IGF Dynamic Coalition on Network Neutrality

Open Statement on Internet Openness

The [IGF Dynamic Coalition on Network Neutrality](#) (DCNN) is a component of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and has been [promoting Internet Openness](#) since its inception, through a participatory multistakeholder process.

This Statement was elaborated through a participatory process organized via the Coalition mailing list. After a first round of consultations, the first draft of the Statement was [presented at the IGF 2021 session](#) of the Coalition.

During the session, stakeholders proposed to further elaborate the Statement, particularly enhancing the document's paragraphs on interoperability and device neutrality. To collect further inputs and feedback a [collaborative pad](#) was set up, facilitating collaboration amongst all interested stakeholders. The Consolidated version of this Statement has been [presented at the IGF 2022 session](#) of the Coalition.

The DCNN advocates for [open, secure, and non-discriminatory Internet, affordable and accessible to all people](#). The Coalition has been promoting Network Neutrality as this fundamental principle plays an instrumental role in preserving Internet Openness; fostering the enjoyment of Internet users' human rights; promoting competition and equality of opportunity; safeguarding the generative peer-to-peer nature of the Internet; and spreading the benefits of the Internet to all people.

The early works of the Coalition have focused on Internet traffic management, stressing the need that operators' practices should be transparent and non-discriminatory, to be compatible with the Network Neutrality Principle. Since its creation this Coalition has explored the various dimensions of Net Neutrality and Internet Openness, acknowledging that Internet Openness is a multifaceted concept, and the debate on Net Neutrality and internet traffic management is only part of it.

Subsequent DCNN works have explored how price discrimination practices [known as "zero rating"](#) models affect Internet Openness, the [fundamental importance of this concept](#) in times of crisis, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the instrumental role of internet openness as an essential precondition of meaningful connectivity.

Importantly, Internet Openness serves the interests of the public by preserving a level playing field with minimal barriers to entry and by providing equal opportunity for the invention and development of new applications, services, and business models.

In this perspective, Net Neutrality is necessary, but not sufficient to preserve Internet Openness. Free competition among broadband networks, software and hardware technologies and all players in the Internet ecosystem is essential to ensure the openness of the Internet.

Besides relying on the network neutrality principle, the preservation of Internet Openness relies on Interoperability and Device Neutrality.

Network Neutrality is the principle according to which Internet traffic shall be treated without discrimination, restriction, or interference regardless of its sender, recipient, type or content so that Internet users' freedom is not restricted by favouring or disfavouring the transmission of specific Internet traffic. Exceptions to such principles shall be necessary and proportionate to achieve a legitimate aim.

Interoperability is the ability to transfer and render useful data and other information across systems, applications, or components (horizontal interoperability) and for third parties to build upon a certain technology (vertical interoperability). The combination of transmission and analysis involves several layers of interconnection, requiring the achievement of various levels of interoperability. At a minimum, one should distinguish between the lower (network) and the upper (application) layers, pointing to a division between infrastructural interoperability and data interoperability.

Device neutrality is the property ensuring users' right to non-discrimination in the services and apps they use, based on platform control by hardware companies. That means users can have a choice of the application they prefer to use, regardless of the brand of device they are using. In other words, device neutrality is instrumental to achieving the ability to run any application so that users can access and share to all applications, content, and services, as long as they are deemed legal in a given jurisdiction, which is essential to achieving an open Internet.