

The development of Internet

2024 is an important year for the EU to consolidate and spread its commitment to an open internet and a functioning multi-stakeholder internet governance model . Important events such as the Global Digital Compact (GDC) (part of the Future Summit), the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society+20 (WSIS+20) in 2025, which will define the development of the Internet are coming

Global Digital Compact (GDC) and Internet Governance

The EU actively engaged in the GDC, advocating for an open internet, human rights-based digital transitions and strengthening key multi-stakeholder IG institutions. The EU urges the GDC to focus on high-level principles and not reshape the current IG architecture, as this will be addressed at WSIS+20 in 2025.

The GDC is an initiative of the UN Secretary-General that aims to establish a global agreement or set of principles to guide the future of digital cooperation and internet governance. The Future Pact is expected to be agreed and endorsed by the parties during the Future Summit in September 2024. The GDC will be part of the Future Pact.

Although both GDC (to a lesser extent) and WSIS refer to Internet governance, they should not be confused. The GDC has a much wider scope and is intergovernmental in nature. WSIS has multi-stakeholders as a feature designed into the IGF. There is a risk that the GDC will take over the subject of WSIS+ in the process of moving it towards the intergovernmental governance model, away from the original multi-stakeholder environment.

Governance of Virtual Worlds : The 2023 Communication on Virtual Worlds calls for multi-stakeholder community engagement to design the future governance structure for open and interoperable virtual worlds – both within and beyond the scope of existing governance institutions multi-stakeholder internet. To this end, stakeholder consultations and multi-stakeholder Internet governance institutions have provided clear feedback despite the early stage of virtual word development.. This will include the preparation of a global multi-stakeholder conference on governance of virtual worlds to establish the first guiding principle of a global governance architecture for virtual worlds, which is scheduled for the first half of 2025. This conference should discuss options for future global policy forums, to discuss the needs for key Internet-related standards, including the key topic of identifiers, based on the work of existing initiatives and considering possible options for the future technical architecture to manage these standards

Ensuring that everyone has access to all key public services online across the Union :

No one should be asked to provide data more often than necessary when accessing and using digital public services.

- Everyone should be empowered to take advantage of artificial intelligence by making their own, informed choices in the digital environment, while being protected from risks and harm to health, safety and fundamental rights.

- Continue to protect fundamental rights online, in particular freedom of expression and information.
- Taking measures to deal with all forms of illegal content, proportionate to the harm they may cause, and in full respect of the right to freedom of expression and information, and without establishing general monitoring obligations.
- Creating an online environment where people are protected against misinformation and other forms of harmful content.
- Protecting the interests of people, businesses and public institutions against cybercrimes, including data breaches and cyberattacks. This includes protecting your digital identity from identity theft or manipulation.
- Ensuring the ability to easily transfer personal data between different digital services.
- The EU is committed to ensuring a safe, secure and fair online environment where fundamental rights are protected and the responsibilities of platforms, especially big players and gatekeepers, are well defined.

According to the European Declaration of Digital Rights and the Principles for the Digital Decade, everyone should have access to safe, secure and privacy-protecting digital technologies, products and services. This involves protecting the interests of people, businesses and public institutions against cybercrime, including cyberattacks and data breaches, and countering those who seek to undermine the security of our online environment. This includes protecting your digital identity from identity theft or manipulation.

Human rights apply both online and offline. The same rights that people enjoy offline, whether civil and political rights, as well as economic, social or cultural rights, should also be protected online.

With the European Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade, the European Union sets out how its values and human rights should apply in the online world. This vision includes: putting people at the center of digital transformation; basic solidarity and inclusion; emphasizing the importance of freedom of choice; participation in the digital public space; safety, security empowerment; and sustainability

The EU continues to work with international partners to advance and promote a global, open, stable and secure cyberspace where international law, in particular the UN Charter, is respected and voluntary non-binding norms, rules and principles of responsible state behavior are observed. The UN Program of Action is essential to advance the implementation of norms of responsible state behavior in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and to promote engagement and cooperation of a multi-stakeholder approach to promote an open, secure, a stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace

A key focus is building trust in the digital ecosystem

Introduction of liability criteria for discrimination and misleading content

Digital ecosystems must be based on transparency and ensure the free flow and wide availability of high-quality and pluralistic information, providing citizens with rights against information manipulation and interference, including disinformation, online discrimination, gender-based violence and harassment, and misleading content online, while ensuring an open, stable, free, global, stable and inclusive, interoperable, reliable, secure and green internet and fully respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Key Commitments - Strengthen multilateral and multi-stakeholder commitment to address discriminatory content as well as false and misleading content at all levels, particularly within the United Nations and with other international and regional organizations, for transparent and accountable content management frameworks, which protects freedom of expression and improves the availability of accurate and reliable information in the public sphere, while fully respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. - Strengthening cooperation between public authorities, platforms and other technology users, media and civil society, to protect individuals against manipulation of information, including disinformation and other forms of harmful content, reducing hate online, by developing counter-messages and, for example, measures for non-discrimination, tolerance and respect, including through awareness-raising activities and public communication. , as well as addressing first the causes of inequalities, such as discriminatory structures, social norms and gender stereotypes.

Platforms must mitigate the risks arising from the use of their services, protect freedom of expression and promote free democratic debate online and be accountable for doing so . - Support cooperation and knowledge sharing on standard setting, policy making and policy implementation, promote information sharing to help governmental and non-governmental stakeholders address information manipulation and interference, including disinformation and other harmful content through human rights-compliant policies. - Sharing best practices in the UN context, such as some of those stemming from the EU Digital Services Act (DSA), which aims to create a transparent and safe online space to protect users against illegal content, online discrimination and cyber attack incidents. The DSA is to propose new consumer protection rules that will facilitate innovation by digital businesses in the online environment and provide opportunities for digital businesses while ensuring the protection of fundamental rights, including the consumer protection principle.

Promoting digital literacy and the development of lifelong digital competences, which is critical to strengthening the resilience of our societies to information manipulation and interference, including disinformation, and raising awareness of potential issues related to ethics, data protection and privacy, children's rights, Public authorities, platforms, media and other online actors, as well as civil society, should promote exposure to diverse cultural and multilingual information and media content to contribute to pluralistic public discourse, enhance inclusion and strengthen resistance to information manipulation and interference, including misinformation. – Supporting media freedom and protecting the safety of journalists online. - Public authorities and private actors should refrain from using the Internet to undermine democratic electoral infrastructure, elections and political processes, including through covert information manipulation campaigns. - Protecting global security in the context of countering Foreign Information Manipulation and

Interference (FIMI), including state-sponsored interference, as well as combating violence and hate speech

Promoting the regulation of artificial intelligence/AI

As AI expands, the European Union is guided by a human rights-oriented and pro-innovation approach to AI based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. For the EU, international human rights law and standards form the basis and are at the center of all considerations related to existing and emerging challenges, as well as all regulations and measures affecting the whole life cycle of new and emerging technologies. Trust and transparency in AI systems is critical to their adoption and sustainability. Human oversight, transparency, risk management and explainability are the main principles by which to regulate technological business models and their applications. In the absence of such oversight, people affected by decisions made by AI should have the right to appeal those decisions. The question is what role will AI play in our future digital society and how should AI impact our lives? How we develop our technology shapes the future of our society.

Digital transformation in Bulgaria

The new European policy program " Digital decade " /DDPP until 2030 was adopted by DECISION (EU) 2022/2481 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL in 2022 .

Ministry of e-governance /MEG is the coordinator for Bulgaria on DDPP and a package of documents are approved by the Council on the Digital Decade and the Development Council, with Decision of the Council of Ministers in 2024.

Every year, starting in 2023, the European Commission publishes the State of the Digital Decade, which looks at the EU's progress in its digital transformation that benefits people, business and the environment. Progress is measured in 4 key areas: digital infrastructure , digital skills, digitalization of public services and digitalization of business through the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) is based on a set of indicators providing a multi-dimensional, detailed picture of the collective annual progress made by the EU towards the 2030 targets. The DESI consists of a dashboard of indicators fully aligned with the digital goals. It includes all key indicators (KPIs) for which values are available or projected at national level.

The DESI 2024 indicator scoreboard includes a total of 36 indicators, 15 of which are Digital Decade KPIs. To enable a clear link between the indicators and the associated objectives, the indicators are grouped into dimensions related to the Digital Decade objectives and sub-dimensions populated by KPIs and supporting associated indicators. The indicators and metadata of the DESI dashboard can be accessed and analyzed through the visualization tool: for all available years.

Report:

| Digital Decade KPI | Bulgaria | | | EU | | Digital Decade target by 2030 | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| | DESI 2023 | DESI 2024 | Annual progress | DESI 2024 (year 2023) | Annual progress | BG | EU |
| Fixed Very High-Capacity Network (VHCN) | 85.6% | 88.6% | 3.5% | 78.8% | 7.4% | 100% | 100% |
| Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) coverage | 85.6% | 88.6% | 3.5% | 64.0% | 13.5% | 100% | - |
| Overall 5G coverage | 67.2% | 70.9% | 5.4% | 89.3% | 9.8% | 100% | 100% |
| Semiconductors | | NA | | | | | |
| Edge Nodes | | 5 | | 1 186 | | x | 10 000 |
| SMEs with at least a basic level of digital intensity | 25.2% | 28.4% | 6.2% | 57.7% | 2.6% | 60% | 90% |
| Cloud | 9.9% | 14.2% | 19.8% | 38.9% | 7.0% | 15% | 75% |
| Artificial Intelligence | 3.3% | 3.6% | 4.4% | 8.0% | 2.6% | 11% | 75% |
| Data analytics | NA | 21.9% | NA | 33.2% | NA | 9% | 75% |
| AI or Cloud or Data analytics | NA | 29.3% | NA | 54.6% | NA | 35% | 75% |
| Unicorns | | 0 | | 263 | | x | 500 |
| At least basic digital skills | 31.2% | 35.5% | 6.7% | 55.6% | 1.5% | 52% | 80% |
| ICT specialists | 3.8% | 4.3% | 13.2% | 4.8% | 4.3% | 5% | ~10% |
| e ID scheme notification | | Yes | | | | | |
| Digital public services for citizens | 59.5 | 67.5 | 13.4% | 79.4 | 3.1% | 100 | 100 |
| Digital public services for businesses | 80.8 | 91.9 | 13.8% | 85.4 | 2.0% | 100 | 100 |
| Access to e-Health records | 77.2 | 77.2 | 0.0% | 79.1 | 10.6% | 100 | 100 |

In the Ministry of e-governance/MEG an ICT Council is working in order to collaborate effectively in a multistakeholder manner.

We implement measures within the fourth national action plan under the "Open Government Partnership" initiative:

"Conducting a national assessment of Internet development in Bulgaria through the framework of UNESCO's Internet Universality Indicators ROAMX" and

"Implementation of various forms of effective public dialogue to develop common standards in the use of artificial intelligence in the digitalization process in order to ensure guarantees of equal access and respect for human rights"

CONFEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS and INDUSTRIALS IN BULGARIA/ CRIB'S OPINION
as a member of the ICT Community Advisory Board in the Ministry of e-governance

We present to your attention an opinion of the Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria (CRIB) in response to the three questions raised by Working Group "Internet" of the Council of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (CWG-Internet):

Question 1: How can relevant multilateral and multistakeholder processes, including UN-based processes such as the Future Summit, WSIS+20 and the IGF, address aspects related to Internet development?

CRIB's response:

CRIB, representing significant economic forces in Bulgaria, recognizes the critical role of international cooperation in shaping Internet policies that promote development and innovation. By engaging in multi-stakeholder processes such as those mentioned in the question itself, CRIB SEES its role in to emphasize the importance of creating policies that support the digital transformation of the Bulgarian economy and, more broadly, the European one. This includes steps such as working together to draft regulations that encourage INVESTMENT in digital infrastructure, promoting the digital literacy of workers and ensuring that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have equal access to digital resources.

Question 2: What are the Challenges and Opportunities, Good Practices and the enabling policy environment for strengthening and improving Internet connectivity, including in areas such as promoting meaningful connectivity and encouraging public and private sector investment in Internet infrastructure?

CRIB's response:

The main challenge identified by CRIB is in overcoming the digital divide, especially in the underdeveloped regions of Bulgaria. CRIB sees an opportunity in this to mobilize targeted European funds to improve broadband connectivity, as well as to work in a consultative mode on policies that stimulate private investment in network infrastructure. ALL regulations that facilitate the easier implementation of new technologies such as 5G and optical fibers can be cited as good practices. Where appropriate, CRIB can point to successful good practices implemented by its member organizations that demonstrate successful strategies for digital inclusion and skills development.

Question 3: How can we encourage multi-stakeholder international collaboration on public policy issues aimed at promoting the development of aspects of the Internet?

CRIB's response:

The process is logical and includes the promotion of dialogue between the participants in the topic, _state and European authorities, branch organizations and industry. It should also be noted here the key role at the national level that CRIB can play, especially in the relationship between business and international bodies. CRIB has proven to work successfully with the other major employer organizations within the Association of Bulgarian Employers' Organizations and is in a position to present a unified national perspective at international forums and high-level DISCUSSIONS. Such an approach will help design Internet policies that clearly recognize and support the specific needs of transition economies in their. digital policy development. . Moreover, through active participation in European and global forums to determine future policies in the field, CRIB will ensure that the voices of Bulgarian business are heard, especially in discussions on Internet governance, digital economy and cyber security.