

Digital Regulation Sandbox: Geographic Priorities and Perspectives

Moderator: Minerva Novero, Policy Specialist, UN Office for South-South Cooperation

The evolving landscape of digital regulation necessitates a dynamic approach to testing and refining regulatory frameworks. The concept of a network of Regional Cross Sector Digital Regulation Sandboxes— can be an innovative means to assess, iterate, and enhance digital regulations sharing lessons between countries and regions. During this panel, we will delve into an analysis of the merits and potential drawbacks of these sandboxes through the lens of examples drawn from the countries represented by our discussants.

The initial event on this topic took place as part of the event of the UN Science Summit Sessions on “Key Challenges and Objectives for Digital Cooperation, Governance and Regulation” ([Link to recording](#)). The 9th edition of the Science Summit around the 78th United Nations General Assembly (SSUNGA78) took place from 12-29 September 2023. The People Centered Internet (PCI) organized nine sessions in conjunction with the International Science Council from Sept 20-22 to discuss the future of digital in achieving the SDGs. The sessions took a people centered approach; this means to discuss how scientific and digital collaboration can only be advanced through human feedback loops. The People Centered Internet sessions explored the parameters of this approach focusing on specific use cases where this is needed to achieve the SDGs and discussing the recommended enabling policy, regulatory, and financial environments, that are required to support genuinely global scientific collaborations across continents, nations, and themes. Speakers from each panel summarized the most important results in a stocktaking ([Link](#)).

Speakers

- Monica Estrada-Tanck, Legislative & Product Policy Coordination, LATAM, Meta
- Zahid Jamil, Member Evaluation Committee State Bank of Pakistan Digital Financial Services Innovation Challenge Facility (DFID funded)
- Omo Oaiya, Chief Strategy Officer, West and Central African Research and Education Network
- Lorraine Porciuncula, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Datasphere Initiative
- Mark Schaan, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- Naeem Zafar, Co-Founder, TeleSense

Summary of Digital Regulation Sandbox

Prepared by Christine Asjoma, Convenor of the Panel Series “Key Challenges and Objectives for Digital Cooperation, Governance and Regulation”

Regulation should help to protect people and protect small businesses from being overrun by monopolies to enable us to live safely. Technology is developing faster than government regulations can adapt. Even countries like Canada with well-established market-based legal systems face the challenge of updating and modernizing these frameworks. Digital regulation, as opposed to traditional regulation, requires a dynamic approach to testing and refining the regulatory framework. In this context, Mark Schaan highlighted the importance of standards, certification codes and sandboxes which, in the absence of a legal framework, allow for purpose-driven approaches involving multiple stakeholders. The concept of a network of regional, cross-sectoral digital regulatory sandboxes can be an innovative way to improve digital regulation and share experiences between countries and regions.

Sandboxes and public-private partnerships are one way of avoiding poorly designed regulations that hinder innovation and create monopolies added Naeem Zafar. They allow geographical and ethical factors to be considered in regulation. And this is not just about developing regulations for the technology, but also about the landscape itself, how and where we use this technology, remarked Monica Estrada-Tank. She called for regulatory innovation and evidence-based policy recommendations for policymakers, emphasizing the importance of multistakeholder prototyping. Zahid Jamil, in his evaluation of sandboxes in Pakistan, found that sandboxes give regulators insights into their impact on businesses and help streamline regulations.

However, it should be noted that cross-sector sandboxes may not currently be suitable for all countries. Omo Oaiya pointed out that in the Global South, basic connectivity remains a major challenge. There is a lot of intellectual capital in the global South that needs to be tap into. However, due to a lack of connectivity, there is a lack of expert networks that connect the North and the South and promote the development of research and education networks in the global South to make them active players in building the ecosystem.

Lorrayne Porciuncula reminded us that what matters is how we create the framework. Agility is not automatic, and sandboxes are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Lorrayne announced plans for a global sandbox forum to facilitate the sharing of experiences. Echoing this idea, she called for the tech community to collaborate with social scientists and establish a clearinghouse for regulatory sandboxes.