

Youth@ICANN

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Introduction

My name is Minh Tam Ngo and I'm 18 years old, part of a generation that has grown up with the internet. We take it for granted: Wi-Fi, Google, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok - it's all part of everyday life. I couldn't live without the Internet because it's always been there for me. Every day I use it to learn, communicate, post and consume. But only recently have I started to see the Internet differently.

I spent four days at an ICANN meeting in Prague. ICANN is an international organisation that takes care of things that many people don't even know about - for example, domain names, IP addresses and technical rules for how the Internet works worldwide.

Experiences

I'll be honest: a lot of things were strange to me or seemed far away at first glance. But there were also topics that really interested me.

The most exciting was a project called String Similarity Evaluation. It was about how similar certain words or sequences of letters are - for example in domains. The whole thing is categorised into "levels". I found this fascinating because it immediately made me think of phishing. In other words, fake websites that look almost exactly like the real thing - just with a tiny difference in the name. It's easy to be tricked, especially if you don't look closely. And that's where a topic like this suddenly becomes very practical and realistic: It shows that even small details can decide whether the Internet is safe or unsafe.

One of my highlights was also the EURALO + NextGen@ICANN session. It was relaxed, interactive and playful. There was a knowledge game with pictures on the wall where you had to memorise the information. Then there was a game to get to know each other: two rows - NextGen and EURALO - faced each other. Everyone had a partner, and they had to introduce themselves to each other (name, origin, age) - first get to know each other, then introduce the other person to the group. A quiz was then played - similar to Kahoot. It was personal and enjoyable.

Not everything at the meeting was a highlight for me. One session was rather disappointing: 'How to Launch/Advance Your Tech Career'. I had hoped to be shown concrete ways - how to really build a career in tech, what to do practically, what tools you need or how to orientate yourself. Instead, there was more general advice such as "know your strengths", "be confident" or "know your value". Sure, it's well-meaning - but these are things that you hear everywhere and that I already know myself. To be honest, I had hoped for more depth.

Conclusion

However, ICANN was a valuable experience for me overall. I met new people from all over the world, improved my English and realised that the Internet is more than just apps and posts. There is a huge infrastructure behind it - and people who are trying to set up policies that work fairly, securely and globally. I found it exciting to take a look inside this world, even if I didn't understand everything. It showed me: The Internet is not just 'there', it is being shaped - and perhaps young people like me can also be part of it or at least start asking questions.

I think we in my generation should stop and think more often about how dependent we actually are on the Internet - and how little we know about the mechanisms behind it. For me, ICANN was the first small door in this direction.