

Report of the Main Session on Governance Challenges in the Digital Age

28 November 2019, IGF, Berlin

Key Policy Questions and Expectations

Policy questions

- What should be the perspectives, and which stakeholders and disciplines need to be considered, to enable policy-making approaches that are truly multidisciplinary for Internet Governance?
- What are the underlying structural conditions that facilitate truly multidisciplinary policy-making process?
- What are examples of attempts to build multidisciplinary policy-making processes for public policy already being developed on Internet Governance across the globe? What worked well? What needs improvement? What lessons can we learn from private sector policy-making?

Overall expectations from the session

We aim to highlight conceptual frameworks and good practices coming from concrete cases presented in the session to illustrate ways to go beyond working in silos and to create policy-making approaches that are truly multidisciplinary and involve a full range of perspectives and actors, in a wide range of substantive topics, covering the life-long period of policy-making from its design, implementation and evaluation.

Discussion Areas

The discussions highlighted a number of key elements for successful policy-making in the digital age. It was felt that processes that are inclusive, transparent and make use of 21st century tools can lead to increased trust in the process, provide more legitimacy and result in better informed and more balanced outcomes.

Policy Recommendations or Suggestions for the Way Forward

The following specific elements of a successful process were put forward:

- Being thoughtful about the design of a process at the outset

This includes being clear about the objectives of a process, why stakeholders are being invited, and the inputs that are expected of them, all of which is important for building trust further down the line.

- The importance of an open, inclusive and accessible process

Given that the outcomes of a process will reflect the values and perspectives of the people engage in it, the broader and more inclusive a process is, the more chance it will have of providing a satisfactory and broadly representative consensus. Those leading the process should consider any barriers to participation that some relevant stakeholders might face, e.g. financial, geographical or language barriers. It is also important to define the policy problem in a way that is understandable to all the relevant stakeholders engaged in the process. Efforts should be made to think about how to include groups which could be impacted but might not be traditionally brought into such processes, such as young people, refugees and disabled people.

- Transparency

Tools provided by modern technology can be used both to involve more stakeholders and to publish elements of discussions had within processes in accessible and understandable ways. We should

remember that the Internet provides way to connect, and indeed consult, people across great distance making it a tool to strengthen the democratic process by consulting people in remote regions (e.g. use of Facebook for voters to communicate with politicians).

- **Accountability**

It is important to be able to hold to account those responsible for the decisions taken at the end of the process. Leaders of processes need to be committed to making it genuinely consultative, and not a tick-box exercise. Accountability also extends to those involved in the process – representatives need to actually be representative, e.g. to inform and consult members of the stakeholder groups they represent.

- Finding the right stakeholders for the specific issue at hand, who can bring the expertise necessary to produce informed and evidence-based decisions

Although we hear a lot about breaking down silos, the silos can actually be incredibly useful because that is where the expertise is stored. The trick is to create networks and connections across silos. The Partnership on AI, for example, looks to bring in partners who are experienced experts, but usually not so much in AI but with backgrounds that should inform the future development of technology.

- **Flexibility**

Processes should not be rigid or act as a straitjacket. They should be able to adapt to the specific issues being tackled, and people should also continuously be looking for ways to improve processes, learning lessons as they go.

- Practical ways to engender trust and create genuine dialogue

Design both the process and physical meeting spaces in ways that engender trust, create genuine dialogue and encourage people to listen to others, and convinces people to come forward with humility, able to appreciate they might not know all the answers or have made mistakes, and know they will not be condemned for it.

- Measuring impact and disseminating results

It is important to find ways to monitor and evaluate the processes used and the outputs they produce. It is also crucial to ensure that the valuable diffusion of ideas produced by any process can find their way to the decision-makers to enabled fully-informed decisions.

Other Initiatives Addressing the Session Issues

Going Digital (www.oecd.org/going-digital/) is an integrated policy framework for making the digital transformation work for growth and well-being". It identifies seven policy dimensions that allow governments – together with citizens, firms and stakeholders – to shape digital transformation to improve lives. It also highlights key opportunities, challenges and policies related to each dimension, offers new insights, evidence and analysis, and provides recommendations for better policies in the digital age.

The International Chamber of Commerce's proposed framework for holistic approach to policy-making was designed create an enabling environment for investment in, and innovation of, ICT. The framework rests on three pillars - a thorough understanding of the digital ecosystem; multistakeholder collaboration; and holistic policy approaches to understand the interplay between the various layers of the ecosystem, and how policies targeting one layer could affect others.

The Canadian Multistakeholder Process on Ensuring IoT Security was relevant because of the open and inclusive process including workshops set up across the country, and the ways that its rules of engagement set out by community and all work was transparently tracked at <https://iotsecurity2018.ca/>.

The Facebook Oversight Board (<https://about.fb.com/news/2019/09/oversight-board-structure/>) will review Facebook's content decisions and decide whether to overturn them or uphold them, as well as make public policy recommendations to which Facebook will have to provide public responses.

Partnership on AI (www.partnershiponai.org/) brings together technology companies, civil society and academic researchers to conduct research, shares insights, provide thought leadership, and create educational material that advances the understanding of AI technologies including machine perception, learning, and automated reasoning.

Estimated Participation

Onsite – around 250 participants, 35% female

Online – around 10 participants, 30% female

Reflection to Gender Issues

A majority of the panelists were women. Women were considered as one group - alongside others such as young people, disabled people, refugees, former prisoners – which policy-makers should consider when designing inclusive consultative processes.