



Overview

The International Conference of Digital Platform Governance hosted on 17-19th June 2024 in Dubrovnik, Croatia brought together more than 80 regulatory bodies with UNESCO's diverse and global stakeholder community. This unparalleled event both in scope and focus, also marks the establishment of the **Global Forum of Networks (GFN)**. The Forum is an international platform convening regulatory authorities from across the world with the aim to foster human-right respecting approaches, build a common space for dialogue and facilitate exchange of good practices for governing digital platforms.

The Conference as well as the establishment of the Forum constitute tangible milestones in the implementation of **UNESCO on the Governance of Digital Platforms**. In line with the guidelines core values and principles of multi-stakeholder cooperation and engagement, they provide unprecedented mechanisms for collective actions to safeguard freedom of expression and the rights to access to information in the context of digital platforms governance and minimizing the fragmentation of the digital space. They also offered common space for comparative dialogue on ongoing governance efforts such as the European Union Digital Services Act, the UK Online Safety Act, among others.

This document outlines some of the Conference key take aways and the next steps identified by the GFN as suggested by conference attendees and regulators. It combines insights from the side events (which took place on 17th June), as well as public panels (on 18th June) and roundtable discussions hosted under Chatham House rule (on 19th June). Any attributed quote or comment that this document may contain has been expressed on the record, in a public session or interview. The document includes three annexes: selected quotes from regulatory authorities, the list of GFN members and list of regulatory authorities which participated in the event.

Common Challenges and Shared Commitment

Following their [2023 statement](#) in which they expressed , their commitment to promote independent online content regulatory systems and their agreement with the objectives of UNESCO's work in the digital environment, seven regulatory networks reconvened in Dubrovnik with their national members as well as UNESCO's global stakeholder community. They started the discussions by outlining their changing mandates in the context of transnational digital disruptions and the need to collectively address a series of global challenges.

- **Diversity of Regulatory, Remits Arrangements and Gaps**

Regulators acknowledged that the digital governance ecosystem consists of a wide array of diverse stakeholders, bodies, and institutional arrangements. This diversity is also reflected within the regulator community whose organisational structures, resources and mandates vary significantly between countries and regions. Furthermore, in many parts of the world, significant regulatory gaps remain with regards to the governance of digital platforms with few or no elements of a national regulatory framework and insufficient or non-existent legal and institutional structures and regulatory capacity. The regulatory networks present at the conference also represent a range of regulatory remits. Some regulators and their Networks focus solely on media and media literacy, others on communications more broadly or online safety. Therefore, participants stressed the necessity to respect national and regional differences and develop cooperation mechanisms including capacity building ones which take into account the requirements and structures of each partner. Finally, while they recognised the importance of local context, capacity and practices, they also reiterated their commitment to strive for greater coherence to avoid further fragmentation and abstain from establishing conflicting approaches which could compromise human rights.

- **Lack of Evidence and Good Practices**

While regulators recognized significant developments in the governance of digital platforms including a series of regional statutory frameworks as well as global guiding principles such as the UNESCO Guidelines, they also stressed the lack of evidence with regards to the effectiveness of safety measures to safeguard freedom of expression while preventing harms online. Similarly, the Guidelines represent a living document, which is subject to periodic reviews and updates, including in consideration with lessons learned from their implementation. Therefore, regulatory authorities highlighted the need to support, gather and share existing and new research to identify good practices and risk mitigation strategies, monitor implementation, and report incidents, in all cases considering specific contexts and regions in which regulation is being implemented.

- **Asymmetrical Relationships between Stakeholders and Regions**

Compared to other relevant actors in the digital space, platforms hold significant power in terms of resources, access to data and means for action. There is a twofold asymmetry, both in terms of systems, resources and regulation, and in relation to Global North countries where more resources are deployed than in the Global South. This asymmetry is also reflected in how platforms allocate resources and run their local operations. While platforms cater to a diverse global audience with varying

cultures, languages and dialects, the vast majority of their compliance efforts to date - ranging from implementing effective and sustainable content moderation systems to their engagement with local authorities including regulators - have been directed towards a small number of wealthy regions. This situation, which was highlighted by many regulators, has also been well documented by a number of civil society organisations and research institutes part of the [I4T Knowledge Network](#).

- **Emergency and Enhanced-Risks Situations (including Elections)**

Many regulators also expressed the necessity to further establish escalation systems for emergency situations. Elections were identified as a particularly sensitive period and they reiterated the importance of enhanced means of communication (between regulators, users and platforms) and risk assessment process for the integrity of the electoral cycle in the lead-up to and during major national election events. They also considered other situations which would justify rapid-response and direct communication mechanisms and suggested to clarify the conditions under which emergency procedures should be applied.

Against this backdrop, they reiterated their commitment to protect and promote fundamental freedoms and advance international human rights standards, in order to strengthen independent regulatory systems and promote transparency, accountability, due diligence, and user empowerment in their regulatory work, in line with the principles of the Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms. They reaffirmed the availability of their respective networks and organizations to further consolidate and develop the Global Forum of Networks. Finally, they acknowledged that **the GFN is a useful platform to commonly address these key challenges and increase their collective ability to hold digital platforms accountable and effectively regulate the digital space in a human rights preserving manner.**

Next Steps and Recommendations

Over the next two years (2024-2026), UNESCO will continue to facilitate the Global Forum of Networks core activities with the objectives to enable GFN members collective actions, consolidate its organisational structures, ensure its sustainability beyond 2026 and use its convening power to integrate the GFN into the broader UNESCO multistakeholder dialogues and initiatives. The Organisation will also support the development of plans for periodical GFN Conferences providing inputs on the programme and enabling the meaningful inclusion of other stakeholder groups. In parallel, UNESCO offers to leverage the power of its various initiatives and programmes including [Social Media 4 Peace](#) to increase and – where appropriate- monitor digital platforms’ meaningful engagement and efforts towards their initial commitments in support of independent regulatory authorities.

The members of the Global Forum of Networks also considered a series of concrete activities to support regulators across the world in the implementation of the UNESCO Guidelines and with a view to gradually improve the governance of digital platforms over time.

- 1) **Evidence-Based Approach and Engagement with Researchers.** Acknowledging the existing knowledge gaps and lack of evidence, GFN members agreed on the importance to deepen their connections with “knowledge producers” including I4T Knowledge Network think tanks and research centres. They suggested to systematically engage them in their convenings and provide them with enhanced opportunities to present and discuss their findings to regulatory authorities.

- 2) **Global Dialogue complemented by Regional and Issue-Specific Discussions.** Recognising diversity of cultures, capacities and practices, GFN members expressed their interest in hosting together with UNESCO and in parallel to the global Internet for trust dialogue, region specific workshops to address the unique needs and requirements of various local contexts. These workshops will have the dual objective of developing local, national and regional roadmaps to implement the Guidelines while strengthening communication channels between key stakeholders including national authorities, vulnerable communities and regional platform representatives. Furthermore, regulators considered the opportunity of establishing cross-regional working groups on selected topics to jointly address global problems.
- 3) **Development and Participation in a Global Governance Ecosystem.** With the aim to contribute to the development of global and inclusive governance ecosystem for the digital space, regulators indicated their wish for the GFN to incorporate different visions and a broad spectrum of perspectives. They suggested to establish new mechanisms for engagement as well as increase their interactions with other relevant actors responsible for the implementation of the Guidelines including for example electoral managerial organisations, self or co-regulatory bodies as well as other regulatory authorities whose mandate cover adjacent and related fields such as market competition or data and privacy.
- 4) **Observatory of Regulatory Arrangements and Jurisprudence.** Considering the rapid development of regulatory frameworks and emerging jurisprudence affecting the governance of the digital space, GFN members suggested to create a global observatory to record statutory and non-statutory arrangements as well as decisions and interpretations taken by regulatory bodies on subjects related to digital platforms. This public database should be freely accessible to all actors and stakeholder groups in developed and developing countries.
- 5) **Joint Media and Information Literacy Campaign.** GFN members highlighted their increased engagement and actions (e.g. working groups, regional campaigns) towards media and information literacy (MIL) and user empowerment. They considered these efforts not only complementary to their traditional regulatory roles but also essential for building resilience in the online environment. Therefore, they suggested to jointly launch a global MIL campaign emphasizing that it should be adapted to the sociocultural realities of each region worldwide where it will be disseminated. This campaign would provide citizens with the tools to identify issues related to the governance of digital platforms, such as disinformation or hate speech, while considering the specific contexts in which these challenges arise.
- 6) **Shared experiences of global transparency metrics and risk assessment standards.** Regulators stressed the importance of creating a shared understanding of some of the Guidelines overarching principles and mechanisms. For example, they promised to share work being done to develop common metrics for (meaningful) digital platform transparency reporting with other GFN members; and to discuss common standards on what constitutes a sufficient and necessary risk assessment for digital platform, which will include considerations of the actual or potential human rights impacts of digital platform operations.
- 7) **Global Rapid-Response Mechanisms.** In line with the Guidelines principles and considering the enhanced risks in the contexts of violence against children, armed conflicts and crisis, regulators wished to clarify the conditions and requirements for the establishment of regional and global early warning systems and rapid responses mechanisms to help detect and prevent harm to individuals' physical safety.

Recognising the diversity of GFN members and considering its informal non-binding nature, none of the activities listed above would constitute a compulsory requirement to participation in the Global Forum. They could be carried out by all members or on an opt-in basis. Similarly, some objectives may be achievable in the short to medium term while others may require further consolidation of the GFN operations and structures.

Contacts

This draft document was prepared for the attention and feedback of the Global Forum of Networks members by UNESCO's Freedom of expression and safety of journalists (FEJ) directorate.

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Annex 1 - Selected Quotes



“The non-governance of the actions of the big-tech giants affects us in several ways. The African continent already face the brain drain and the data drain in the context of the ultra-rapid development of technology.”

Ms. Latifa Akharbach, President of the African Communication Regulation Authorities Network (ACRAN) and President of the Moroccan High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HACA)



“If we are all asking [platforms] to measure the same things, if we can all agree on what particular measurements reveal then that makes it easier for the platforms to comply. It also makes it easier for us to follow trends in the industry generally and to even generate comparative data over time between us.”

Ms. Camilla Bustani, Director, International at Ofcom, Global Online Safety Regulators Network representative (GOSRN)



“We look forward to building up these collaborative spaces on a global level and to try to reach coherence in protecting human rights and countering hate speech.”

Ms. Mònica Duran Ruiz, Executive Secretary of the Platform of Ibero-American Audiovisual Regulators (PRAI) and Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya (CAC)



“In our respective countries we are facing the threats to democracy and basic human freedoms. We all are witness to unpleasant and often abusive events in terms of content which violates democracy and which democracy holds as separate: freedom of expression. This has brought us to a common denominator in the age that we live in where technology is running at an immense speed. We must take action. The Mediterranean Network of Audiovisual Regulators will play an active role in this Global Forum. By sharing regional experiences and challenges, we can contribute to a united approach to digital governance. This collaboration will allow us to develop more effective and secure policies that meet the needs of all digital users.”

Ms. Armela Krasniqi, President of the Mediterranean Regulatory Authorities Network (MNRA) and Head of the Albanian Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA)



"We need to learn from each other, share resources, and share best practices. We need a consistent, coherent and efficient governance of digital platforms that is compliant with freedom of expression principles."

Mr. Stanislav Matějka, Vice-Chairperson of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA)



"The challenges are enormous. We need to face them at the global level. I hope we will all contribute to establish a minimum standard of accountability of platforms. The EU is making an unprecedented effort to regulate the digital platforms and ERGA stands ready to share the experience of the European media regulators in this field."

Mr. Giacomo Lasorella, Chairman of the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) and President of the Italian Communications Authority (AGCOM)



"We recognize the absolutely essential nature of dialogue between stakeholders, particularly between regulators and digital platforms. These platforms can potentially be an asset for strengthening social ties, providing broader access to culture and education, and contributing to economic development. However, they also pose considerable challenges, as their misuse can destabilize and challenge our democracies and social cohesion, notably through the development and amplification of sometimes long-standing phenomena, such as information manipulation, or other threats to the public interest: incitement to hatred, glorification of terrorism, or endangering minors."

Mr. Denis Rapone
Board Member Arcom, on behalf of the Chair of Arcom and of the Francophone Network of Media Regulators (REFRAM)

Annex 2 – List of Existing Global Forum of Network Members (as of June 2024)

- The African Communication Regulation Authorities Network (ACRAN)
- The European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA)
- The European Platform of regulatory authorities (EPRA)
- The Global Online Safety Regulators Network (GOSRN)
- The Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (MNRA)
- The Platform of Ibero-American Audiovisual Regulators (PRAI)
- The Francophone Network of Media Regulators (REFRAM)

Annex 3 – List of Regulatory Authorities Registered to the International Conference for Digital Platform Governance (Hosted on 17-19th June 2024 in Dubrovnik, Croatia)

Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of North Macedonia / North Macedonia

Agency for Electronic Media (AEM) / Croatia

Agency for electronic media (AEM) / Montenegro

Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique (Arcom) / France

Audiovisual Council (AC) – Moldova

Audiovisual Media Authority of the Republic of Albania (AMA) / Albania

Austrian Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications / Austria

Authority for Communications (AGCOM) / Italy

Autorité luxembourgeoise indépendante de l'audiovisuel (ALIA) / Luxembourg

Haut autorité des médias et de l'audiovisuel du Tchad (HAMA) / Chad

Comisión de Regulación de Comunicaciones (CRC) / Colombia

Commissariaat voor de Media / The Netherlands

Commission on Television and Radio of Armenia (CTR) / Armenia

Communications Authority of Kenya / Kenya

Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) / Bosnia and Herzegovina

Conseil national de la communication du Burundi / Burundi

Conseil Supérieur de la Communication of Burkina Faso / Burkina Faso

Consejo de desarrollo y promoción de la información y comunicación (Ecuador) / Ecuador

Consejo Nacional de Televisión (CNTV) / Chile

Conseil National de la Communication (CNC) / Cameroon

Conseil National de la Presse et de l'Audiovisuel (CNPA) / Comores

Conseil National de Régulation de l'Audiovisuel (CNRA) / Senegal

Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel et de la communication (CSAC) / DRC

Conseil Supérieur de la Liberté de Communication (CSLC) / Congo

Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel de la Fédération de Wallonie-Bruxelles (CSA)/Belgium

Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya (CAC) / Spain

Council for Media Services of the Slovak Republic / Slovakia
Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting (RRTV) / Czech Republic
Cyprus Radiotelevision Authority (CRA) / Cyprus
General Authority of Media Regulation / Saudi Arabia
Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle (HACA) / Morocco
Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC) / South Korea
National Broadcasting Council of Ukraine / Ukraine
National Broadcasting Council of Poland (KRRiT) / Poland
National Council for Radio and Television (NCRT) / Greece
National Electronic Mass Media Council / Latvia
National Media Commission (NMC) / Ghana
National Media and Infocommunications Authority / Hungary
Office Fédéral de la Communication (OFCOM) / Switzerland
Office of Communications (Ofcom) / United Kingdom
Portuguese Regulatory Authority for the Media / Portugal
Post and Electronic Communications Agency of the Republic of Slovenia / Slovenia
Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) / Turkey
Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania – LRTK / Lithuania
Regulatory Authority for Communication (ARC) / Cape Verde
Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media (REM) / Serbia
SATRA (Audio Visional Authority Regulatory of Iran / Iran
The Second Authority of Television and Radio / Israel
The Spanish National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC) / Spain
Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) / UAE