

Internet Governance in South Eastern Europe

A monthly overview of developments and activities related to Internet governance and digital policy in South Eastern Europe and the neighbouring area.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENTS

Domain Name System



In **Romania**, several developments occurred over the past two months with regard to .ro - the country's top-level domain (ccTLD). In December 2016, the RoTLD registry announced the introduction of an annual maintenance fee for .ro domain names, starting 1 July 2017. In reaction, several registrars sent a letter to RoTLD and the Ministry of Communications and Information Society, asking for public consultations on the details of the measure. At the request of the ministry, the National Institute for Research and Development in Informatics (the entity hosting RoTLD) annulled its decision. Meanwhile, the ministry announced plans to elaborate a law project on the administration of .ro, and launched a public consultation.

Also in **Romania**, privacy and data protection concerns were raised following an announcement that the National Agency for Fiscal Administration would conclude an agreement with the National Institute for Research and Development in Informatics on the sharing of information regarding the registrants of .ro domain names. The Ministry of Communications and Information Society reacted saying that any such data transfer can only be done with the consent of the data subject. The Data Protection Authority also noted that registrants should be informed of any data transfer, and announced that it would open an investigation.

Imena.bg, the registry operator for **Bulgaria's** ccTLD, has launched the sunrise period for the registration of domain names under the .6r Internationalised Domain Name (IDN). The three month period is intended to allow the registration of specific categories of domain names (reserved names; names representing countries, and regions and municipalities in Bulgaria; etc.), as well as the placement on a 'registration queue' of domain names already registered under .bg, and of domain names requested by trademark or other rights holders.

Convergence



'Telecom operators suffer losses because of the over-the-top (OTT) services' – VivaCell MTS, one of **Armenia's** main telecom providers, underlined during a meeting with the country's Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technologies. The company stated that users increasingly prefer OTT services to the detriment of traditional telecom ones, but that providers of such services use the existing Internet infrastructure 'without bringing any income to the state or to the operators'. The minister pointed out that this situation is common around the world, and that telecom operators should focus on 'invest[ing] in new technologies which will ensure the usage of new services'.

Taxi drivers in **Croatia** are protesting against Uber, asking authorities to ban the platform from operating within the country. According to Croatian authorities, Uber is registered in the country solely for marketing and advertising activities, but the Uber application has been used by partner drivers to find potential clients. This has led to substantive fines being imposed on such drivers for providing public passenger transportation services without the necessary license. Taxi drivers find these measures insufficient and ask for a total ban against Uber.

Infrastructure



The **Georgian** parliament published a series of draft laws aimed to amend and enhance the country's legislation in the field of electronic communications. Some of the proposed amendments are intended to respond to a decision taken by the Constitutional Court in April 2016 against the unrestricted access to telecommunications and Internet data by the Georgian security agency. Small and medium sized telecom operators have expressed concerns over their ability to implement the proposed requirements, as well as over the responsibilities to be entrusted to the new 'Operational-Technical Agency of Georgia'.

Cybercrime



On 25 January, **Greece** ratified the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and its Protocol on Xenophobia and Racism. The Convention on Cybercrime, formally adopted by the Council of Europe in 2001, is the first international treaty dealing with crimes committed via the Internet and other computer networks. The Additional Protocol, adopted in 2003, concerns the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through Internet and other computer systems.

A 31 years old **Ukrainian** hacker, Sergey Vovenko, was sentenced to 41 months in prison in the USA, on charges of aggravated identity theft and conspiracy to commit wire fraud. The hacker operated a botnet comprising more than 13,000 computers infected with malware, to gain unauthorised access to computers belonging to individuals and companies, and steal bank accounts details, and debit and credit card numbers. Vovenko also used several online hacking forums to traffic the stolen data.



Child safety online



In **Croatia**, the Centre for Missing and Exploited Children published the results of a research which showed that primary school children spend up to five hours a day on the Internet, 55% of them access the Internet via mobile phones, and 90% have a profile on Facebook. [The Step by Step Parents Association](#) published a handbook on Internet safety for parents, [and an online portal](#) was launched with the aim of assisting parents in keeping their children safe online.

A study conducted by the **Bulgarian** Safer Internet Center [shows](#) that children are spending more time online at increasingly younger ages. Although children are equipped with technical and digital skills, they do not necessarily use such skills to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Internet or to respond proactively to online risks.

E-commerce



In **Romania**, the e-commerce market increased with 30% in 2016 compared to 2015, reaching a total estimated value of over €1.8 billion. According to GPeC [this figure](#) represents tangible goods sold online, and does not include services, plane tickets, event tickets, hotel reservations, travel, etc. On average, Romanians spent €5 million daily for online shopping. In terms of online payment methods, Romanians prefer cash on delivery (90% of orders are paid this way), followed online payments by card (6-7%), and other types of payment such as online banking and ams (3%).

Croatia's first online business-to-business platform for the marketing and commercialisation of agricultural products 'Crone' is to become operational at the end of February. [In its initial phase](#), the platform will provide information about, and products from entrepreneurs represented in the country's largest local cluster of small farmers - 'GoGreen'. It will later expand to include other producers. Crone is aimed to contribute to eliminating the barriers that Croatian agricultural startups have when accessing foreign markets.

Economic – other



In **Serbia**, the fees related to the processing and publishing of electronic financial statements, by the Business Register Agency (APR), can be paid online, via credit cards, [starting 31 January](#). Until this date, the fees were paid via electronic banking, but the delivery of electronic reports with the proof of payment were problematic. Now, the fees are automatically associated with the particular financial report sent to processing.

In **Albania**, search engine Gjirafa has launched a startup incubator for Internet entrepreneurs. Gjirafa Lab [initiated](#) with assistance from the US Agency for International Development, is aimed to contribute to consolidating the Internet economy in the region, especially in Kosovo, Albania, and Republic of Macedonia.

Capacity development



In **Serbia**, the government has decided to introduce 'Computer science and ICT' as a compulsory subject for fifth grade elementary school students. The subject will be taught for one hour per week. [The measure](#) is to become applicable in September 2017, and is intended to help children develop algorithmic thinking, and acquire programming skills and knowledge, while building on their existing knowledge.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the Sarajevo Public Library purchased [the latest model](#) of the electronic book reader Kindle, enabling its customers to read e-books from dedicated digital platforms such as Amazon. In addition, e-readers have the ability to convert text into speech, enabling people with certain disabilities to have easier access to library resources.

Development – other issues



In **Bulgaria**, a court ruling obliging the government to introduce voting machines in every polling stations for the upcoming parliamentary elections in March has been received with concerns. [While the country's interim Interior minister](#) announced that the court ruling would be complied with, experts from the Electoral Commission are worried that problems may appear during the electoral process, because of the short time available to procure the machines, test them, and train both staff and citizens on how to use them.

Freedom of expression



In the context of large street protests that took place in **Romania** in February, [the country's Ministry of Internal Affairs](#) published a list of journalists and politicians that have, allegedly, promoted the demonstrations via social media platforms. [The action](#) was strongly criticised by civil society organisations, [which viewed](#) the list as 'an attempt to intimidate and exercise pressure over critical voices in the society'. In their view 'freedom of expressions and freedom of assembly are constitutional rights, and authorities are obliged to protect such rights, not contest them or condemn their exercise by citizens'.

The Ministry of Information Policy in **Ukraine** has sent a letter to Facebook asking the company 'to develop a verification mechanism for unreliable news'. [The letter underlines](#) concerns about 'threats facing freedom of speech and democracy in the form of dissemination of false and unconfirmed news'. Facebook, which accounts for around 3 million users in Ukraine, is required to designate a team that will help Ukrainian authorities 'in developing mechanisms to control fake news', taking into account 'similar mechanisms [that] are already being developed [...] in other countries'.

Privacy and data protection



In **Moldova**, public policy makers are reportedly [discussing](#) changes to a proposed 'big brother' law that has been under debate in the country's parliament since April 2016. The initial version of the draft law would broaden the obligations of electronic communications service providers to collect and retain data, increase digital surveillance measures, and enable authorities to block websites 'containing information that urges hatred or ethnic, racial or religious discrimination, to hostility or violence'. Civil society organisations have been vocal [in criticising](#) the proposed legislation for its potential to lead to unjustified mass surveillance, and asked for revisions that would bring the law in line with international standards.

EVENTS ACROSS THE REGION



Infrastructure and technologies

Domain Forum Bulgaria | 10 February | Sofia, Bulgaria

Held for the sixth time, the forum brought together around 50 Bulgarian and international guests, for a full day of discussions on issues related to the domain name industry and broader Internet developments. Two main panels addressed aspects related to the impact of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs), the global and regional Internet governance ecosystem, and the role of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

Turkey DNS Forum | 15–16 February | Istanbul, Turkey

The third edition of the forum, organised annually by ICANN, brought together Internet domain registries, registrars, registrants, service providers, and other interested stakeholders, for discussions on developments in the domain name industry. Some of the main topics

covered were: emerging trends in the domain name marketplace and IDN deployment; the security and stability of the Domain Name System; and the impact of local regulations – especially in the areas of privacy and intellectual property rights – on the domain name business.

Albania Artificial Intelligence | 22 February | Tirana, Albania

Organised by the Albania Machine Learning & Artificial Intelligence Community, the event featured discussions on issues related to developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). The opportunities and challenges brought by AI technologies in areas such as economic development, the labour market, safety, security, and privacy were explored by participants. The need to prepare new generations for the requirements of a new digital economy powered by AI systems was emphasised.



Cybersecurity

How S@fe is Your Business? | 2 February | Nicosia, Cyprus

The conference, organised by the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Cyprus Neuroscience and Technology Institute, revolved around cyber risks faced by companies in the digital economy. The underlying message was that a combination of measures is necessary to address cyber risks: promoting a better understanding of cybercrime and cybersecurity issues; developing appropriate mechanisms for protection from cyber risks; and strengthening co-operation among various stakeholders.

Capture the Flag Cybersecurity Competition | 4–5 February | Yerevan, Armenia

Organised by 1guard and Enterprise Incubator Foundation, with support from Microsoft Armenia, Monitis, and the Innovative Solutions and Technologies Center, the competition was aimed to promote cybersecurity awareness in Armenia. It brought together over 120 participants, grouped in 28 teams assigned with tasks of different difficulty levels. Given the success of the competition, organisers were encouraged to run it 2-3 times a year.



Cybercrime

Public-private Cooperation to Address the Issues of Trust and Legal Reform in Ukraine | 8–9 February | Kyiv, Ukraine

The workshop, organised by the Cybercrime@EAP III project of the Council of Europe (CoE), focused on issues related to communication and information sharing between local Internet service providers (ISPs) and law enforcement agencies. The discussions underlined that increased trust between the government and the private sector can be achieved by focusing on internationally recognised principles and best practices of public-private cooperation in cybercrime and electronic evidence.

and of other state bodies in implementing the legal provisions and ensuring actors comply with its provisions.

Workshops on Inter-agency and International Cooperation for Search, Seizure and Confiscation of Online Crime Proceeds | 16–17 February | Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Organised in the framework of the Council and Europe and European Union project on Cooperation on Cybercrime under the Instrument of Pre-accession (iPROCEEDS), the workshop was aimed to assist national authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the preparation of inter-agency cooperation protocols and domestic protocols for international sharing of intelligence and evidence in the context of fighting against cybercrime. Participants were briefed on how they can implement auditable, simple, and effective procedure for sharing of information and evidence in the search, seizure, and confiscation of online crime proceeds.

Second Cybersecurity Meetup | 13 February | Belgrade, Serbia

The second Serbian Cybersecurity Meetup, organised by the Share Foundation, discussed the implementation of the Law on information security, and the role of Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). Discussions revolved around the responsibilities of the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, of a national CERT,



Online education

New Technologies in Education Show 2017 | 9–11 February | Belgrade, Serbia

The event, organised by the British Council, in partnership with the British Embassy in Serbia, the Serbian government, and several other partners, was aimed to showcase the role of ICTs in improving the quality of education. Participants had the opportunity to explore modalities for modernising the learning processes and make them more adequate for preparing young people for the digital world of work.

International Conference on E-Education, E-Business, E-Management and E-Learning (IC4E) | 5-6 February | Crete, Greece

IC4E brought together scientists, scholars, engineers, students, and industry representatives from around the world, to present ongoing research activities in the areas of online education, e-commerce and other e-business processes, and e-management. Participants discussed developments in the use of ICT in educational and business processes, and explored possibilities for business and research collaboration.

EVENTS ACROSS THE REGION



Development

DigiCode Youth Programming Contest | 11–13 February | Gyumri, Armenia

Gyumri Technology Center held its third annual DigiCode Youth Programming Contest, organised in partnership with the Union of Information Technology Enterprises, the Enterprise Incubator Foundation, and Huawei. The contest aimed to develop algorithmic thinking and creative abilities among school children, and turn them from game consumers to game makers. Out of a total of 360 applicants, 40 pupils reached the final phases of the contest and competed in the following categories: 'Best game', 'Best virtual laboratory', 'Best design', and 'Best idea'.

11th National Conference on E-health | 16 February | Sofia, Bulgaria

Representatives of public and private healthcare organisations, health-insurance companies, and public authorities attended the conference, organised by the ICT Media and e-Health Bulgaria Foundation, and supported by several other partners. Participants discussed the progress made by the e-health system in Bulgaria, as per the European and national priorities, and looked at: the extent to which the national platform for e-health has been built, the current facts and tendencies in the e-health sector, and European policies and strategies for the current year.



Freedom of expression

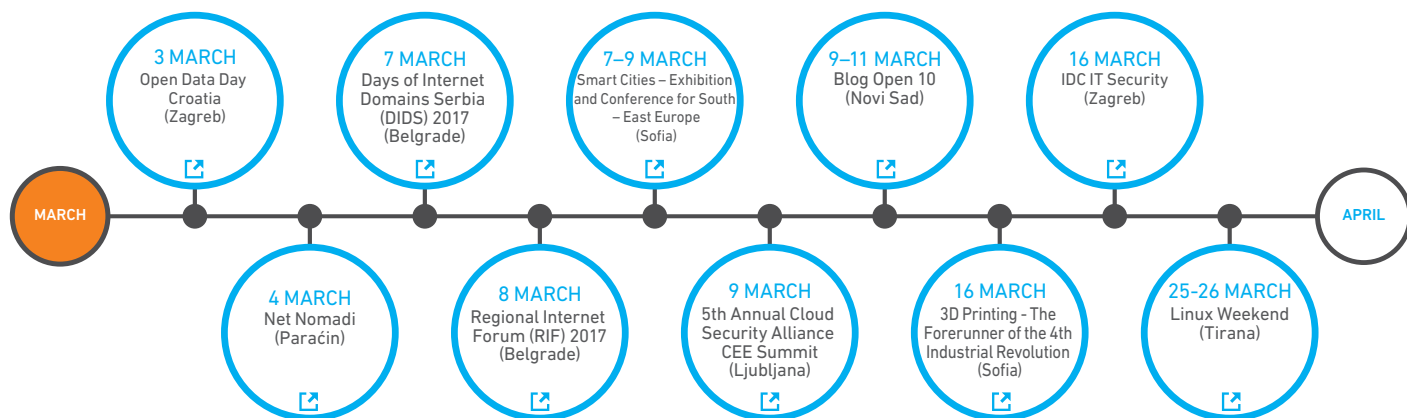
Fact-Checking and Influence of New Technologies on Journalism | 31 January | Skopje, Macedonia

Organised by the Metamorphosis Foundation, the conference featured discussions on possible approaches for addressing the issue of 'fake news'. Discussions revolved around the role of media fact-checking and the importance of respecting journalistic standards, as well as on the need to place more emphasis on educating users and empowering them with the ability to recognise truthful and quality information. It was also underlined that media literacy has an important role to play in making a difference between news, facts, fiction, and propaganda online.

Youth and the Prevention of Violent Extremism: Workshop on Perspectives from the Black Sea Region | 1–3 February | Chisinau, Moldova

Organised by the Austrian Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with the support of the OSCE Transnational Threats Department and the OSCE Mission to Moldova, the workshop brought together around 14 young individuals from Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, and the Russian Federation, for discussions on violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism. It was underlined that co-operation between governments, civil society, and the private sector is key in combating online hate speech and online violent extremism.

AHEAD IN MARCH



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.