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EuroDIG 2011: multistakeholder dialogue on Internet governance must be further strengthened

Belgrade, 01.06.2011 - The fourth "European Dialogue on Internet Governance" conference, EuroDIG 2011, finished with a broad support of participants to further strengthening the multistakeholder dialogue model for Internet governance, based on the understanding that it is the only way to effectively address the challenges the Internet brings to public policy. Participants stressed that events such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the EuroDIG - with its concept spreading to regional and national levels - are already influencing decision making.

During two days the conference brought together more than 500 participants – a hundred of them participating from 12 regional remote hubs across Europe - from the private sector, governments, international organisations, youth, media, civil society and the academic and technical communities to discuss public policy issues and challenges related to the Internet.

The need to protect privacy on the Internet was present in many of the discussions. A common idea that was underlined is the need to raise users' awareness on their rights as much as on the consequences of their actions when managing their personal data online. This should be a shared responsibility between public authorities, industry and civil society. Education of users, for example of social networks, was highlighted as a key priority.

Another topic of discussion was the protection of critical resources of the Internet in Europe, especially having in mind the fast development of the Internet and the need for security of the infrastructure, since the increased use of the Internet and the intensity of network traffic creates risks for the quality of services. It is thus necessary to create procedures for a fast and secure recovery in case of an attack or a failure. What also needs to be done is to define critical segments and potential threats so that they can be efficiently neutralised.

In the sessions there was a fairly unanimous opinion that the Internet is a great tool for democracy, even though it can be used against it, and that access to the Internet should be considered a fundamental right. That is why there is the need for programmes to assist vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The following topics were also discussed in the eight thematic sessions: standards for defining privacy, greater inclusion of individuals in processes of the Internet development, ethics and corporate responsibility, new business models on the Internet, literacy, crime on the Internet, as well as the presence of languages other than English on the global network.

Reports of each discussion can be found at www.eurodig.org. The reports from every session will be used to prepare the 'Messages from Belgrade' which will be presented as the contribution of the EuroDIG to the UN Internet Governance Forum in Nairobi in September 2011.

In the opening the Prime Minister of the Serbian Government, Mirko Cvetković, stressed the importance of the Internet for the development of economy and pointed to the fact that the development of new services, such as e-Administration, e-Banking and broadband Internet was of the utmost importance for small and medium enterprises. The State Secretary for the Digital Agenda, Jasna Matić, highlighted that the hosting of the EuroDIG by Serbia contributes to its inclusion in European trends and shows it is focused on the future, thinking and understanding the importance of IT, and actively creating conditions for their

faster development.

Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General Maud de Boer-Buquicchio said it is necessary to ensure freedom on the Internet, but also to protect vulnerable users by preventing and punishing all forms of abuse. She stressed that the Council of Europe is in favour of ensuring a maximum of rights, a minimum of restrictions while ensuring an adequate level of security.

Vladimir Radunović, the coordinator of educational programmes of Diplo Foundation, said "the Internet is no longer a technological phenomenon but a social one. Engineers are not the only ones who need to deal with new technologies. Legal, economic and regulatory issues should be left to decision makers, business people and Internet users who should deal with them in an open dialogue such as EuroDIG. I hope that some issues discussed during the conference will also be discussed at the local level and that Serbia will take an active part in global discussions about topics related to the Internet Governance".

The conference was hosted by the Digital Agenda Administration of the Republic of Serbia and organised by the Council of Europe, the Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM), Diplo Foundation, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), with the support of the Serbian National Register of Internet Domain Names (RNIDS), the Republic Agency for Electronic Communications (RATEL), EUnet, the research centre 'Petnica', together with other organisations.

The EuroDIG was sponsored by: Telenor, Huawei, Microsoft, Google, Switch, VeriSign, EUnet, ICANN, Ericsson, Affilias, RNIDS, USAID and IREX.

The next EuroDIG will take place in Sweden in 2012.

For additional information on the EuroDig 2011 please visit www.eurodig.org.

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