



# GLOBAL INTERNET POLICY INITIATIVE

First Quarter - 2003  
PROGRESS REPORT

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- GIPI begins working in Vietnam, and hires new coordinators in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kazakhstan.
- A national Internet peering exchange is created in India.
- Progress on tax exemptions for IT in Armenia and Tajikistan.
- Draft laws on e-signatures, e-documents, e-payments and informatization submitted to parliament in Uzbekistan.
- ISP licensing simplified in Armenia, and avoided in Bulgaria.

## ARMENIA (David Sandukhchyan, GIPI-AM coordinator):

- In January 2003, simplified rules for the licensing of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) came into force in Armenia. Under the new regulations, ISPs will no longer be required to submit technical plans in order to get a license and the regulator will have less control over ISP business decisions. GIPI-AM had put great effort into achieving this change.
- In February, at the request of the government, GIPI-AM reviewed the new rules for Internet services drafted by the Ministry of Transport and Communication. GIPI's analysis identified potential problems for ISPs (e.g., provisions making ISPs responsible for verifying that their customers use only government-certified modems, a requirement that Internet cafes register their customers' identities, etc.). In response to our criticisms the Ministry revised their draft rules to incorporate GIPI-AM's suggestions.
- In March, the Armenian Support Council for ICT Development asked the working group on ICT law (which GIPI-AM leads) to draft a proposal for exempting certain categories of computing equipment from value-added taxes, to reduce prices to end-users.

## AZERBAIJAN (Yashar Hajiyev, GIPI-AZ coordinator):

- GIPI-AZ worked with officials from the Ministry of Economic Development to identify shortcomings in the licensing procedures for ICT services. At the request of the ministry, GIPI-AZ will continue to suggest licensing policies that are more consistent with the best international practices.
- As part of the legal working group of the National ICT Strategy agency, GIPI submitted comments on draft e-signature legislation to Parliament.

- GIPI-AZ is working with the UNDP to create an Azerbaijan E-Policy Report that can be used to promote foreign investment in Azerbaijan's ICT markets. GIPI-AZ's coordinator drafted the chapter on "Legislation in the ICT Sphere."

#### BELARUS (Vadim Dryganov, GIPI-BY coordinator):

- In February, GIPI-BY assisted a World Bank working group that is preparing an "E-Readiness" assessment for Belarus. GIPI helped the group obtain market data, identify reforms needed in licensing policies and regulation of the telecommunications market, and identify barriers to alternative technologies (such as VSAT and VoIP) which should be removed.
- In March GIPI-BY played a key role in organizing Belarus' 5<sup>th</sup> Internet Forum. The event attracted more than 200 participants, including members of Parliament. Thirty-three lectures on topics of interest to the national Internet community were offered. The forum also featured a roundtable discussion for ISPs to address issues of mutual concern ranging from pricing policies to Internet exchange points.

#### BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA (Anisa Setka, GIPI-BA coordinator):

- In January, Anisa Setka became GIPI's coordinator for BiH.
- The second of four workshops for members of the Bosnian ISP Association took place in Sarajevo on 20 February. Representatives of the Ministry of Communication, BH Telecom and journalists also participated. The workshop was led by Joseph McNamee, the European ISP Association's spokesman and regulatory affairs manager. It focused on ISP licensing issues and improving the relationships among the Bosnian ISP Association, the communication ministry and the regulatory agency. The Balkan ISP Workshop Series is sponsored by the Open Society Institute.

#### BULGARIA (Veni Markovski, GIPI-BG coordinator):

- GIPI-BG's coordinator presented a lecture on "Internet as New Media – Opportunities for Ethnic Minorities and Disadvantaged Groups" at a two-day conference in Sofia in January.
- Our coordinator spent two weeks in Geneva participating in the second preparatory meeting for the ITU's upcoming World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).
- In March, GIPI-BG succeeded in convincing the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications to remove new requirements for ISP licensing from the draft telecommunications law while it was under final consideration.

#### GEORGIA (Nino Kuntseva-Gabashvili, GIPI-GE coordinator):

- Working with another local organization (the Association of Transmittance, Informatization and Democracy), GIPI-GE organized a roundtable discussion among small and medium-sized businesses on "Problems and Perspectives of Development of E-Commerce in Georgia." During this discussion, GIPI-GE offered policy recommendations on draft e-commerce and e-signature laws. These recommendations were also presented to the Ministry of Economy and the Parliamentary Committee on Economic Reforms.

#### INDIA (Rishi Chawla, GIPI-IN coordinator):

- GIPI-IN has been involved from the beginning in creating the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI), which started operating in four cities during March. Our coordinator had convened meetings, developed business models, researched technical options, led the process of registering NIXI as a nonprofit company and designed its website ([www.nixi.org](http://www.nixi.org)). He worked with the Ministry of Communications and IT to obtain an \$858,000 grant from the Indian Government to build the peering exchange, and he now serves as NIXI's Policy, Legal and Technical Co-ordinator.

#### INDONESIA (Mas Wigrantoro Setiyadi, GIPI-ID coordinator):

- In January, GIPI-ID participated in public discussions of the government's plans to restructure and privatize INDOSAT, Indonesia's international telecommunications operator.
- Indonesia is implementing a new telecommunications law that requires the creation of an independent regulatory authority. GIPI-ID reviewed proposals for the new regulator and provided recommendations to improve the organizational plan, the process of staff selection, licensing procedures and other aspects of the agency. As a result of this input, GIPI was invited to continue participating as an advisor throughout this process.
- In March, GIPI-ID collaborated with several other organizations to convene a workshop on cybersecurity which was attended by about 300 people. GIPI's presentation at the event was entitled "The Urgency of A Comprehensive Cyber Crime Law to Protect IT Users: A Public Policy Approach to Answer the Need to Fight Against Cyber Crimes."

#### KAZAKHSTAN (Sofia Essenova, GIPI-KZ coordinator):

- In January, GIPI-KZ worked to support and register Kazakhstan's delegation to the PrepCom2 conference for the ITU's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which took place in February.
- A new GIPI-KZ coordinator began working in February: Sofia Essenova. One of her first projects involved discussions with the Research Institute of Legality, Law and Order on e-signature legislation to identify areas of possible collaboration. Towards that end, GIPI-KZ prepared a list of topical resources for researchers at the Institute.
- GIPI-KZ analyzed the draft law "On Communications" and then proposed some needed revisions to government officials.

#### KYRGYZ REPUBLIC (Shamaral Maichiev, GIPI-KG coordinator):

- In January, GIPI-KG suggested changes to a bill designed to impose hefty "universal service" fees on companies seeking to provide international and long-distance telephone service.
- In March, GIPI-KG participated in a workshop arranged by the President and Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic and UNDP. During the workshop, GIPI-KG made recommendations on several key issue areas, including e-government, e-economy, e-education, legislation and investments. These recommendations, along with those of other participants, will be submitted to the offices of the President and Prime Minister, and to Parliament.

#### NIGERIA (Maxwell Kadiri, GIPI-NG coordinator):

- GIPI-NG prepared a report highlighting the negative impact of the regulator's current restrictions on use of the ISM bands for the commercial provision of wireless Internet access. As a result of GIPI-NG's report, the Nigerian Communications Commission agreed to work towards a solution to the problem that is more acceptable to the local ISP community. The first step towards this goal was a ten-month postponement of the deadline NCC imposed on commercial wireless providers to vacate the affected ISM spectrum.
- GIPI-NG's coordinator helped organize a new "Civil Society Coalition on ICT Policy and Development In Nigeria" and will continue supplying it with information and advice.
- GIPI-NG closely monitored the final consideration of the draft telecommunications bill by the National Assembly. GIPI had provided substantive input on various parts of this important legislation.
- As requested by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), our coordinator presented his research into Nigerian laws that need to be repealed or amended to make them consistent with an IT-driven economy.

#### RUSSIA (Aleksandra Belyaeva, GIPI-RU coordinator):

- Internews and the Citizens' Initiative for Internet Policy (CIIP, GIPI's implementing partner in Moscow) received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York for a two-year project on information security policy in Russia. The grant will enable CIIP to organize workshops, translate relevant policy documents, arrange visits by experts and sponsor legal research. "We want to ensure that Russia's regulatory framework for information security reflects internationally recognized best practices," said George Sadowsky, GIPI's executive director.

#### SERBIA (Slobodan Markovic, GIPI-YU coordinator):

- In January, our assessment of Serbia's ICT policy environment was submitted for review by USAID. A revised version was recently posted on GIPI's website (<http://www.internetpolicy.net/>).
- As part of our OSI-sponsored "Balkan ISP Workshops," Joseph McNamee, regulatory affairs manager for EuroISPA, led two seminars in Belgrade during February. The first – on regulation – was for members of the Yugoslav ISP Association. The second – on Internet/telephone convergence issues – was for journalists and ISPs.
- In March, one of our closest collaborators – the head of the Bureau for Internet and Informatics in the Serbian Ministry of Science – was fired after criticizing the government for only paying lip service to informatization. His firing – as well as the assassination of the prime minister a few days later, and the declaration of a state of emergency – disrupted several projects in which we are actively involved, including reform of the top-level country domain.

#### TAJIKISTAN (Asomiddin Atoev, GIPI-TJ coordinator):

- In January, GIPI's local coordinator signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tajikistan's Minister of Communication, regarding their future cooperation.
- GIPI-TJ provided recommendations to the Ministry of Communications on tax reforms that would be conducive to Internet growth. Based on these recommendations, the

Ministry of Communications drafted a law “On Amendments to the Tax Code” to exempt imports of computer and telecommunications equipment and parts, software, computer books and computer training centers from value-added taxes. Three additional ministries voiced support for this legislation, which is now being considered by the government.

- In March, GIPI-TJ prepared a report on the ICT situation in Tajikistan for the Ministry of Communications. The report noted the positive impact of competition in the local Internet market, which is producing a rapid growth in the number of active Internet users in Tajikistan: more than a 400% increase during the previous 12 months.

#### UKRAINE (Maria Shkarlat, GIPI-UA coordinator):

- GIPI-UA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Parliament for GIPI-UA to create an online forum to promote public access to, and discussion of, Ukraine’s IT laws and policies. Draft laws on e-documents, e-signatures, telecommunications, open software and national information policies were posted on the website during January. Public online discussion of these laws began in February.
- In March, GIPI-UA participated in a special sitting of the Parliamentary Committee on Construction, Transport and Communications’ for consideration of the draft law “On Telecommunications.” GIPI-UA was invited to participate in further meetings of parliament on this draft law.
- GIPI-UA and the Ukrainian Internet Association held joint press conferences in seven parts of the country during March. These events focused on the importance of training in the use of information technology for local community development.

#### UZBEKISTAN (Shaukat R. Valitov, GIPI-UZ coordinator):

- GIPI-UZ organized a seminar on the legal situation for intellectual property protection in Uzbekistan on February 4<sup>th</sup>. The focus of this event was the legal status of electronic publications. Further seminars are planned on related issues.
- GIPI-UZ has been working with the UNDP in drafting new legislation on e-signatures, e-documents, e-payments and informatization. All of these laws were submitted to Parliament in March.
- GIPI-UZ’s coordinator helped select national experts for UNDP as they prepare to assess Uzbekistan’s “e-readiness.” Our coordinator will also participate in identifying readiness indicators and drafting the assessment.

#### VIETNAM (Duc Le, GIPI-VN coordinator):

- GIPI-VN launched its operations in Vietnam in March. Our coordinator’s first task is to prepare an assessment of the local telecommunications and Internet markets, to identify the most pressing policy issues. Future areas of GIPI-VN advocacy may include efforts: to make the domestic telecommunications market more competitive; to minimize the regulation and taxation of ISPs; to foster e-government; and to reduce government restrictions on the distribution of, and access to, Internet content.