



United Nations  
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IFAP

Information for All  
Programme

IN COOPERATION WITH



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Latvian National Commission for UNESCO



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

**RIGA GLOBAL MEETING  
OF EXPERTS ON THE  
ETHICAL ASPECTS  
OF INFORMATION SOCIETY**

**RIGA (LATVIA)  
16-17 OCTOBER 2013**

**Riga Guidelines on  
Ethics in the Information Society**



*We, the participants in the Riga Global Meeting of Experts on the Ethical Aspects of Information Society, held in the framework of the UNESCO Information for All Programme in Riga, Latvia from 16 to 17 October, 2013,*

*Recognizing that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer tremendous potential for contributing to global peace, human rights, progress and true mutual understanding which underpin UNESCO's mandate and its vision of a new humanism,*

*Committed to the full implementation in cyberspace of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the resolution "The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet" adopted by United Nations Human Rights Council A/HRC/20/8, and other universally recognized legal instruments,*

*Convinced that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides the universal set of values and principles – including inter alia, the right to freedom of expression, universal access to information, particularly to information in the public domain, the right to education, the right to privacy and the right to participate in cultural life – that should inform ethical choices, practices and decision-making in the information society,*

*Acknowledging that advances in the technological development equally create risks for further entrenching and exacerbating existing inequalities, creating new forms of tensions, disadvantages and inequity and that the new forms and modes of interactions and social transformations boosted by ICT have impacts and consequences on societies' architecture that are not yet sufficiently conceptualized,*

*Recognizing that the information society is much more than its infrastructure and that it also comprises the social relationships and uses facilitated and driven by the infrastructure. In turn, these social relations constitute, and are constituted by, a set of behavioral norms based on underlying ethical values and principles, including respect of human autonomy, dignity, integrity and vulnerability,*

*Observing that freedom of expression and privacy in the Internet are threatened by new technological means for mass scale surveillance, intrusion, exclusion and censorship, recognizing that freedom, safety and security in cyberspace are not incompatible but complementary values,*

*Taking into account the "Report of the UN System Task Team on the post-2015 Development Agenda: Realizing the future we want for all", and recognizing the contribution of an information society based on ethical values and principles, for setting and realizing the post-2015 global development goals of social and economic inclusion, peace and security and environmental sustainability,*

*Recalling the Code of Ethics for the Information Society proposed by the Intergovernmental Council for the UNESCO Information for All Programme (IFAP),*

*Supporting the implementation of the action plan adopted by the UNESCO Executive Board at its 190th session in the document EX/5 Part I (D), "UNESCO and the Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society",*

*Recalling the provisions of the WSIS C10 Action and emphasizing that ethical principles are relevant to all stakeholders of the information society, collectively or individually, and that existence and implementation, at all levels, of human rights and the ethical principles is essential to ensuring an all-inclusive information society,*

*Agrees upon the following guidelines to uphold the ethical dimensions of the information society:*

1. Affirm freedom of expression as a fundamental right and recognize and ensure that the same principles of freedom of expression apply equally to the Internet and other uses of information technologies, as they apply to traditional forms of media.
2. Encourage international, regional and national reflection and debate on the ethical challenges of the information society and emerging technologies, in particular through the Information for All Programme (IFAP) and the work of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST). Such reflection and debate should be inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural in nature and serve to inform policy and advisory bodies as well as all stakeholders. Particular attention should be given to the participation of Small Island and Developing States, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and other marginalized users, and prioritizing issues based on national contexts and needs.
3. Support the use of the Internet and other ICTs as means for enhancing the effectiveness of democracy and democratic institutions, providing to the public opportunities for effective public deliberation and participation in democratic process, and promoting transparency, accountability, responsiveness, engagement, inclusiveness, accessibility, participation, subsidiary and social cohesion.
4. Raise awareness about the ethical implications of the ICT use and development, particularly among young people, along with life-long education initiatives to equip all citizens with the skills and competence to participate actively and knowledgeably in the information society. New info-ethical and info-civic pedagogical paradigms may be envisaged in this regard to support new modes of global citizenship fully integrating digital media and virtual political spaces.
5. Support equitable participation of all stakeholders from all regions of the world, while acknowledging the diversity of cultures, in the discussion of information ethics and contributing to efforts to raise awareness, analyze, discuss and respond to the ethical challenges of the information society.
6. Promote dialogue among all stakeholders to ensure legal protection and respect of human rights in social media, especially the rights for freedom of expression and privacy.
7. Share and promote best practices on the respect of freedom of expression and privacy protection.
8. Sensitize policy-makers to give consideration to the ethical principles that bear on technological and social issues in the information society and underlie specific regulatory frameworks, whether or not such principles are enshrined in existing normative instruments or codes of conduct.
9. Strengthen ability of policy-makers to identify and remove barriers to ensure that everybody can effectively participate in the information society.

10. Support capacity building of policy-makers for the ethically informed development of frameworks and decision tools, based on universal human rights and ethical principles.
11. Invite policy-makers and other stakeholders in establishing mechanisms for addressing the challenges of the concentration of quasi-regulatory power in intermediaries such as social networks and their role in setting of de facto standards for information access and exchange.
12. Support research focused on analyzing the gaps and lags that hamper policy in the face of the ethical challenges of the information society, with a view to supporting policy-makers and all stakeholders in addressing ethical implications of technological advances. Conduct ongoing research on multidisciplinary base to assess social transformations in the information society, including knowledge and education systems, individual attitudes and behavior.
13. Increase awareness amongst all stakeholders about the sustainability of information society related to the wide spread use of ICTs and the pollution and health concerns that result from the improper disposal of e-waste, and promote ways to reduce energy consumption and pollution.
14. Promote broad-based multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at addressing social cohesion and digital solidarity through the advocacy of human rights; the eradication of stigma, discrimination and xenophobia; the prevention of violence, especially against women and children; and the reinforcement of ethics and protecting online privacy.
15. Bridge the information and knowledge divide by improving access to information, promoting media and information literacy and information ethics curricula for ethically informed use of ICTs, as well as by increasing availability of quality content, including in local languages.