

GSR-25 Consultation

“What does it take for regulators to become digital ecosystem builders?”

Contribution from Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina recognizes the vital role of digital transformation in fostering economic growth, innovation, and efficient public services. The country is committed to building a modern digital society by improving digital infrastructure, enhancing digital literacy, and aligning with EU standards.

As a national regulator, the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) Bosnia and Herzegovina pledges to develop, improve, and implement a regulatory framework that provides incentives and opportunities for investments in high-capacity broadband infrastructures, to promote competition and to ensure affordable and secure access to high-quality communication networks and services available, accessible and affordable for all.

In today’s digital age, ICT regulators must evolve beyond their traditional roles as rule enforcers and become digital ecosystem builders who proactively foster innovation, inclusion, trust, and agility. Therefore, following global trends, CRA monitors the development of the digital economy intending to address new regulatory challenges stemming from fast-evolving digital technologies.

It has been recognized that the transformation calls for a multidimensional agenda rooted in agile governance, institutional reform, responsible adoption of emerging technologies, and strengthened regional and global cooperation. A whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach is needed: regulators, ministries, industry sectors, and stakeholders must closely collaborate to ensure that digital transformation is inclusive, enforceable, and aligned with broader development goals.

The CRA believes that this can be achieved by acting in the following way:

1. Fostering Innovation in Regulatory Approaches

To lead innovation, regulators need access to tools such as regulatory sandboxes, living labs, and innovation hubs to gain insight into emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and blockchain. This opens opportunities for co-regulation and iterative learning in partnership with industry, academia, and civil society.

A whole-of-society approach is essential—regulators should co-create future-ready policies with startups, marginalized communities, digital rights organizations, and gender advocates. Internally, fostering a culture of innovation requires investment in new mindsets: data literacy, system thinking, risk-based governance, and ethical foresight. Regulators must also move from rule-centric to outcome-focused models, emphasizing flexibility, evidence, and public interest.

Where national strategies, such as AI strategy are absent, regulators can act as policy shapers—initiating national dialogues, proposing roadmaps, and embedding human rights and trust into AI governance from the outset.

2. Adapting and Enhancing Regulatory Capacity

To balance innovation with digital equity, regulators must evolve in three key areas: Mandate expansion to cover coordination of strategies such as AI and digital skills policies; Institutional capacity-building following ITU G5 Benchmark and Governance reform to integrate inclusive, rights-based digital transformation goals.

A whole-of-government approach is vital: regulators should lead or support inter-ministerial councils, ethics boards, and national digital task forces. This ensures coherence, avoids duplication, and promotes public sector digital readiness.

At the same time, regulators must address structural inclusion gaps—including the gender digital divide, rural connectivity, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. The capacity building should be extended not only to regulatory staff but also to public officials, SMEs, and educators. Promoting digital skills and AI literacy ensures the entire ecosystem is equipped to govern responsibly and inclusively.

3. Harnessing Transformative Technologies for Regulatory Excellence

Regulators must leverage transformative tools such as AI for real-time monitoring, predictive compliance, and service automation; Big data for evidence-based decision-making; Blockchain for transparency and accountability and IoT for infrastructure oversight and smart public services.

Using open data platforms, AI-based tools, and interactive consultations, regulators can promote stakeholder participation and civic oversight.

Internally, fostering interdisciplinary teams and continuous digital upskilling will allow regulators to shift from compliance-centric processes to agile, responsive governance.

4. Cross-Border Cooperation for Regional and Global Ecosystem Building

In a globally interconnected digital economy, no regulator operates in isolation. Cross-border cooperation is essential to avoid fragmentation and accelerate regional innovation. ICT regulators must actively participate in international bodies such as the ITU, WSIS, GSR, and regional regulatory associations.

A whole-of-government effort at the regional level, such as coordinated efforts in the Western Balkans or South-East Europe—can harmonize policies on AI, cybersecurity, data protection, and digital trade.

Through peer-learning platforms like the WSIS Forum, regulators can share tools and best practices on digital inclusion, affordability, and AI ethics, especially valuable for low-capacity or small states. In line with WSIS Action Line C11 and the UN Global Digital Compact, cross-border cooperation should focus on interoperability, inclusiveness, and respect for human rights. The joint capacity-building initiatives, regional ethical frameworks for AI, and pooled technical resources can amplify impact and foster resilient digital ecosystems across borders.