

PRESS RELEASE

After 10 years of Swiss IGF: ‘Swiss Internet & Digital Governance’ association founded

Zurich, 19.03.2025 - The Swiss internet governance community has reached an important milestone: with the founding of the ‘Swiss Internet & Digital Governance’ association, the successful dialogue platform Swiss Internet Governance Forum (Swiss IGF) is being transferred to a new structure. OFCOM's patronage of the Swiss IGF will be continued.

The Swiss IGF is the national offshoot of the UN Internet Governance Forum (UN IGF), which was launched in 2005 at the UN World Summit on the Information Society. Since 2015, the Swiss IGF, under the auspices of the Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM), has provided a central platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue on internet and digital policy issues in Switzerland and is enjoying steadily growing numbers of participants.

The Swiss IGF is characterised by its inclusive ‘bottom-up’ approach: representatives from politics, business, science and civil society discuss the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation in Switzerland on an equal footing. Any interested person or institution can take part in the Swiss IGF. The agenda is determined by a ‘Call for Issues’, in which all interest groups can propose topics - from cybersecurity and artificial intelligence to net neutrality and platform regulation. As a nationwide initiative, the forum will be held predominantly in German, French and English.

The founding of the association now enables the Swiss IGF to be more broadly supported in the national community and simplifies long-term co-financing by third parties. The Mercator Foundation Switzerland is laying the foundation for this with a generous three-year grant aimed at establishing a structure supported by the community. ‘The aim of the funding is to ensure the financial and structural independence of the Swiss IGF in the long term. This is central to the credibility of the conference as a neutral platform for intersectoral, digital policy dialogue,’ says Riccardo Ramacci, Portfolio Manager Digitalisation and Democracy at Mercator.

‘After ten years of successful informal development work, the time was ripe for this step,’ explains Thomas Schneider, Deputy Director of OFCOM and co-initiator of the Swiss IGF 10 years ago. ‘The new association will continue the proven basic principles of open dialogue and inclusive participation of all interest groups. OFCOM continues to support the organisation of the conference and is pleased that the new set-up will allow even better involvement of the community and other projects in addition to the annual conference.’ OFCOM continues to act as patron of the Swiss IGF and contributes to its funding.

From an executive point of view, the founding of the association marks the end of the successful development work of the co-secretariat with Jacques Beglinger and Livia Walpen, who have brought the Swiss IGF to its current significance with great care. Nicolas Zahn, who has been a member of the Swiss IGF core team for some time, is taking over the management of the new structure. ‘It gives me great pleasure to take on this task. The Swiss IGF has grown continuously in recent years and the understanding of the importance of such a unique platform for constructive digital policy dialogue is constantly increasing. The new structure will allow us to grow sustainably and further deepen this dialogue by involving all stakeholder groups. The goal for 2025 is clearly to establish this new structure and actively expand our member base, also in order to expand and broaden the Board of Directors at the next General Assembly. Another important goal will be to develop a sustainable financing

model. The Swiss IGF has proven over the years that it creates value for the digital governance community, which is why I am confident that we will find a solid model here.’

In the new structure, the association will continue to organise the Swiss Internet Governance Forum conference, which will take place this year in October. Following its foundation and an initial General Assembly, the association invites interested stakeholders from the digital governance community to join. The next General Assembly will take place at the beginning of October 2025 as part of the Swiss IGF Conference and will provide an opportunity for broad participation by the various stakeholder groups. Further information can be found on the website: <https://www.igf.swiss>

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