

Finnish Internet Forum 2013 Report

Finnish Internet Forum 2013 was held on 25 April 2013 at the House of Municipalities in Helsinki. For the consecutive second time, the event was took place in the spring period. As previously, the forum was bilingual with sessions in both Finnish and English.

The event was prepared by the multi-stakeholder group responsible for the national follow-up of the WSIS, chaired by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This year's panel discussions and presentations were organized by ISOC Finland, Electronic Frontier Finland, Ministry of Transport and Communications and Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Administrative support was provided by the Finnish Information Processing Association.

The event seems to have achieved a rather solid level of participation. This time the number of registered participants exceeded 140, with more than half of the registrations received within 24 hours of the announcement of the event. During the event, the attendance varied between 50 and 90 participants depending on their interest in the topics. The webcast, sponsored by the Internet Society, had a steady 20 participants throughout the day.

A survey of the participant's experience of the event was conducted. The results have been analyzed in the feedback meeting of the organizing team and noted in planning the event for 2014.

Event homepage: <http://internetforum.fi>

webcast archive: <http://bit.ly/isoctv>

Is journalism going to be destroyed or saved by the Internet?

Panel: Ms Hanna Nikkanen, web journalist, co-founder of the "Long Play" project; Mr Jarmo Koponen, staff journalist of "Uusi Suomi", a web successor of an extinct newspaper with the same name; Mr Jyrki Vesikansa, the chairman of the Finnish Newspapermen's Association with half a century of print journalism experience; and Mr Esa Sirkkunen, a senior reseacher specializing the the sustainability of new media at Tampere University. Moderator: Yrjö Länsipuro, President of ISOC Finland.

It was noted that the existence of the Internet and related technologies have given journalists new powerful tools and helped them to perform tasks that used to be difficult or impossible. The treshold to starting one's own (allegedly) journalistic undertaking has been lowered. The proliferation of new, alternative sources of news supply, mostly free of charge, has caused difficulties to the legacy media, although Finland's traditionally strong media houses have not been hit as early and as badly as legacy media elsewhere. However, with the present economic crisis that has led to decreasing advertisement volumes and circulation figures, journalistic staffs have been cut everywhere. That legacy media houses still enjoy the trust and confidence of the audience is shown by the dominance (in terms of weekly visits) of their web sites compared to stand-alone web news sites. As elsewhere, the problem is how to monetize them. Some paywalls have been introduced. They seem to succeed better than earlier experiments with their cumbersome paying systems.

Economic survival and sustainability is a big problem for new media, too. They need to do with small staffs, minimum of fixed costs and innovation in finding niche audiences as well as in combining funding sources. "Long play" is a new web publication with each edition devoted to one topic, of which the most interesting has reached 4,500 downloads so far. There may be new openings in data journalism and in providing training and fact-checking services to citizen journalists.

It was noted that the traditional, well-defined borders of the profession of journalism have become porous, with potentially far-reaching consequences for all who are engaged in it. New entrants, along with free lancers to whom legacy media more and more tend to outsource difficult stories, are finding themselves not only economically exposed but without the legal protection that legacy media can afford to give their staffs.

Routine tasks that kept former generations of journalists busy are now more or less taking care of themselves. For politicians, blogs in publications like "Uusi Suomi" (and Twitter!) have replaced speechmaking and their all-important media coverage as an attention-getting mechanism. Company press releases (that used to take 80% of the space of Kauppalehti, the main economic newspaper) are now published on the company web sites. Sports and stock exchange news are becoming automatized. Chasing ambulances can be left to the public, that eagerly delivers pictures of most accidents to media outlets interested in them (the Finnish version of Metro receives 2,000+ a month). The question is, will the time freed from routines be used for higher forms of journalism, like investigative work, or will media outlets simply do with fewer journalists?

The moderator's tentative conclusion was that journalism probably will not be destroyed ; the Internet may even help it to survive, in the same vein as the telegraph, initially feared as a threat to newspapers, eventually came to be leveraged by the print media a century and half ago. Professional journalists need to understand their changing role and to position themselves nimbly in the new constellation, creating win-win situations because their skills – ability to check facts, to separate the wheat from the chaff, to give meaning to an expanding array of data and information – will always be in demand.

Distributed Denial of Service Attacks

Mr Mikael Storsjö made a presentation about the DDoS his servers experienced while running the Kavkaz-Center site.

Cyber Security and Human Rights

Panel: Ms Päivi Lipponen, MP, Chair of the Committee on the Future, of the Parliament, Petteri Järvinen, author of dozens of ICT books, Erka Koivunen, head of CERT-FI, Timo Soikkeli, Stonesoft Co., computer security specialist. Moderator: Tapani Tarvainen, Electronic Frontier Finland

At the beginning of the panel, a message by the Ms Heidi Hautala, Minister for Development Cooperation was read. Her planned participation had been canceled at the last minute due to other commitments.

In her message she noted that Finland is a member of the Freedom Online Coalition, and had just decided to join the Digital Defenders Partnership.

It was discussed whether cybersecurity could become a Finnish export product, as the situation in Finland looks much better than in some other countries. It was pointed out that by the same token, Finland does not have much experience in serious attacks and so would be liable to create solutions that don't work so well in other countries, in particular those lacking on the reliability and trustworthiness of the police and the authorities. It was argued that data protection mechanisms in Finland aren't really better than elsewhere, we've just been lucky, and that Finnish police has also been guilty of abuses.

It was debated if it would be possible to limit development or export of tools that can be used for both lawful purposes, to catch criminals, as well as for oppressing dissidents in less democratic countries, for example backdoors in mobile phone networks. It was mostly agreed that once developed and mandated by standards it's impossible to keep such tools from the hands of dictators. Whether it would be possible to refrain from making them in the first place or least keep them away from standards and common hardware such as mobile phones was a question left hanging in the air.

It was noted that there's already an enormous number of data on almost everybody in the net, including photographs. Avoiding social media personally doesn't really help, and while it is still possible to avoid being tracked, forgoing mobile phones, using only cash, avoiding security cameras

etc., it's getting very difficult. In a sense, privacy has already been lost, and it is not obvious what if anything can be done about it.

It was further discussed how well-meaning authorities tend to build overreaching surveillance mechanisms and collect as much data as possible "just in case", in effect treating all citizens as potential criminals. Ranging from fingerprints scanned for passports and kept in a central registry to various health and other registries, the more data is stored the more abuses and leaks will happen. Despite of laws and rules restricting access to data, in practice abuses are rarely prosecuted or even investigated.

It was briefly discussed whether private individuals should do or should have the right to analyze programs running in their computers or the security of banks and the like by things like port scanning.

As the last subject, the right to anonymity was discussed: whether anonymity should be restricted or protected by law or technical means. No clear conclusion was reached, there are clearly two sides: some people have genuine need for anonymity, yet it can be abused for hate speech and threats of violence etc. It was noted that regular paper mail is still perfectly anonymous and that registration requirement doesn't seem to help against abusive comments in web fora.

In conclusion it was observed more money is spent in chasing rabbits in Helsinki than for national cybersecurity, and a wish was expressed that the issue would get more attention from the state.

Information Society Code

Ms Sanna Helopuro, Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, presented the project for an Information Society Code, a comprehensive reform of the legislation on electronic communications that had reached consultation stage.

Role of small countries in Internet Governance (In English)

Panel: Mr Sinuhe Wallinheimo, Member of Parliament, Mr Dan Daley, Senior Economic Officer at the Embassy of the United States in Helsinki, Mr Jari Arkko, Chair of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), and Mr Chengetai Masango, Programme and Technology Manager at the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Secretariat. Moderator: Ms Mervi Kultamaa, Councillor at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Firstly, the panelists exchanged views on the functioning of the current multi-stakeholder co-operation of internet governance. The discussion demonstrated that there is no single co-operation model but many different models which may change over the time. The working methods of the organizations vary, taking as example the IGF as a discussion forum on the internet's public policy issues, the IETF as standards making body and the national and international regulatory processes. The processes may evolve and mature over time. The rules for co-operation across stakeholder groups are not as clearly defined as the ones in ice hockey, for instance. The panelists observed a growing need for different stakeholders to consult each others in order to make well informed decisions. They also affirmed their strong belief in the multi-stakeholder co-operation as the only legitimate working method in internet governance.

Also the governments' role in the multi-stakeholder setting varies. Some governments push for their stronger involvement in internet governance. The panelists voiced an opinion that even though the present governance model is not perfect, it has passed the test of time in bringing the internet in the forefront of our societies as enabler and a huge contributor to the global economy. It was felt that one should avoid radical changes at international level in order not to damage the resilience and strength of the current structure. Instead of debating over their role in internet governance, the governments could use their time more efficiently in furthering internet and its benefits to all societies. The discussion with the audience brought about the different working cultures between the United States

and Europe and the shortcomings which may still exist in the EU's legislative processes as far as multi-stakeholder co-operation is concerned.

Lastly, the panelists discussed the role of small countries. For instance, the Global Innovation Index and the chart which measures the countries influence by their technical relevance demonstrate that small countries can have a more prominent role than what their size is. They may have possess advantages which the bigger countries don't have such as the ability to react fast due to a low level of bureaucracy and the easiness to contact relevant stakeholders and to bring them together. Mr. Daley and Mr. Masango expressed their appreciation of Finland's support to the multi-stakeholder internet governance and to the IGF. It was suggested that Finland should abandon the idea of being a small country and keep doing what it is doing at the moment.

As final remarks, the panelists were of the opinion that internet is and should be governed, provided that it is done in a sensible way. The regulatory regimes may need to be adapted to recognize the multi-stakeholder reality that we have in the internet society today. The needs and the rights of different users, and in particular, the ones of children, should be well taken into account.