, in Belgrade, Serbia, the Data Science Conference was dedicated to promoting data science in the Balkan region, fostering networking within the community, and contributing to the development of the regional data science ecosystem. The event was attended by over 200 participants, who discussed how the vast amount of data generated and collected by new technologies are being used in innovative ways, from predicting successful market products, to determining the risk of disease outbreaks. The conference's programme included theoretical presentations and overviews of practical applications in areas such as: machine learning, big data, neural network learning, and data architectures and distributed systems.

EVENTS ACROSS THE REGION

**RONOG & ION
Bucharest**

On 12 October, Bucharest hosted the third meeting of the Romanian Network Operators Group [\[1\]](#) and the ION Bucharest conference [\[2\]](#) (the later organised by the Internet Society). The two events, held back to back, brought together representatives of regulatory authorities, governmental bodies, network operators, and others in the technical community. Security in the framework of the DNS was one of the main topics tackled by participants, with discussions covering aspects such as DNSSEC and encryption. Challenges, concerns, success stories, and lessons learnt in the deployment of IPv6 were also addressed, and operators were encouraged to further develop or enhance IPv6-related strategies and action plans. Additional discussions were held on ongoing developments in the field of the Internet of Things, and the opportunities and challenges they bring for network operators.

**Belgrade
Security Forum**

The seventh edition of the Belgrade Security Forum – a space for high-level discussions on security policy in SEE and beyond – was held on 12–14 October [\[1\]](#). A session on *Two-speed cybersecurity in the Western Balkans* [\[2\]](#) discussed regional approaches towards cybersecurity and explored options for enhancing strategic and legal frameworks, while ensuring transparency and following evidence-based approaches. Emphasis was placed on the need to strengthen cooperation in tackling cybersecurity challenges: among governmental bodies at national level; among governments, at regional level; and among the public and private sectors, at both national and regional level. A draft report on *Cybersecurity in the Western Balkans: Policy gaps and cooperation opportunities* [\[3\]](#) was also presented. In addition, a session on *Opening Democracy for Citizens: Open Government Partnership* [\[4\]](#) looked into the role of open data for greater government transparency, civil society inclusiveness, civic tech eco-systems, and more efficient commerce. Meaningful access to public data and a proper regulatory framework for open data were underlined as some of the key missing components.

**Ukrainian Internet
Governance Forum**

The seventh annual meeting of the Ukrainian Internet Governance Forum [\[1\]](#) was held on 14 October, in Kyiv. The event gathered over 130 participants from the local Internet community, as well as foreign guests, for a full day of discussions on Internet-related issues. Topics addressed included: cybersecurity (legislative frameworks, industry approaches, and human rights aspects); rights and freedoms online; protection of intellectual property rights; education in the digital age; the domain name market in Ukraine. The role of the state in Internet governance processes was discussed in a rather atypical session, framed as a 'duel' between two speakers with opposing views. The meeting also had a capacity building dimension, with presentations and discussions on the broader Internet governance ecosystem, its current status, and prospects for the near future.

Sinergija 16

The 13th edition of Sinergija [\[1\]](#), one of the largest conferences in SEE dedicated to ICTs, was held on 17–19 October, in Belgrade, and was organised by Microsoft Serbia. The conference's focus was placed on the continuous evolution of digital technologies, and their impact on the economy, at large, and on human lives. Large and small ICT companies, decision makers, IT experts, students, and end users gathered for three days of presentations and discussions on a wide range of ICT-related topics, including: developments in cloud computing and the Internet of Things; big data; identity management, authentication, and data protection; cybersecurity threats and challenges; risks and innovation in digital business.

**Spam –
The joy of fools**

On 20 October, the Serbian National Internet Domain Registry, in collaboration with the Museum of Science and Technology, organised a panel discussion titled 'Spamming crazy joy', in Belgrade [\[1\]](#). Held within the framework of the European cybersecurity month, the event was dedicated to exploring various spam-related issues: technical aspects and approaches taken by ISPs for dealing with this phenomenon; legal and regulatory frameworks tackling unsolicited electronic communications; the cybersecurity implications of spam, especially in the context of mass spam campaigns used for the distribution of malware; the limits of using mass electronic communications for marketing purposes; and education and awareness raising as key instruments for mitigating the harmful effects of spam.

**Bosnia and
Herzegovina
Internet
Governance
Forum**

The second annual meeting of the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) Internet Governance Forum [\[1\]](#) was held on 21 October, in Sarajevo. Under the theme *BH Internet – Open and secure?*, the meeting tackled three main issues: universal access and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in ensuring an open and accessible Internet; violent extremism and terrorism on the Internet, and the right of reporting; and practices and challenges related to empowering the exercise of human rights and the promotion of innovation and economic growth in the context of the digital economy. Participants from civil society, government, academia, and the private sector engaged in very lively discussions on these topics. One feature of the event was the inclusion of persons with disabilities, who were encouraged to actively participate and share their perspectives on the topics discussed.

**Software Freedom
Kosova Conference**

Held on 21–23 October, in Prishtina, Kosovo*, the seventh edition of the Software Freedom Kosova Conference [\[1\]](#) was attended by over 300 participants, including developers, academics, private companies, and users committed to promoting software freedom, free culture, and open knowledge. The event featured workshops, trainings, and talks on the basics of free and open source software, and the advantages and opportunities the concept brings to businesses, the government, and the non-profit sector (in areas such as open government data, education, commercial practices, and community programmes). Specific topics covered included: the security of data and communications, technologies for secure and privacy-preserving identity management, data visualisation applications, business models in open source and design, user-centered designs in open source software, and the use of open source technologies for social change.



Join us in preparing the next issue. Send us [\[1\]](#) updates about Internet governance developments and/or events in your countries. Comments on this issue are also welcome.