

IGF 2020

BPF on Local Content: a proposal for its continuity in 2020

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II – BACKGROUND

Linguistic diversity and the need to nurture and develop local content has been a concern from the earliest days of the Internet. It was identified as one of the action lines in the Geneva Plan of Action and still today is one of the main obstacles to access the global Internet, when a local offer of contents and services in the local languages is scant or inexistent.

A BPF on local content (BPFLC) was first established in 2014 with a focus on how to create an enabling environment for the development of local content. In 2017 the IGF MAG once again convened this BPF and it collected examples of initiatives that succeeded in stimulating the creation of local cultural assets, and extracted experiences and lessons learned with the goal to inspire policy makers and other stakeholders.

In 2018 the BPFLC examined the relationship between local Internet access provision and the development of locally relevant content and services. The focus was on both enabling a sustainable local content value chain, and the economic viability of creating and providing locally relevant content.

In 2019 the BPFLC decided to extend the scope of its issues, with special emphasis on preservation and promotion of languages and heritage under conditions in which cultural and linguistic diversity, artefacts and histories are sometimes at risk as a result of political and social shifts and upheavals.

III – DESCRIPTION

We have plenty of reasons to think that the main issues taken up in 2019 are still pertinent for the continuation of this BPF in 2020, among them:

- Practices demonstrating the benefits and risks of enforcing author (or community) rights on cultural assets.
- State support for creativity in all cultural fields is central (incidentally, this already happens in nearly all developed countries and is even a major export item in several of their economies when proper conditions apply).
- How the UNESCO convention on cultural diversity may positively impact on fair trade of digital cultural goods.
- A reflection on the various mechanisms of direct or indirect support to local content production: not only State aids and grants, but also other indirect mechanisms such as quotas of local production, obligation to reinvest in local cultural production a part of the profits of multinational companies, stimulus to public service media.
- Consider cases which illustrate how and how much Internet platforms contribute to the production and circulation of local content to the benefit of local/national cultures.
- Development of local capacities for proper digitization of local content, including an enabling environment to secure digital assets while minimizing barriers to their broad use.
- Development of local capacities to use cryptography for protection of sensitive content. Include the creative use of local networks and encrypted tools by communities to protect their

content without renouncing to broader communication in a safer way. This includes the free use of locally available spectrum to effectively enable community networks and media.

- In this sense, the issue of digital sovereignty raised by the EU and by some European governments applies also to this specific field, where the localization of citizens' data related to contents and the content itself are not negligible.

However, this is a list of issues which is too broad for the intersessional process to handle meaningfully. The consultant and co-facilitators are thus proposing that in 2020 the BPF concentrates its work on one key element that emerged from the 2019 outcome report: the need to further explore issues related to the protection, preservation and remuneration of creative work and collective wisdom, from a local content perspective. As such, the BPF will focus on:

- **How to protect, preserve and remunerate creative work and collective wisdom in order to create a sustainable model for the production, distribution and local fruition of local content in the digital age. This may involve intellectual ownership rights, communities' intellectual property rights, ownership of national or community identifiers of natural resources, protection of creative works and so on.**

The goal is to compile and then analyse case studies of good practices from different sectors (e.g. private sector, media sector, governments and international organizations like WIPO, UNESCO, civil society organizations, community groups and so on).

Possible angles that could be covered in the BPF work include:

- Successful examples of remuneration of creative work (traditional and innovative ones over the Internet).
- Successful examples of remuneration and protection of traditional/collective wisdom (traditional and innovative ones over the Internet).
- Comparison of various existing models to protect different kinds of rights, and the opportunities and challenges they bring when it comes to the development and protection of local content.
- Successful examples of approaches that help local communities develop their creative products/services
- Best practices about the creation of virtuous circles to put in direct relations producers and final users through innovative solutions
- Approaches for protecting against risks of commercial takeover of local/indigenous identifiers of natural/cultural assets (e.g. the cases of “babaçu”, “cupuaçu” and the Japanese food companies).

IV – INPUTS FROM 2019

The BPFCLC continues to be an opportunity to reflect about these issues, some of which go beyond enabling production of local culture. The recommendations of the outcome document of 2019 serve as inputs to guide the work of the BPF, and in particular to seek local practices related to them:

- With the onslaught of imposed development discourses and practices, with limited ability to shield vulnerable local communities from their impact, we need to devise ways to mitigate the dilution of local specificities in the name of global modernity.
- Build up the repository of indigenous populations and cultures, through safe networking as a tool to preserve knowledge, enhance cultural assets, including enhancing capacity for digitization of local assets.
- Local governments and administrations should respect and foster free/libre and open source software (FLOSS) and promote local technologies.

- Encourage appropriate, localized, eco-responsible technologies compatible with local values and that do not necessarily enforce dominant biases.
- Advocate for public policies which effectively preserve local indigenous languages, with adequate planning, effective government support and supporting budget.
- Effective policy is needed to support digitization of existing archives and historical records along with resource-based and economic support for researchers and technicians working on documenting and disseminating diverse local languages and cultural heritage and traditions. Public/state media infrastructure should join these efforts and be in condition to help implement these goals.
- Active participation of speakers in the use, documentation, dissemination and revitalization of their own languages and cultures is essential.

IV – ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR CONTINUATION AND BROADENING THE SCOPE

- One of the initial efforts will be to regroup the people and entities who have been participating in the BPF dialogues.
- Particular attention will be given to the activities undertaken by International organizations active in these fields, which will be invited to be actively involved in the activities of the BPF throughout the year.
- Try to reach as many national and regional IGFs as possible on time to stimulate their organizers to consider pursuing the issues of this BPF (and others as well) in their sessions. This should be carried out in sync with the IGF Secretariat's facilitation activities of NRIs.