

IRPC contribution to the IGF 2021 issue areas

1. About the Internet Rights and Principles Coalition (IRPC)

The Internet Rights and Principles Coalition (IRPC) is a network of individuals and individuals based at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) working to uphold human rights in the online environment and to root internet governance processes and systems in human rights standards. The dynamic coalition sets out to promote and provide a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration and aims to be an umbrella platform for facilitating collaboration on human rights issues in the Internet Governance Forum process.

2. Relevant issue area(s) and policy (questions)

I. Economic and social inclusion and human rights

Social inequality and the pandemic

1. What can be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic context about the relationship between digital inequality and social and economic inequality?
2. Similarly, what lessons can be drawn with respect to the pandemic and Internet-related human rights? What does this suggest about policy approaches for digitalisation and digital inclusion?

Economic and social inclusion and sustainable development

1. What is the relationship between digital policy and development and the established international frameworks for social and economic inclusion set out in the Sustainable Development Goals and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Conventions on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, on the Rights of the Child, and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

Digital policy and human rights frameworks

1. What is the relationship between digital policy and development and the established international frameworks for civil and political rights as set out in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and further interpretation of these in the online context provided by various resolutions of the Human Rights Council?
2. How do policy makers and other stakeholders effectively connect these global instruments and interpretations to national contexts?
3. What is the role of different local, national, regional and international stakeholders in achieving digital inclusion that meets the requirements of users in all communities?

Inclusion, rights and stakeholder roles and responsibilities

1. What are/should be the responsibilities of governments, businesses, the technical community, civil society, the academic and research sector and community-based actors with regard to digital inclusion and respect for human rights, and what is needed for them to fulfil these in an efficient and effective manner?

Promoting equitable development and preventing harm

1. How can we make use of digital technologies to promote more equitable and peaceful societies that are inclusive, resilient and sustainable?
2. How can we make sure that digital technologies are not developed and used for harmful purposes?
3. What values and norms should guide the development and use of technologies to enable this?

II. Universal access and meaningful connectivity

Barriers to universal and meaningful access

1. What are the main challenges that people face in obtaining and making full use of Internet access? To what extent are these the result of social, economic and cultural factors, and to what extent do they result from aspects of the digital environment?
2. How can we use the responses to these questions to better understand the intersection between digital policies and other policy areas? Can this understanding help us to develop and implement more realistic Internet-related policy goals?

III. Emerging regulation: market structure, content, data and consumer/users rights regulation

Content moderation and human rights compliance

1. How to ensure that government regulation, self-regulation and co-regulation approaches to content moderation are compliant with human rights frameworks, are transparent and accountable, and enable a safe, united and inclusive Internet?

Data governance and trust, globally and locally

1. What is needed to ensure that existing and future national and international data governance frameworks are effective in mandating the responsible and trustworthy use of data, with respect for privacy and other human rights?

IV. Environmental sustainability and climate change

Increasing awareness and proactiveness among policymakers and developers

1. How do we ensure that technology developers, digital corporations, policy makers and policy processes consistently consider the impact of the Internet and digitalisation on sustainability and climate change?

Measuring impact

1. How can we improve the assessment, measurement and monitoring of the environmental impact of digitalisation and the Internet?

Reducing impact

1. How can we achieve a net zero impact on climate change of the further expansions of the Internet and its infrastructure?
2. How can Internet standards, governance and policy choices, and standards for device design, development and manufacture, contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of the Internet (e.g. through the adoption of green computing, energy efficient servers and machines/processes, and by policy contributions)?
3. How can we further use digital technologies to better predict and manage the impacts of climate change?

3. The IRPC contribution

I. Economic and social inclusion and human rights | Universal access and meaningful connectivity

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only created an unprecedented global health crisis but has also exposed and aggravated other ongoing issues as the digital divide that goes hand in hand with social and economic inequality. The importance of protecting and upholding the fundamental rights and freedoms in the online environment is not only vital but increasingly urgent and documents - such as the Charter, that provide framework for developing rights-based norms for the online environment are increasingly more relevant and necessary.

The IRPC has been following closely the recent developments, the impacts of the pandemic on human rights and the challenges on those working to uphold human rights online. Through its participation in events and seminars such as the last year's IGF DCs Main session, or beyond the IGF environment, at academic events (Goldsmiths University of London and University of Padova) and at RightsCon 2021, the coalition calling all stakeholders on the importance of protecting and upholding the fundamental rights and freedoms in the online environment at all times, particularly in times of crisis.

In recent years the coalition has been focusing its works on Articles 1-4 of the Charter, which highlight the right to access to the Internet (Article 1), the right to non-discrimination in Internet Access use and governance (Article 2) and the right to development through the Internet (Article 4).

III. Emerging regulation: market structure, content, data and consumer/users rights regulation

The IRPC is working to ensure that the Internet offers an inclusive resilient and sustainable environment and that emerging Internet-connected technologies and rights based and environmentally sustainable by design. Issues related to data governance and human rights have been an area of focus of this Coalition and it has been urging for more to be done by all stakeholders to ensure human rights by design approaches to existing and emerging technologies. Following a very the workshop at IGF2019: WS 282 Data Governance by AI: Putting Human Rights at Risk?, the coalition is following up with WS #184 Syncing AI, Human Rights, & the SDGs: The Impossible Dream? at this year's IGF.

IV. Environmental sustainability and climate change

The IRPC has been focusing on Article 4 of the Charter of Human Rights and Principles for the Internet, The Right to Development Through the Internet - and its clause b) Environmental sustainability, to address the environmental sustainability of ICTs. The coalition has organised workshops at the IGF and regional IGFs between 2018 and 2020. This year the coalition was part of the organising team at Focal Break out Session: Greening Internet Governance at EuroDIG2021, following the first Plenary session on ICT and environmental sustainability hosted at the virtual EuroDIG2020, and participated in the strategy session focusing on this issue at RightsCon21. The IRPC has been working with other stakeholders to look for solutions to green Internet Governance and to address the current challenges, from standardised methods to measure the environmental impact of the ICT to ways to reduce the environmental impact. The coalition is part of the Greening Internet Governance Intersessional work at the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) and following the IGF Policy Network on Environment (PNE).