



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.

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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.

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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 context

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](#).

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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

2)

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)

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)

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)

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)

Regulators stressed the importance of creating a shared understanding of some of the Guidelines overnpan

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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.

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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(as of June 2024)

- The African Communication Regulation Authorities Network (ACRAN)
- The European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA)



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