

IGF BERLIN 2019

**The Internet
Governance
Forum (IGF) of
the United
Nations –
a brief
description**

November

2019

25-29

What is the IGF?

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is a multistakeholder discussion platform of the United Nations. It addresses current legal, political, social and technical aspects of the Internet. The participants deal with all aspects related to the question of how the Internet as we know it can be maintained and improved. The issues up for discussion include technical standards, human rights matters, the impact of digital technologies on everyday life and working life, and opportunities arising for economic and social development. The IGF has an advisory function and provides an opportunity for all participants to influence the discussions in the relevant decision-making bodies at national and international level.



What does Internet governance mean?

‘Internet governance’ describes an open and constructive decision-making and dialogue process of all social groups that serves to raise awareness of problems and to find possible solutions. In this context, ‘governance’ thus does not

refer to state regulation. Internet governance is rather based on the 'multistakeholder' approach. This means that representatives of governments and international organisations, civil society, business and the technical community share their views on technical standards, social and economic objectives, political procedures and other rules, values and standards related to the Internet on an equal footing.

A global platform where every voice counts

The Annual Meeting of the IGF serves to share views, network and provide information and to propose issues to be discussed. The IGF is the major global discussion platform on the future of the Internet, which also aims to actively involve the Global South. It offers an opportunity for businesspeople to develop new perspectives for technologies, their rules and applications. It offers an opportunity for NGOs and associations to attract the attention of the international community to their interests. People who are online a lot can get an insight into the debate on the Internet and join like-minded people. In the IGF, all stakeholders can contribute to shaping the Internet.

What issues are dealt with?

The IGF is a platform to discuss global Internet policy trends, current legislation and best practices. The participants deal with emerging opportunities and challenges and analyse possibilities to fully tap the potential of the Internet going forward. This is also becoming increasingly important for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially in the traditional industries. Greater involvement of SMEs in the IGF is a major objective of Germany as this year's host country. The individual issues to be discussed are not laid down in advance but rather build on the proposals made during the preparatory stage. All stakeholders can submit



proposals. A number of overarching priorities have already been identified in the initial phase:

- ‘inclusion’: matters related to access to and participation in digitisation and its shaping on an equal footing;
- ‘data governance’: the technical, legal and organisational aspects of dealing with and exchanging data;
- ‘security and safety’: matters related to data protection, data security and the protection of people, resources and infrastructures in the digital age.

Background and organisation

The IGF was launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Since 2006, its Annual Meetings have been held at different places. This year, Germany for the first time is the host country and is organising the IGF in cooperation with the United Nations. The UN Secretary-General has set up a Multistakeholder Advisory

Group (MAG) to select the issues to be discussed. The MAG consists of more than 50 representatives of governments, the private sector, civil society and science and the technical community from all regions of the world. The proposals on issues and workshops are submitted by the interested general public in response to a call for issues by the IGF Secretariat of the United Nations in Geneva. Apart from the international Annual Meeting of the IGF, there are additional national and regional initiatives, which are organised independently. These include the Internet Governance Forum Deutschland (IGF-D) and the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG), which will take place in The Hague, Netherlands, on 19-20 June this year.

Timetable and programme

The IGF 2019 Annual Meeting will be held in Berlin on 25–29 November 2019 in the Estrel Congress Center. The event consists of two parts: on 25 November, ‘Day Zero’, events will take place which will be organised by various participants of the IGF independently of the United Nations. Germany as the host country, for example, will organise a high-ranking international meeting of Ministers who are responsible for digital policy with representatives of business and civil society. The regular IGF conference and workshop programme begins on 26 November. This part is laid down by the MAG. On this day, Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel will open the IGF.

How you can participate in the IGF

The IGF depends on the active participation of many stakeholders. There are different ways to participate:

- As visitors: you can register online as from August.
- Those who are interested in the entire IGF planning process and wish to get involved at an early stage can participate in the Open Consultations in the context of the meetings of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG). In this context, everybody can get first-hand information and make suggestions. You can participate either on the spot or online. You need to register in advance for the MAG meetings.
- Organisers of workshops can submit their proposals to the IGF Secretariat until mid-April. The proposals will be examined, discussed and evaluated by the MAG to ensure that a broad range of views and participants is represented. At workshops, for instance, it should be ensured that there is a gender balance and that as many regions and stakeholders as possible are represented.
- Events in the run-up: it is possible to present ideas for events in the run-up to the IGF; the results will then be fed into the IGF. The aim is to inform the public throughout the IGF year about issues related to Internet governance. One example is the annual meeting of the Internet & Jurisdiction Policy Network; this year, it will take place in Berlin from 3 to 6 June and be funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. If you are interested in organising an event on Internet governance in the run-up to the IGF 2019, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy will assist you.

Important dates in the IGF 2019 year

- 4 March to 12 April 2019: call for proposals on workshops
- 4 March to 10 May 2019: call for stands in the Congress Center
- 8 to 12 April 2019: second Open Consultations and MAG Meeting in Geneva
- 5 to 7 June 2019: third Open Consultations and MAG Meeting in Berlin
- August to November 2019: registration of participants for the IGF 2019
- 25 November 2019: 'Day Zero' of the IGF 2019
- 26 to 29 November 2019: regular conference programme of the IGF 2019

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