CAIGF

CENTRAL ASIAN
INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

REPORT

on the Central Asian Internet Governance Forum 2021 on in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

September 2021

Table of contents

Background 3

1.Topical issues of digital development considered in the framework of CAIGF 4

1.1. Digital inclusiveness and overcoming digital divide 4

1.2. Trust and security in cyberspace in the era of a pandemic 4

1.3. Digital sovereignty or digital cooperation in digital future management 5

1.4. Protection of rights and freedoms in digital world 5

1.5. Digital data: seeking a balance between privacy and digital development 6

2. Financial report 7

3. Achievements within the framework of events 7

Background

From September 27 to October 1, a unique week of digital development “Digital week” was held in Kyrgyzstan. Within the framework of this week, two major forums were held: the Central Asian Internet Governance Forum (hereinafter CAIGF) and the Kyrgyz Information Technology Forum (hereinafter KIT 2021).

The main organizer of these events is traditionally the Public Foundation "Civil Initiative for Internet Policy" (hereinafter - CIIP). The CIIP has been operating since 2003 and is a leader in the field of rule-making in the field of regulation of information technology and communications in the Kyrgyz Republic and the CIS. It also actively participates in the processes of digital transformation of state and public life, promotes equal, free and fair access to the Internet and enhances the role of public institutions and citizens in government decision-making in the field of information and communication technologies.

The mission of CAIGF this year was to discuss the digital development agenda at the regional level and join forces with other Central Asian countries to accelerate digital integration and jointly confront digital challenges. And the main advantage in 2021 was the opportunity to openly discuss with digital leaders from different sectors, countries the barriers, development zones and joint efforts within the framework of digital transformation. It is important to note that this time a delegation from the Republic of Kazakhstan headed by the Minister of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry, as well as international experts from 12 countries arrived at the forums.

The forum was attended by representatives of state bodies of Central Asia, international experts, as well as representatives of global high-tech companies such as Tik Tok, Uber, Yandex and IBM.

The CAIGF allows to develop recommendations and define further measures and actions aimed at digital development both at the national and regional levels.

During the event, all measures were taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus infection (Covid-19).

1. Topical issues of digital development considered in the framework of CAIGF

1.1. Digital inclusiveness and overcoming digital divide

The coronavirus pandemic has become a catalyst for the digital transformation of world politics, and has also contributed to the aggravation of a number of problems, among which one of the most acute is the deepening inequality between the city and the regions, which is acquiring a digital dimension. Forced isolation has demonstrated the importance of access to information and communication technologies - without them distance learning, distance working and social distancing in general would be impossible. During the discussions, the scale of the problem of the digital divide was noted and the fact that it has become one of the key on the international agenda, leading international organizations also paid attention to this problem. The experts noted the need to develop common principles in the field of capacity building and bridging the digital divide, which could be consolidated in the rules of responsible behavior of states in the global information space. The experts also noted the importance of creating and developing digital infrastructure to bridge the digital divide between countries. In particular, the issues of opening and using data centers in the territory of Central Asia and the effective use of the competitive advantages of each of the countries are considered. Particular attention was paid to the need to ensure an efficient data exchange system to bridge the digital divide. The participants proposed recommendations regarding the creation of a special platform for uniting the countries of Central Asia, the need to conclude agreements on cross-border data transfer.

Based on the results of the discussions, the experts recommended creating uniform conditions for data exchange by establishing common approaches and standards at the legislative level.

1.2. Trust and security in cyberspace in the era of a pandemic

Issues of standards and strategies for cybersecurity are one of the important tools for ensuring cybersecurity, since the cross-border threats in cyberspace and the difference in standards and approaches in countries of the same region are a serious obstacle to deterring cyber-attacks and combating cybercrime. The forum participants noted that the issue of security in cyberspace was previously important, and the period of the pandemic acquired particular significance, since the number of attackers increased - those who were already engaged in online fraud were joined by newly minted virtual criminals who had previously carried out their criminal activities in reality.

During the discussion special attention was paid to the issue of protecting children in the digital world.

As a result of the discussions, the experts recognized the importance of cooperation between states in the harmonization of state legislations for combating cybercrime. They also noted the need to improve knowledge on cyberhygiene and, in general, to improve the digital skills of the population.

1.3. Digital sovereignty or digital cooperation in digital future management

During the forum, the issues of the impact of digitalization on global and internal state socio-political and economic processes, as well as the role of the state in the formation of a new digital reality were discussed. One of the main issues was the digital interdependence between the countries of the region, prospects and opportunities.

As a result of the discussions, the discussants came to a consensus that the key components of the state's digital sovereignty are the protection of the personal data of its citizens, the development of its own IT industry and protection from external interference to internal social and political processes using online platforms.

1.4. Protection of rights and freedoms in digital world

The words "fake account", "fake news", "fact-checking", "disinformation", "verification" has become part of our discussions at this forum session. Today, the flow of information is growing all the time, and more and more often you can find unconfirmed data from very dubious sources on the Web. The experts discussed such issues as how to fight fakes and disinformation, what are the tools to counter fakes, and what mechanisms are there for actively protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens in the digital world.

As a result of the discussions, the experts came to the conclusion about the need to ensure self-regulation, and not the use of administrative methods of regulation through the adoption of normative legal acts restricting freedom of speech. The experts agreed that the goal of self-regulation should be the organization of a systematic fight against inaccurate information and the creation of a secure information environment.

In addition, experts noted the need to improve the digital and media literacy of journalists so that they can easily recognize fakes. Also, experts recommend that it is mandatory to check the articles of fact-checking.

1.5. Digital data: seeking a balance between privacy and digital development

Digital technologies, with all their colossal benefits, can increase the risks of unethical use of personal data and privacy violations. In this regard, according to the results of the discussions, the experts agreed that the key principle of data management should be to accept the concept of self-determination of the subject in relation to his (her) data: "Nothing about me without me." It is also highlighted the importance of ensuring the transparency of the processes for obtaining consent for the collection of data. The session will also address the advantages and disadvantages of data localization, one of the policies applied by governments to protect the data of their citizens. At the same time, it was noted that along with solving the issues of protecting citizens' data, localization can also adversely affect small and medium-sized businesses and start-ups, which will hinder economic development. Therefore, governments should consider innovative mechanisms in data protection regulations that can balance both privacy issues and the economic and other benefits that can be gained from cross-border data exchange. The COVID-19 pandemic also demonstrated how the application of boundaries to data can negatively impact the ability to respond to global challenges.

2. Financial report

	Income	USD
1	ICANN	5000
2	IGFSA	2500
3	ISOC	10000
4	RIPE (5000 Euro)	5750
	Total	**23250**
	Expenses	
1	Hall rental	2 570
2	Coffee break	2 112
3	Printing services	1 650
4	Zoom, online translation	995
5	LED Screen rentall	2 003
6	Technical equipment	2 106
7	Translators	1 416
8	Internet	480
9	Dinner	520
10	Air-tickets (travel)	4 000
11	Accomodation	2 400
12	Masks, sanitazers	440
13	Video and foto	1 858
14	Transfer	700
	Total	**23250**

3. Achievements of the event

The CAIGF and KIT Forum held in 2021 contributed to the actualization of the tasks of the digital agenda in the post-pandemic crisis, determined the prospects for a multilateral dialogue on the sustainability of the global Internet, the priorities of the common digital future of the countries of our region.

- As a result of the events, discussions, recommendations developed, the following results were achieved:

- An authorized state body for the protection of personal data has been established in the Kyrgyz Republic.

- Demonstration of the cross-border exchange of documents Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan through the electronic document management system with the participation of the President of the Center for Analysis and Investigation of Cyber Attacks of the EEC integration gateway.

- Eight formal bilateral meetings were held to develop potential joint regional initiatives. Thus, bilateral meetings of the Ministry of Digital Development of the Kyrgyz Republic were held:

  - with the delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan and JSC "Holding Zerde";

  - with the delegation of Estonia;

  - with the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan;

  - with an IBM representative;

  - with commercial director of Kaspersky Lab regional office;

  - with the President of the Center for Analysis and Investigation of Cyber Attacks of the EEC integration gateway.

- The total number of participants in the events (offline and online) was about 300 people.
- The event was attended by about 50 experts from 12 countries.
- About 60 reports were presented on the prospects and trends of digital development.
- A Protocol on interaction and cooperation in the field of ICT was signed through the creation of an interdepartmental working group Kyrgyzstan - Kazakhstan.
- 2 Memorandums were signed:
  1) On cooperation between the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic and “Cerebra” LLP of the Republic of Kazakhstan on automated diagnosis of the acute stage of stroke based on post-processing processing of CT results by artificial intelligence.
  2) Memorandum of cooperation between IT parks Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Georgia. Joining forces for the opportunity to enter new markets and support for startups.
- The headliners of the event were representatives of such top international companies as Facebook, TikTok, IBM, Uber, Yandex and many others.
- Within the framework of the EEC, an agreement was reached on the exchange of data on cybercrimes that occur in Central Asia. This applies not only to hacker attacks, but also to possible countermeasures using digital technologies to extremism and terrorism, as well as various kinds of computer viruses.

- An agreement was reached on the interaction of the High-Tech Park of Kyrgyzstan and Astana Hub in the development of the startup ecosystem, attracting investments, creating joint acceleration programs, and building human resources.
- The Privacy Awards ceremony was held for the first time. 10 awards were given to specialists, companies and projects from Central Asia with significant achievements in the field of privacy.

Video broadcasts and photos from event:
https://www.facebook.com/CAIGF/
More information about the program of events is available on the website:
https://caigf.org/en/