



## **GIPI Russia Overview February 2002**

### **Introduction**

The GIPI program in Russia started work in earnest in mid-2001, when key senior staff were appointed. The main objective of GIPI Russia is to promote the adoption of the legal and regulatory framework that will support development of open, decentralized, market-driven and transparent information and communications networks in Russia. GIPI Russia works to educate deputies of the State Duma and other policymakers on a non-partisan basis. GIPI also provides technical assistance on policy issues. For example, at the request of the Duma Information Policy Committee GIPI prepared analyses of the draft laws “On digital signatures” and “On e-commerce.” (The digital signatures law was passed by the Duma in late November 2001 and signed by the President in January 2002; the latter law is expected to be approved in 2002.)

President Vladimir Putin has expressed his support for the idea of government openness furthered by use of the Internet. At a Civic Forum Putin said: “One of the brightest examples ... of solutions to social, ecological, charity, information and educational issues... has been the Russian Internet, the development of which has largely been the work of non-governmental and non-profit organizations. Its creation has given rise to a fundamentally new system of public oversight over the quality and reliability of information, including information about the work of government bodies, and it continues to exert influence over administrative decision-making.”

### **Activity Highlights**

- Five Duma committees are involved in the preparation of legislation regarding information and communications technologies (ICT). Consistent with its independent posture, GIPI works with all participants in the policy development process, and has perhaps been of most assistance to a non-political professional group – the Duma Legal Administration (LA). The LA has the important role of analyzing all federal legislation presented to the Duma, and its conclusions need to be taken into account by all Duma factions and individuals when considering legislation. The LA asked GIPI to examine the draft laws on digital signatures and e-commerce to identify any contradictions with existing legislation.
- Towards the end of 2001, GIPI began cooperating with a coalition of Duma members calling themselves “Electronic Russia.” Composed of 38 deputies drawn from all factions represented in the Duma, the goal of this caucus is to promote the passage of laws establishing a framework favorable to ICT development in Russia.

- With the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), GIPI is working with the Chief Information Officer of the Government Information Administration to organize a CIS summit conference for the spring or summer of 2002 on information society principles.
- In November 2001, GIPI participated in a Civic Forum, held at the Kremlin, designed to increase dialogue on ICT development between civil society and government. The Forum attracted almost 5,000 Russian NGOs – the largest gathering of such groups for many years – and was attended by the President and many senior government officials. At the Forum, working with the Glasnost Defense Foundation, GIPI organized a roundtable discussion on “Guarantees and Methods for Ensuring Openness of Government Information.” One outcome of the roundtable was a set of recommendations prepared by GIPI, urging high level (Prime Ministerial) approval for federal legislation to require federal executive government bodies to place information on the Internet. This recommendation was cited by the Minister for Print and Broadcasting as one of the most positive outcomes of the Forum.
- GIPI is monitoring possible moves by the Ministry of Communications to implement licensing restrictions on web hosting services, and is exploring ways of eliminating a “fee” currently being charged by the same Ministry on all services which it licenses, including ISPs.
- GIPI is working with the Ministry of Justice to find ways to limit an initiative that would require ISPs to provide an unlimited back-channel tap to the secret services.

#### **Linkages: People and Organizations**

- GIPI has been working with the UNDP, which, during the second half of 2001, was redesigning its approach to ICT development in Russia. GIPI helped facilitate the visit of senior advisors from UNDP headquarters, and arranged for meetings with key government, Duma, private sector and NGO officials. As a result, GIPI expects to be cooperating with UNDP Russia on implementation of a reformulated ICT strategy in 2002.
- GIPI maintains on-going contact with the Government Information Administration’s Chief Information Officer. In recent months, he has been working to introduce elements of e-governance to Russia – a series of measures intended to make government officials more accessible to the public.
- GIPI is a key participant in the “Internet and Law Conference,” an informal working group of academic, governmental and commercial members, who are working together to develop a roundtable on ICT policy issues.

#### **In Depth: GIPI Facilitates Launch of Duma Coalition “Electronic Russia”**

On December 18, 2001, the Global Internet Policy Initiative (GIPI) hosted the first working meeting for members of “Electronic Russia,” an inter-factional group of Duma deputies. Thirty-eight deputies representing all the parties and factions within the Russian State Duma have

officially joined “Electronic Russia,” whose goal is to promote the passage of legislation on Internet regulation and development in Russia. The chairman of the group, Deputy Valentin Shubin (Union of Right Forces), approached GIPI Russia about facilitating such a gathering in order to begin a dialogue between “Electronic Russia” and the main stakeholders in the Russian ICT community.

In addition to members of “Electronic Russia,” GIPI Russia invited to the meeting influential officials from government ministries and agencies concerned with ICT regulation and development, and representatives of major businesses providing Internet content and services. Following comments by “Electronic Russia” chairman Valentine Shubin, presentations were made by GIPI Russia director Fyodor Kravchenko, the head of the Department of Information Security of the Russian Federation Security Council Anatoly Streltsov, the Deputy Minister for Communications and Informatization, Alexander Volokitin, the president of the Union of Internet Operators Marat Guriev, and the president of one of the leading Internet providers “Relkom-Business Network” Aleksei Soldatov.

The gathering provided an opportunity to summarize the legislative developments that occurred in the field of Internet regulation in 2001, as well as to formulate a 2002 workplan for “Electronic Russia.” GIPI Russia prepared and distributed a report summarizing the main legal developments concerning ICT in 2001, the *Bulletin of Legislative Activities in the Sphere of ICT, 2001*. It was decided that GIPI would continue to collaborate with “Electronic Russia” in 2002 by providing the group with expert analysis of proposed Internet and ICT legislation, preparing monthly updates on legislative developments in Russia and abroad, and organizing further gatherings of “Electronic Russia” with the participation of outside experts on Internet regulation.

Following the gathering, various committees of the State Duma asked for additional copies of the GIPI *Bulletin of Legislative Activities in the Sphere of ICT, 2001* and background information on GIPI itself.

### **About GIPI**

The Global Internet Policy Initiative is a joint project of Internews and the Center for Democracy and Technology. It supports adoption in developing countries of the legal and policy framework for an open and democratic Internet. The project works with local stakeholders in consultative, coalition-based efforts to promote the principles of a decentralized, accessible, user-controlled, and market-driven Internet. For more information about GIPI in Russia, contact the director of GIPI Russia, Fyodor Kravchenko ([kravchenko@internews.ru](mailto:kravchenko@internews.ru)) or visit <http://www.gipiproject.org/>