

# GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2017

*Internet governance from the edges:  
National and regional IGFs in their own words*



GISWatch 2017  
SPECIAL EDITION

# **Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words**

Global Information Society Watch 2017 Special edition  
Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words

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Global Information Society Watch 2017 special edition:  
Internet governance from the edges: NRIs in their own words

Disclaimer: The views expressed in survey responses are not necessarily the views of APC or of its members.

This report is a special companion edition to Global Information Society Watch 2017: National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs), which can be downloaded from <https://www.giswatch.org/2017-local-and-regional-internet-governance-forums-igfs>

## YOUTH IGF OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (YOUTH LACIGF)

Latin America and the Caribbean

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### NRI founding stories and development

*What is the story of the founding of your NRI?  
What were its inspiration, its objectives?*

The Youth IGF of Latin America and the Caribbean (Youth LACIGF) is an initiative that was born of the growing youth community of the LAC region that participates in events such as the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Internet Governance Forum (LACIGF) and other national, regional and international forums of the internet governance ecosystem. It is no news that lately young people have begun to participate more actively in internet governance, raising their voices in various forums and existing processes and trying to make the message they bring to be heard by more and more members of the internet governance community. In this context, in 2016 the Youth LACIGF was conceived by individuals of the Youth Observatory. The proposal emerged on the eve of the 9th LACIGF, as a process that seeks to build a permanent space for exchange and discussion of new ideas and perspectives of youth.

*How did it develop and what difficulties did you experience along the way?*

The Youth LACIGF community is an initiative that aims to enable a space for the youth from the LAC region, from different stakeholder groups, to discuss, from their own views, the main issues and the principal challenges they face every day on the internet.

The Youth LACIGF 2017 agenda was defined based on the results of a public consultation held in June 2017. After the community input, a Programme Committee composed of representatives of four different stakeholders (civil society, business, end user and academia) was created. This Committee was responsible for defining the final agenda, the format of the discussions and logistics details. We also formed a working group to work on logistics issues with contributors.

In this year, the Youth LACIGF community elaborated a Code of Conduct for the participants, in order

to create a safe and positive environment that encouraged everyone to participate and be committed to building an inclusive community. The Code of Conduct was sent to all the registered participants prior to the event and was published on the official site of the Youth LACIGF.

The event happened as planned and was praised by most of the attendees and remote participants. On the difficulties note, the major ones were:

- **Funding:** Like other NRIs who lack funding, the financial support for the meeting is offered by companies and partner organisations. Therefore, reaching out to prospective funders is one of the most challenging tasks within the preparation of a Youth LACIGF meeting. Mainly due to the fact that the initiative is made “by young people, for young people”, we still encounter some prejudice and mistrust regarding the initiative’s seriousness and commitment.
- **Support from host country:** Youth LACIGF is an initiative that is held on the eve of LACIGF meetings in order to mobilise the youth community that is supposed to attend the forum. But the outreach activities prior to the event are made exclusively by the Youth Observatory (creator and host of the event) network and associated members. In our latest edition, hosted in Panama, we had the support of the host organisation; however, we encountered difficulties in publicising the event in universities, institutions and national organisations given the fact that the Youth Observatory had only one local associated member.
- **Venue:** As stated above, the Youth LACIGF is a NRI that lacks funding and this fact leads us to look out for partnerships in pretty much every need that the initiative entails. In the past two editions we have settled a partnership with a local educational organisation that would be willing to offer us the event venue for free.

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*How do you imagine your NRI and its activities in the future?*

For the future, we envision the Youth LACIGF as a more acknowledged initiative by the major internet governance actors for its importance in the LAC region, thus gaining the official support from the LACIGF Organising Committee. This project deserves to become a larger and more representative and inclusive initiative directed towards the Latin American and Caribbean youth. As we seek to be a safe space for debate and sharing of experience among young people throughout the LAC region, it is very important for us to promote the participation and representation of as many young actors of internet governance as possible.

### **NRI internal governance and initiatives**

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*Who are the people involved in your NRI and how do they contribute to it?*

The people involved in the Youth LACIGF are young people between 18 and 30 years old across the whole Latin America area. In the organising committee, we try to involve young professionals from different countries, stakeholder groups and backgrounds in order to have greater representation and diversity of experience to enrich the initiative.

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*Have you experienced difficulties in ensuring all stakeholder groups participate fully and more or less equally?*

Since the Youth LACIGF is a youth-focused initiative, it is very difficult – if not impossible – to achieve a balanced or equal stakeholder participation. Most of the young people are in the study period, even without a definitive stakeholder, so in the first two editions of our forum, the most represented stakeholders were civil society and the academic sector.

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*Do you measure gender balance in your NRI? Did you undertake measures to encourage gender balance?*

Yes, we are very conscious about the gender balance in our NRI. We, as young professionals, have a notion of the gender gap that exists in our region, which replicates itself on the internet. One of the flags that we defend is that we struggle to reduce, if not end, this gap. We want women to get the respect they deserve, and we fight hard for it, which

was one of the reasons to draft a Code of Conduct. We seek the participation of women included in our NRI. In the election of the scholars, in the speakers and participation of the NRI we seek a gender balance. In the Second Youth LACIGF 14 women and 18 men participated. This year we innovated in the creation of a Code of Conduct that seeks to guarantee the free and safe spaces of all attendees, especially women in dealing with issues such as harassment and stalking. Another topic that is included is cybersecurity, giving tools and examples to ensure that you surf securely on the internet.

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*How was your last forum organised, what were the topics chosen and the outcomes of discussion? How was it financed?*

Our last forum succeeded. We chose as themes: Infrastructure and Access, Cybersecurity and Surveillance, Internet and Human Rights, and Youth and Governance. The forum discussions were quite rich, and there was a lot of exchange of experiences and knowledge. On funding: like other NRIs, we need external support to get our annual event held, so we have created a support request document that has been shared with the responsible sectors of some organisations that already have a track record in supporting initiatives related to internet governance. With that, in the end, we have the support of Ciudad del Saber, Google, ICANN, Internet Society and IPANDETEC to carry out our initiative. The report on the last edition is available online.<sup>17</sup>

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*Are there controversial topics that have been difficult in your NRI and if so, why?*

The only controversy we had, which was more an unforeseen, was in relation with an activity during the Internet and Human Rights workshop. We organisers proposed an activity to create a list of human rights principles to be defended on the internet, but participants protested that it would not be necessary as there are already dozens of such lists across the internet. Instead, it was suggested to do a brainstorming of actions that could be developed to more effectively achieve those principles. It was a very cool experience, because we built the activity on time, without prior planning, and in the end it was a debate with a very high level of contributions.

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<sup>17</sup> [https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot\\_download/3568/717](https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/3568/717)

## Perspectives on the role of NRIs in internet governance

*What is your take about the role of your NRI in internet governance processes, at the level of your country, region and globally?*

In our opinion, the main role of the Youth LACIGF is to allow the exchange of experiences and knowledge among people from different countries, with different backgrounds, different cultures, etc. The Latin America and Caribbean region is very large in size and has a very large diversity in a multitude of areas, and among them is the internet. It is important for us that people know the different realities, different perspectives and experiences, so that they can return to their country with all this knowledge load that has been shared and can use it in a positive way, increasingly seeking a safer and more inclusive internet.

*How do you perceive your role and position towards other NRIs, the IGF and the IGF Secretariat?*

In our opinion, and also in the opinion of my NRI, everything is intertwined and working together. All of us, NRIs, the IGF and the IGF Secretariat, are working to find a better, safer, more inclusive internet, etc. Despite the many work fronts, with many differences and similarities, the ultimate goals are the same. Regarding the NRI-IGF relationship, we argue that the NRI is working in a local field, meanwhile, NRI and IGF are working in a similar way/getting the same achievements. With each front, each initiative, doing its part, together we will be able to shape the future of the internet.

## Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words

National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs) emerged in response to the success of the first two global Internet Governance Forums (IGFs). The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, the outcome document of the final phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), alongside the call for the creation of the IGF, served as the foundations for the model of bottom-up, multistakeholder internet governance. The first NRIs were set up in 2007 and 2008, and there are now close to a hundred initiatives, comprising national, sub-national, regional and youth initiatives, which organise autonomously and cooperate with the global IGF Secretariat. The importance of NRIs has increased throughout the years, as they have grown in number and their work has expanded in scope. They have acquired such relevance within the IGF that an NRI session was included in the IGF 2016 and 2017 main sessions agendas.

This year, APC has taken the initiative to compile two editions of Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch) focused on the work of NRIs. While the main 2017 GISWatch annual report provides independent and analytical perspectives on the role of NRIs in internet governance broadly, the present companion edition, *Internet governance from the edges: National and regional IGFs in their own words*, aims to give voice and visibility to the stories of each NRI, share their experiences and achievements, and highlight their perspectives on internet governance.

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