



CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE ON INFORMATION, PARTICIPATION AND TRANSPARENCY IN INTERNET GOVERNANCE

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¹The Code of Good Practice on Information, Participation and Transparency in Internet Governance is an initiative of the Association for Progressive Communications, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. This first version of the Code incorporates feedback gathered from multiple stakeholders and internet governance entities at the Internet Governance Forum held in Sharm el-Sheikh in December 2009.

Introduction

The Internet is increasingly important in all aspects of human society. It is continually developing - in technology, in access and in participation. Its impact on social, economic, cultural and political life is growing rapidly. Almost everyone is now affected by the Internet, by services and usage of the Internet, and so by Internet governance – irrespective of how much or how little they use the Internet themselves.

The development and governance of the Internet have been largely built on principles of transparency and information sharing, of multistakeholder participation and of open discussion and decision-making. These principles have contributed greatly to the Internet’s dynamism and inclusiveness.

This code of good practice builds upon the experience of the many entities concerned with Internet governance, in order to reinforce transparency, information and participation. It is intended as a framework of principles and guidelines which will help these entities to maintain and improve transparency, inclusiveness and accountability as the Internet continues to grow in range, diversity and importance. The ways in which these principles and guidelines are implemented will vary according to the roles and circumstances of the different entities concerned.

Definitions

In this code of practice, the term **“Internet governance”** refers to ‘the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet,’ as it was defined in the Tunis Agenda on the Information Society, agreed at the World Summit on the Information Society in 2005.

In this code of practice, the term **“decision-making”** includes all processes involved in debating and deciding policies, standards, coordination and administration of and for the Internet, and those concerned with the Internet’s relationship with other public policy spheres. This includes all processes from agenda-setting to implementation which affect Internet governance as defined above.

Principles of Internet governance

There are many different entities concerned with Internet governance. Although they are diverse in role and character, they share a broad commitment to transparency and information sharing, multi-stakeholder participation and open discussion and decision-making which has emerged from the way in which the Internet has developed.

This commitment is spelt out in the “WSIS principles”, included in the Tunis Agenda outcome document of the World Summit on the Information Society, which declare that “The international management of the Internet should be multilateral, transparent and democratic, with the full involvement of governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. It should ensure an equitable distribution of resources, facilitate access for all and ensure a stable and secure functioning of the Internet, taking into account multilingualism.”

The following principles build on this framework to provide a platform for inclusiveness and transparency in Internet governance:

1. The development of the Internet has balanced the involvement and requirements of different stakeholder groups - notably governments, business, civil society and the Internet professional community. Participation from all stakeholder communities has become and needs to remain a generally accepted norm for Internet governance.
2. The development of the Internet is highly important to all societies. It is therefore essential that stakeholders from all societies, with their different social, economic and cultural experiences, are involved in its development.
3. The development of the Internet requires the engagement of all types of internet participants and needs to reflect their diverse values, concerns and needs. This must include not only Internet professionals and end-users, but also future users of the Internet and those who can not or do not use the Internet themselves.
4. The development of the Internet requires issues to be debated, policies developed and decisions implemented at a variety of geographical levels, from global to regional, national and local, thus ensuring the engagement of the diverse stakeholders at all these levels.
5. The Internet increasingly interacts with many other areas of governance. It is important both for the Internet and for society as a whole that those who are primarily concerned with policy areas other than the Internet – such as telecommunications and the media, social and economic development, the environment and human rights - can contribute to policy development and decision making across traditional policy boundaries.
6. In order to facilitate the above-mentioned interactions, robust technical and inclusive institutional interfaces need to be developed and maintained.
7. Well-informed individuals and organisations provide the basis for an open and inclusive global Internet. Access to information and opportunities to participate in decisions concerning the Internet and its relationship with other aspects of society are essential if these principles of engagement are to be achieved.

Guidelines concerning information

Definitions

In this code of practice, the term **"information"** includes both:

- a) background information which enables decision-making processes and materials to be understood by participants and potential participants in decision-making, by other stakeholders and by the wider public; and
- b) materials (agendas, background documentation, information about decision-making processes, minutes, resolutions etc.) which themselves form part of a decision-making process.

1. Internet governance decisions and decision-making processes concerned with Internet governance, should be - and be seen to be - open, transparent and inclusive.

2. All information which is concerned with Internet governance and decision-making, or which concerns the work of Internet governance entities, should be publicly available and readily accessible to all potential participants in ways and formats that are convenient to them. Exceptions to this guideline should be subject to open discussion and public explanation.
3. Entities concerned with Internet governance should actively facilitate access to information and foster knowledge within the Internet and wider communities about their work in general, issues with which they are concerned, the decisions which are being made, and the processes through which decisions will be reached.
4. To achieve this, they should produce and make available - to the internet community, the media and the wider public - information resources which summarise their work, specific issues and decision-making processes.
5. These information resources should facilitate understanding and informed choice by users. They should include materials which are written so as to be readily understood by those who do not have specialist knowledge or expertise.
6. Internet governance entities should aim to make information available in diverse languages, formats and standards in order to facilitate inclusion of all potential user communities.
7. Internet governance entities should provide accessible points of contact, including offline points of contact, for obtaining further information about their work, about specific decision-making issues and processes, and about the processes through which decisions are reached.
8. Internet governance entities should seek to extend these information principles and practices into areas of dialogue and joint working with other governance bodies, including those whose concerns lie primarily outside the Internet.

Guidelines concerning participation

Definitions

In this code of practice, the term "**participation**" means the opportunities which are made available for those who wish to do so, to contribute to a decision-making process which (they believe) affects them (or in which they believe they should be heard), and to the mechanisms which enable them to make a contribution.

1. Internet governance entities and processes should enable and encourage all those who wish to participate in processes and decisions concerning Internet governance to make a contribution, with the expectation that their views will be considered.
2. Internet governance entities should actively foster participation in their work by all those who are or may be affected, or consider themselves affected, by the decisions that they make, including individuals and organisations from all stakeholder communities and world regions.
3. Internet governance entities should strive to include within their deliberations countries and people that are under-represented, including those who are and those who are not currently users of the Internet, and should recognise the needs of its future users.

4. Any individual or organisation should be able to initiate ideas for debates about Internet policy, standards development, coordination or administration, and the governance and structure of Internet governance entities. They should also be able to take part in such debates.
5. Opportunities to participate in the work of entities concerned with Internet governance should be widely publicised, with the aim of ensuring that all those who wish to participate are aware of them. Internet governance entities should recognise that the quality of access may affect the ability of potential participants to engage with them, and facilitate the participation of those adversely affected by poor connectivity.
6. To facilitate inclusiveness and engagement, Internet governance entities should produce and disseminate clear information about modes of participation in their policy, standards, coordination and administration processes. They should recognise that lack of familiarity and expertise may prove barriers to participation and should offer induction opportunities for new participants in both physical and online meetings.
7. Internet governance entities should strive to make participation in decision-making independent of physical location, ability to travel to physical meetings and financial resources. Efforts to achieve this should include offline and other mechanisms that meet the needs of particular communities, as well as remote online participation.
8. Internet governance entities should seek to extend these principles into areas of dialogue and joint policy-making with other governance bodies, including those whose concerns lie primarily outside the Internet.

Monitoring and review

Entities concerned with Internet governance should regularly review their information, participation and governance arrangements, in the light of this code of practice, with the aim of using the outcomes of such reviews to improve inclusiveness, the quality, transparency, timeliness and accountability of decision-making, and the cohesiveness of Internet development. This should include the opportunity for participation by all stakeholders. Methods of achieving this objective may include peer review and other shared or external assessment methods. Internet governance entities should make public the outcomes of such reviews.

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