

Summary discussion:

How to overcome IG policy silos on global and national levels

This theme is the first of three discussed in the build-up to the Geneva Internet Conference. The second theme discussed [Whom do I contact if I want to raise my Internet governance \(IG\) concern?](#), while the third focused on [Evidence and measurement in IG: What sort of data and numbers are we talking about?](#) Each theme was introduced during a webinar, followed by two weeks of forum discussions. The webinar digest and discussion of the first theme is available [here](#), while the link to the survey questions to gather data on the policy silos issue is [here](#). The following summarises the [forum discussion on how to overcome IG policy silos at a national and global level](#).

The question of policy silos is one of the most pressing challenges in Internet governance (IG). Parallel debates take place, at the risk of policy incoherence and turf battles among the forums discussing the same issues. We therefore asked: What are our countries' experiences? To what extent is it possible to overcome policy silos? What practical approaches can be used to create IG policy coherence – examples, case studies, anecdotes?

The policy silos challenge seems to be widespread. For example, from a **US perspective**, **Ginger Paque** says that there is 'a forest of silos'. She believes that maybe we need all of these silos to address individual issues, rather than one huge silo where we will only get suffocated if the grain spills down on us all at once. 'But then we need to open connecting doors and pathways between these silos, with a system for clear communication and discussion. That, to me, is why the UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is a valuable space for discussion without commitment. We need to take this risk-free body seriously, and improve it to become an organised sharing and updating resource for Internet governance strategies and priorities.'

Vladimir Radunović also believes that the IGF is a viable option for bridging policy silos. Speaking about **Serbia**, IG-related issues are heavily present in national political life, and are dealt with by various bodies, including the National Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, and the various ministries.

Yet, there is no apparent coordination among them, with the exception of the occasional thematic event organised by either some of the institutions or by NGOs.

Yet, IGFs can also be a viable option at a local level. Mr Radunović believes that on a local level, a strong and continuous IGF with intersessional dialogue and a bottom-up shaped agenda is much needed, as well as a national multistakeholder body – similar to the CGI in Brazil - that would help internal mapping of issues and who does what and how, and help the information exchange within public institutions and among all stakeholders.

Barbara Rosen Jacobs is in agreement, as she explains in her comment from a **Netherlands** perspective. IG issues are mostly dealt with within the Ministry of Economic Affairs, with cybercrime being dealt with within the Ministry of Safety and Justice, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decides on matters related to the freedom of the Internet. Since the country's regional IGF is very active in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the NL IGF might be a good opportunity to overcome policy silos in the Netherlands.

Is the IGF the only viable option? **Poncelet Ijeleji from The Gambia** believes that all the main issues are really multifaceted indeed; however, we have to take cognisance of what is actually on the ground and how IG issues are dealt with in each country. He believes that at national level, the country's ICT ministry can act as an important liaison between the government and all stakeholders, with the aim of reaching consensus that can turn into policy.

Foncham Denis Doh says that in Cameroon, one of the important steps the government undertook was the creation of the National Agency for Information and communication Technology (ANTIC). Although it has had many achievements, the agency's main weak point is its failure to adequately involve the other stakeholders in the process. 'They need to understand that IG is a multistakeholder affair and so they need to encourage and consider the participation of others.'

Hamza Ben Mehrez, from Tunisia, says that by engaging in the Open Governance Partnership (OGP) initiative in 2011, Tunisia sought to promote transparent governance by committing to respect and deliver the action plan of the Open Governance Declaration. Hamza believes that to establish a new road map for more inclusive IG in Tunisia, policymakers must devise institutional reforms that target the lack of transparency and bureaucratic state deficiencies concerning the government's information sharing.

Creating a policy-specific or theme-specific place or framework to discuss important issues is important, but it is just as important to make that place known, says **David Rüfenacht from Switzerland**. 'With so many different actors in IG, the increasing importance of the Internet in our daily lives and its tendency to evolve as technology changes, the challenge, in my opinion, is to create a place, a framework or a procedure rather than an all inclusive institution that might be able to deal with today's issues yet rust as soon as it is called into creation.'

When discussing policy silos, the involvement of stakeholders seems to play a major part. **James Mbungyuh from Cameroon** says that IG policies are determined by a government office who are not, unfortunately, very active in the process. The level of awareness among Internet users on legal matters and its socio-economic impact is also very low. He attributes the low level of participation from stakeholders to an insufficient level of communication from governments, and asks about ways civil society can make a change in this scenario.

Similarly, **Stephanie Borg Psaila** says that **Malta** has a very ambitious National Digital Strategy, in which a number of stakeholders, including the regulator, the government's ICT agency, and business groups, are involved in making this initiative a good multistakeholder model. The stakeholder group lagging behind - and not only when it comes to the national strategy - is civil society. When it comes to the term IG, this is a fairly unknown concept, even among active stakeholders. Perhaps, terms like 'digital policy' or 'digital economy' are more commonly used in a local setting.

Baudouin Schombe from **DR Congo**, believes that multisectoral consultations within a framework, bringing together all stakeholders at the national level, are crucial to help identify the various IG issues. Common key questions can be then discussed at the regional level, feeding into the global forum. Although each stakeholder group has different concerns, each has a precise role.