



## Summary of Session: Digital platform regulation

Organiser: UNESCO

Date and Time: Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 09:15-10:15

ALFM: WSIS Action Line C9: Media

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2023/Agenda/Session/316>

### Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The internet and social media have empowered societies with enormous opportunities for people to communicate, engage, and learn. The digital world holds potential for marginalized communities, democratizing spaces for communication and opportunities to have diverse voices engage with one another, to be heard and seen. However, these have been gradually eroded over recent decades.  
However, the governance and culture on platforms are rules informed by dominant cultural norms putting people against each other, bringing out their fears, anger and hate.
- Meanwhile, across the world, governments are introducing laws to regulate content. UNESCO is therefore developing its new Guidelines on digital platform regulation, prioritizing inclusion, and encouraging the empowerment of users to access and make decisions about their content engagement. The aim of the Guidelines is to support the development and implementation of regulatory processes that guarantee freedom of expression and access to information.
- The session aimed to take advantage of the WSIS multistakeholder community to consult and analyze the 2.0 draft of the Guidelines to hear their views on some important questions such as the multistakeholder approach of the guidelines, the level of detail and granularity, the scope of the guidelines, and the actions that should be taken in order to make sure that the guidelines could be use in different contexts and realities and were future proofed.
- The main take aways of the session are the following:
  - When pursuing regulation for digital platforms there is a need to be clear about what is that we want to achieve and how is that we will achieve it. Once the objective is well set, there is a need to identify with clarity who would be the stakeholders / companies in the scope.
  - Setting a standard base on human rights principles requires reminding everyone those principles and include them as a preamble so every stakeholder involve abides to them.
  - There is an increase necessity to bring to the table the different companies and to find ways where they can engage with the different stakeholders in the different countries they operate.



- When it comes to regulating digital platforms, It is very important to find a correct balance between been to detailed (this can happen related to transparency considerations) or leave some flexibility for the operation (for instance in the case of content moderation).
- Regulating digital platforms requires a look at the advertising market.

Towards WSIS+20 and WSIS beyond 2025, please share your views on the emerging trends, challenges, achievements, and opportunities in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines to date (5-8 bullets)

- UNESCO sees the development of the Guidelines as contributing to the WSIS action Lines as well as the implementation of the proposals set out in “Our Common Agenda”. This includes the preparation of the UN Summit of the Future to be held in September 2024, and namely the development of the Global Digital Compact. UNESCO is also working with DGC to help steer the development of the Code of Conduct for Information on Digital Platforms, and we are pleased to participate in the working group for that process.
- Great challenges remain in the way technology companies and specifically digital platforms companies are involved in these processes and engage with the broader multistakeholder community. As they become more powerful, they also leave these spaces to lower-level officers or simply abandon them. WSIS is the perfect space to bring together the full stack of companies that have something to say and do in fighting the most important issues that are affecting the media and the full exercise of human rights in the digital ecosystem.

Tangible outcomes (such as key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments (3-5 bullet points)

- The session allowed UNESCO to gain further feedback and specific inputs for the next draft of the Guidelines for regulating digital platforms: a multistakeholder approach for safeguarding freedom of expression and information. The inputs gathered during this session will be consider in the 3.0 draft of the document and in the next stage of the consultation process.

Actionable plan (2-5 points)

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Suggestions for thematic aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2024 (WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event) (one paragraph)

- Regulation of digital platforms (the evolution and the impact on human rights)