



CENTR's summary of IGF 2015

Last week, the CENTR secretariat attended the 2015 edition of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Brazil. While the long list of workshops provided a good overview of the global issues, IGF is much more than a collection of meeting sessions. Well-attended and well organised, it provided the perfect environment for networking across industries and stakeholder groups. With more than 140 sessions, at least 9 at any time over the event's four days, it doesn't make sense to try and give a complete overview. We therefore identified what we believe to be the key themes.

The first trend, and a worrying one, is the increasing pressure on intermediaries and the technical operators of the Internet to engage in content control. The topic was raised by Vice-President of the European Commission Andrus Ansip at the CENTR workshop as "we need to solve this content issue and remove harmful content quicker". The Turkish government official who gave the first speech of the opening session told the audience that the Turkish government would make sure content would be removed faster. And he obviously didn't suggest that there would be a need for a faster court order. Disney warned that the next billion would not get online before the intellectual property issue was solved. From developing countries, numerous stories were shared where intermediaries were forced by telecom authorities and other government services to remove content without any legal basis. Other intermediaries have taken their own initiatives in this area (with or without a nudge from their government). Most but not all of these cases were linked to intellectual property issues or had free speech aspects. IGF is not the only forum where this trend can be spotted (we also referred to this in our latest report from ICANN in Dublin), but it is worrying that especially at the IGF, there is not more resistance to the idea of the private sector exercising judicial monopoly on what is infringing and what is not. The Internet infrastructure was built to avoid exactly what some now want to try to use it for: content control. An interesting session in this respect was the [session](#) on the [Manila principles](#).

The second recurring theme was the zero-rating and net neutrality debate. This is the practice of mobile broadband providers and ISPs not charging end users for access to certain Internet applications (but still for other activities, e.g. browsing). Advocates of the zero-rating practice believe it is necessary in order to "connect the next billion". Indeed, you can

argue that zero-rating helps bring down the cost of access to information, that it can create demand for other services, and that it enhances investment in infrastructure. You could also argue, however, that the preferential handling of some content, which is against net neutrality, gives access to only a sub-set of information. It also undermines competition on the content and service level. For example, in some countries, Spotify data streams are free, based on an agreement between Spotify and the data carrier. How likely is it that a competing music streaming service, which would rely on paid data services, could still conquer a relevant part of that geographic market? So is zero-rating good or bad? Is the provider or the information you can access good if it is Wikipedia or the European Parliament? Is it bad if we are talking about Facebook, Google, WhatsApp and the like? Or is the latter not "better than nothing"? What about privacy if providers try to learn more about users, inspecting their behaviour?

Why is the topic relevant for ccTLDs? Normally, the information you can access on these free networks is provided through apps, not involving the typing in or viewing of domain names. Local content could suffer if ISPs or telcos favour certain types of apps or content. If local providers "piggy-back" on the vast user-base of "Internet giants" and walled gardens to win them as subscribers, they might still not see the need to invest further in infrastructure. Also, the issue is not only relevant to developing countries. European telco representatives praised the benefits of the "open Internet", a term "much more suitable" than, for instance, net neutrality. The former allowing telcos or ISPs more possibilities to provide specialised services (preferential treatment, greater bandwidth), whereas the latter would (strictly speaking) treat every data package, sender or receiver equally. The main session will be made available on the [IGF channel](#).

The third theme, without a doubt the theme with the most workshops and Open Forum discussions, was cybersecurity. The debate went beyond the usual dichotomy of security v. privacy, even though “Safe Harbour” and its consequences was a recurring issue. **The main session on cybersecurity** broadened the perspective on encryption (it should be a “citizen’s right”), data localisation trends, and cybersecurity in international treaties and agreements: the ghost of a “Global Convention on Cybersecurity” hovered over the room; the call amongst governments for a stronger role in cybersecurity is growing louder. Cybersecurity, according to some speakers, was increasingly blended into non-related areas, such as trade or the illegal content debate. The TPP trade agreement proved to be a negative example of how provisions on the protection of trade secrets and cyber espionage were “negotiated in exchange for market concessions on rice or automobiles”. Cybersecurity, referring to areas such as “technical availability, or resiliency”, should also not be mixed with content-related issues: “illegal content cannot destabilise the Internet”, and can therefore not be the rationale for more regulation.

A meeting of the **European Internet Forum** (EIF) mirrored the range of topics discussed at IGF. The views of a vocal telco provider on net neutrality (or rather “open Internet”) and encryption (“it cannot solve everything”), and a conciliatory view on filtering gave a good idea of their pragmatic approach. Rather reassuringly, MEPs took a more thoughtful view, stressing that societal and economic problems could “not be solved at the technical layer”; self-regulation or soft law should be reverted to, yet its limitations should be noted, e.g. in the area of child abuse material.

The **joint CENTR workshop** took an interesting and unexpected turn when the audience “interrogated” European Commission Vice-President Ansip about European “hot potatoes”: Safe Harbour, encryption, data protection, copyright and liability. His stance at least on encryption was clear: he stands “strongly against any kind of backdoors”. After the opening by the Vice-President, ccTLDs took the opportunity to showcase their registries’ activities to restore trust, ranging from the implementation of DNSSEC and stringent WHOIS rules to education and awareness raising. The lack of digital literacy among Internet users, but, in particular that of de-



IGF 2015

João Pessoa, Brasil

cision-makers, is a hard obstacle to remove to create a safer environment. Seeing a high interest in training, especially among the latter, is a good sign for our industry.

The fourth theme is the need to bring the next billion Internet users online. Internet Society (ISOC) engaged on all fronts in a campaign to bring this to the attention of all stakeholders. This theme ran through all sessions. Whether on privacy, security and trust, capacity building or women’s rights, all these issues were identified as obstacles that need to be cleared before bringing the next billion online. In essence however, it boils down to the plans of the telecom operators to start rolling out services in less commercially interesting areas. What we currently see on a global level is nothing more or less than the geographic cherry picking the European regulators forbade in the ‘90s. Only liberated market models have shown to successfully address the access issue.

In other news: the IGF mandate is likely to be extended for another ten years. CENTR had some excellent exchanges with the delegation from the European Parliament and follow-up meetings and training has been planned. At an I* meeting held in João Pessoa, the technical community supported the following messages for the WSIS+10 review in New York in December: (1) the IGF has become the prime vehicle for harnessing the benefits of the community’s diversity; (2) the multistakeholder model that has evolved over the last 10 years is *the way forward*; and (3) there is still much work to be done, especially in connecting the unconnected. The discussion on whether IGF should produce outcomes or not continues: while most participants agree best practice documents are acceptable, strong concerns were expressed on some of these documents being voted on in dynamic coalitions: the IGF should never turn into a policy creating venue.

EU Policy Update

By Nina Elzer, CENTR Policy Advisor

Safe Harbour: is guidance better than recommendations?

After the European Court of Justice (ECJ) struck down the Commission's "13 recommendations" on transatlantic data transfers (also known as "Safe Harbour"), the executive issued **guidance** on alternative mechanisms of transfer of personal data from the EU to the US. These include contractual solutions (that "satisfactorily compensate" for non-existing general protection), intra-group transfers (from the EU to affiliates outside the EU), derogations (unambiguous consent; transfer necessary for performance of contract). [Read more](#)

NIS saga continues

An informal trilogue took place on 17 November. The Luxembourgish Presidency tried to obtain a mandate by COREPER; this could speed up the decision-making process, as it would allow the Presidency to negotiate directly with the European Parliament without the need to go back to all 28 Member States for the nitty-gritty details. The scope of the Directive (who to cover, how to identify them) remained a major stumbling block. [Read more](#)

Revival of privacy v. security debate

In the wake of the Paris attacks, the European Commission published a **fact sheet on the state of play of the European Agenda on Security**. What is probably supposed to be a (timely) update on what's being done already gives a surprisingly clear idea of where the EU is going with regards to, for example, encryption, illegal content, etc. References to, e.g. "due regard to the impact on the fundamental right to freedom of expression", which can normally be found in such documents, are clearly missing. [Read more](#)

ECJ to rule on legality of "torrent trackers"

The question is whether computer servers used for sharing content (videos, music, books) via file-sharing programmes ("torrent trackers") are illegal, and if so, whether websites (e.g., Pirate Bay) acting as search engines for such trackers, are infringing copyrights. The case was referred to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) for clarification by the Dutch court. Servers themselves do not contain copyrighted information, yet they index such information, which is then shared. Infringement occurs only when files are uploaded or downloaded. Should the trackers be found legal, cases against websites such as Pirate Bay will have less traction.



Persisting concerns on net neutrality

While the EU institutions by and large keep hailing the adoption of the telecoms package, they were not able to dissipate concerns around the implementation of rules on reasonable traffic management, specialised services and price discrimination practices such as zero-rating. Calls for common guidelines to avoid diverging approaches throughout the EU are getting louder (briefing by the European Parliament).

Digital Single Market – European Parliament draft report

More than **1,200 amendments** have been tabled as a response to a **text drafted** by MEPs Kaja Kallas (ALDE, Estonia) and Evelyne Gebhardt (S&D, Germany). This is the groundwork for the Parliament's response to Commissioner Ansip's **Digital Single Market Strategy**, which is too large for MEPs to comment on (they will wait for compromise proposals). It's all non-binding, but could give an indication as to how the Parliament positions itself with regards to the (non-)legislative measures announced by the Commission. Both the IMCO (internal market) and ITRE (industry) committees are expected to vote on it on 16 January 2016, paving the way for the adoption in plenary (also in January).

European Commission: no time for business as usual

The (real) title of the **European Commission's Work Programme 2016** tries to show the executive branch's commitment to addressing and further advancing **Juncker's ten priorities**. With regards to the Digital Single Market, this means initiatives, such as copyright, geo-blocking, free flow of data, the cloud, and VAT for electronic commerce, a comprehensive review of the telecoms regulatory framework, of the audio-visual and media services directive, the satellite and cable directive, and the regulation on consumer protection.

Roadmap for EU copyright

The reform will come in "waves", starting with the review of cross-border portability of content and improved access to content for the blind by the end of the year. In 2016, legislative and non-legislative measures will address the issues of territoriality, online distribution of content, exceptions and limitations & IPR enforcement ([see the roadmap](#)).

CENTR holds its 10th Security Workshop On 26 October 2015, the CENTR Security working group met in Oxford. The meeting was hosted by Nominet, the .uk registry and was well attended by 31 participants from over 20 different registries.

ICANN's CEO search: the pink elephant in the room (*blog post*) It happened on a drowsy Sunday afternoon at ICANN's 54th meeting in Dublin, squeezed in right before the GNSO meeting with the Board, following a last-minute cancellation the day before. George Sadowski, speaking as Chair of the CEO Search Committee, was summoned to give a quick update on the status of the search for the next CEO of ICANN.

IGF 2015 - Accurately pinpointing the real big Internet governance issue (*blog post*) These days I find myself agreeing more often with Milton Mueller than I used to. I am not sure if that can be attributed to me getting older or Professor Mueller getting more moderate. Given the unlikelihood of the latter, it must be the former.

.be, .brussels and .vlaanderen backstage This year was marked by a number of changes in our organisation's structure. The biggest change was the merger of the 2 technical teams that used to work independently from each other: Development and Operations.

The CZ.NIC association collected \$100,000 USD for the Turris Omnia project in less than 24 hours The CZ.NIC association launched a crowdfunding campaign on the Indiegogo.com platform to collect \$100 000 USD in 61 days to fund the research and development of the Turris Omnia router.

Two-letter .ie domains open to registration Domains like hp.ie and aa.ie available to businesses and individuals during a 30-day registration period until 16 December; domain names with interest from multiple applicants will go to auction in January 2016; one-letter domains, like t.ie, are also available to register.

Nordic Domain Days on 23-24 November 2015 The first edition of the new domain industry event Nordic Domain Days in Stockholm, Sweden is taking place next week. For more information and registration see <http://www.nordicdomaindays.se>

DomainWire Global Top-Level Domain Report Q3/2015

CENTR published its **quarterly stats report** for the third quarter of 2015. The report provides the status and trends of the global top level domains market including legacy gTLDs, new gTLDs and ccTLDs. The report also has a focus on European ccTLDs.



Upcoming CENTR Events

3-4 December 2015

18th CENTR Marketing workshop (Dublin, Ireland)

19 January 2016

8th CENTR R&D workshop (Montigny le Bretonneux, France)

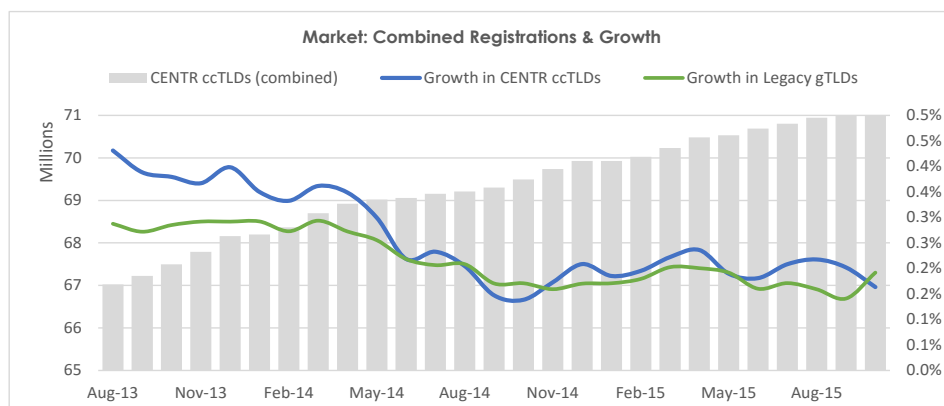
3 February 2016

37th CENTR Administrative workshop (Lausanne, Switzerland)

16 February 2016

55th CENTR General Assembly / 2016 Annual General Meeting (Budva, Montenegro)

Domain Name Statistics



Source: CENTR (based on 57 ccTLDs), ICANNwiki
Growth lines use 3-month moving averages to smooth the line * Refers to CENTR full members only

CENTR combined registrations*

71.2 million

Combined registrations among CENTR full members stands at 71.2 million over 57 recorded ccTLDs – a combined growth of around 2.4% over the past 12 months. In terms of median ccTLD growth in Europe, the rate was 3.8% over the same period.

It's estimated that ccTLDs in CENTR represent around 95% of all ccTLD registrations in Europe. CENTR produces detailed registration stats, trends and analysis to its members.