

Internet governance principles: Declarations, normative frameworks and accountability measures

Background and relevance

By Resolution 52 of the 37th General Conference in 2013, UNESCO is mandated to conduct a comprehensive and consultative [study on Internet-related issues](#), the results of which should include options for future action and will inform the Organization's reporting to the 38th General Conference in 2015. The study focuses on Internet-related areas within UNESCO's mandate, including: i) access to information and knowledge, ii) freedom of expression, iii) privacy and iv) ethical dimensions of the information society.

The debate at the General Conference included an extensive discussion of the desirability of introducing a non-binding, standard-setting normative instrument related to privacy and ethics in cyberspace. The ultimate consensus resolution that was adopted instead requested the above-mentioned comprehensive study, explicitly stating that it did not constitute a step in the process of creating a new instrument. The debate revealed, however, a strong desire by Member States for more information about the existing Internet-related declarations, guidelines and frameworks developed in other fora, in order to inform the Organization's governing bodies when deciding future actions for UNESCO.

In addition to international and regional human rights instruments ratified by governments — which have been affirmed by UNESCO, the UN Human Rights Council, and the UN General Assembly as applying both off-line and online — more than 20 Internet-specific declarations and frameworks had been developed by various stakeholder groups by mid-2014. Comparisons of these documents reveal that they share a majority of basic principles, but differ on some issues.

While previous analyses provide important context, a complete review from the perspective of UNESCO's mandate is needed to meet the request made to the Secretariat by Member States. Throughout the World Summit on the Information Society and its follow-up, UNESCO has promoted a vision of inclusive knowledge societies, and conceptual framework of "Internet Universality" which envisions an Internet based on the universal norms of being: human Rights-based; Open; Accessible to all; and with Multi-stakeholder participation (summarized in the acronym R.O.A.M.). Built on existing international standards and instruments related to Internet governance, UNESCO's Secretariat has promoted this draft concept of "Internet Universality" based on its mandate and fields of competence, encompassing the Organization's work in such areas as efforts to advance universality in education, online freedom of expression and privacy, social inclusion and gender equality, multilingualism in cyberspace, access to information and knowledge, and ethical dimensions of information society. UNESCO has also begun to explore the development of Internet Development Indicators, modeled after the internationally-recognized [Media Development Indicators](#).

UNESCO is ideally placed to produce a review of Internet principles documents that will be beneficial for all stakeholders. The Organization enjoys the respect and impartiality of a universal UN body, the convening power to achieve consensus as witnessed in the 2013 WSIS+10 Review Meeting, and the intellectual rigor and expertise exhibited by recent publications in the Internet Freedom Series.

Objectives

- to provide a comprehensive review of key initiatives on Internet governance principles which have been developed and adopted by various stakeholders, identifying areas of similarities, overlap, consensus, differences and disagreements, while putting these texts into historical, political, economic and social context;
- to analyze the extent to which various declarations have been used as normative instruments, with reference to related accountability mechanisms and indicators;
- to analyze the compatibility and completeness of existing documents with respect to UNESCO's mandate and positions, as encompassed by the draft concept of "Internet universality" and the R.O.A.M. framework, and to identify any gaps;
- to provide a user-friendly online resource web page to Member States, civil society, the private sector, and individuals with open access to the documents and data visualization;
- to inform options for UNESCO actions informed by an understanding of existing declarations, frameworks and accountability mechanisms.

Key questions

- What international and regional declarations, guidelines, frameworks and accountability mechanisms related to one or more fields of the study ((i) access to information and knowledge, ii) freedom of expression, iii) privacy and iv) ethical dimensions of the information society) have been developed and adopted by stakeholders?
- What networks, observatories and mapping projects exist to identify developments regarding Internet governance principles?
- What were the historical, political, economic and social contexts that led to their creation?
- Have these documents been used as normative instruments by stakeholders, and if so, how?
- How does UNESCO's draft concept of Internet universality fit into existing declarations and frameworks? How could it be measured and applied?
- Is there a gap that needs to be filled to cover the areas under UNESCO's mandate?
- What actions, if any, should UNESCO take regarding Internet governance principles?

Research process

- Compiling and organizing a complete set of declarations and normative frameworks of Internet governance principles.
- Analyzing the documents, and any relevant secondary literature about them, to determine points of commonality and consensus, as well as differences and disagreements. A matrix could be produced to tabulate results by theme.
- Synthesizing and incorporating responses covering this particular dimension where it is referenced in [global questionnaire for the comprehensive study on Internet-related issues](#). More than 160 organizations have been invited to submit responses to the questionnaire by November 2014.
- Contacting organizations for background on the process that led up to the principles documents as well as whether and how they have been used as instruments by stakeholders.
- Analyzing accountability mechanisms and measurement indicators, in terms of their comprehensiveness, rigor, and effectiveness.
- Coordinating peer review through an editorial board of volunteer experts. Attention to the composition of this group should be given to gender, geographical and stakeholder balance.

- Creating an online resource web page (under UNESCO’s website) of the major Internet principles documents to share with the public. This would include a database searchable by various key terms and serve as a resource to UNESCO Member States and the public at large. Data visualization could also be employed to share findings with the public in an inviting and interactive manner.

Expected deliverables

The envisioned deliverables will include 1) a published review; 2) an online resource web page. The estimated size of the review excluding Appendix of related documents is as below:

REVIEW	Pages
Introduction	5
Literature review	2
Methodology	3
Analysis of documents and indicators	40
Options for UNESCO action	5
Conclusions and recommendations	15
Total	70

* Online interactive resource web page, including a database of all existing principles documents and a thematic search tool to compare and contrast existing texts by theme.

The study should be made available in English in the first instance, and be further translated if resources permit. It will be published under Creative Commons license (i.e. for free download), and made available in pdf and epub formats.

To elaborate on the scope of the study UNESCO will provide the selected contractor with a detailed concept note.

Interested parties should submit (i) proposal (ii) budget **by 20 September 2014** to Ms Xianhong Hu: x.hu@unesco.org.