

1. Links between technology and public policy

Technical details of Internet protocols and other information technology specifications can have significant public policy implications. Their design can impact on human rights such as users' data protection rights and security, their ability to access diverse knowledge and information, and their freedom of expression online. It also affects other stakeholders.

2. What is the current situation?

The Internet technical community has already worked to establish approaches to specification setting based on public policy concerns. Positive examples include technical guidance for privacy considerations in new protocols, the recognition of multilingualism for internationalised domain names, or accessibility standards for persons with disabilities. However, even where the technical discussion process is open, key decisions are frequently made by technical experts in the absence of broad stakeholder representation. An effective multistakeholder approach to specification setting on the internet will be based on efficient mutual interactions between technical and public policy considerations so that technical specifications more systematically take into account public policy concerns. This is particularly important when legal rights of individuals, especially their human rights, are clearly impacted.

3. European Commission's perspective

- The Commission will continue building bridges between technology and policy, e.g. via the High Level Group on Internet Governance (HLIG).
- High-level interactions with the Internet technical community, e.g. the IETF Chair, have helped a mutual understanding of policy priorities and technical constraints.
- Although the ability for public authorities to regulate in the public interest should be preserved, it is undeniable that processes of technological innovation also contribute to the development of global "norms".
- The implications of this evolution in norm setting in relation to the Internet require an open public debate with all concerned. (Open workshops with multi-disciplinary experts)
- Although there is **no** intention to regulate Internet standards, an early and broad involvement of all stakeholders (not only governments) can usefully inform technical decisions, including standardisation, and avoid conflicts downstream.