

IGF 2021 POLICY NETWORKS CONCEPT

The [mandate](#) of the Internet Governance Forum ([IGF](#)) calls for discussing digital public policy issues in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet and to facilitate discourse between different stakeholders. The Forum is further mandated to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices, strengthen and enhance the engagement of stakeholders in existing and future Internet governance mechanisms, particularly from developing countries, as well as to develop capacity in Internet governance. Also, the United Nations Secretary-General's [Roadmap for Digital Cooperation](#) envisages a strengthened IGF with a view to making it more responsive and relevant to digital issues, and inter alia, foresees "93.(e) Better integrating programme and intersessional policy development work to support other priority areas outlined in the present report;".

In line with its objectives, the IGF has launched a new type of intersessional activity, in the form of policy networks. The aim is to establish expert-led framework networks on broad Internet governance topics that create spaces for in-depth multistakeholder efforts in the interest of the global community.

Below is a description of the general concept of policy networks. Each approved Policy Network would develop a specific work plan.

What is the PN concept about?

The IGF intersessional work is implemented in different forms, each having specific goals and implementing methodology. The policy networks (PN) intend to create framework networks on broad Internet governance topics that allow for an expert in-depth view on Internet governance issues of broad interest. The topic is decided by the IGF Secretariat upon careful consideration of inputs submitted through various means of public consultations at the IGF, including the annual meeting discussing outputs and particular community's interest as well as other intersessional work streams exchanges; MAG's advice; and the overall stakeholder support, monitored for example through the call for voluntary contributions implemented during the annual IGF meeting's discussions. Identifying concrete and globally relevant issues that require in-depth discussion is part of the PN's task.

The purpose of the PNs is to:

- provide in-depth understanding of the topic and the globally relevant Internet governance issues;
- raise awareness on it;
- prompt cooperation across regions and stakeholder groups.

The PN driving force is a community of interested stakeholders, members of a dedicated mailing list. The community is continuously consulted on the thematic focus of the PN, methodology, so far produced outputs and similar. Within the PN is a multistakeholder working group of experts which supports transforming community's expressed views into concrete actions, such as outputs, actionable next steps etc.

How is PN different from other intersessional workstreams?

Besides PNs, other IGF intersessional work streams include Best Practice Forums and Dynamic Coalitions.

Best Practice Forums (BPFs)¹ offer unique platforms for multistakeholder discussion on topics relevant to the future of the Internet, with the aim of facilitating dialogue and collecting emerging and existing practices to address specific issues or themes. BPFs foster a common understanding of the concrete policy challenges stakeholders may address in order to contribute to achieving the Internet policy goal the BPF is focussing on. The objective is not to develop new policies or practices, but rather to collect existing good practices, share positive and negative experiences, and flag challenges that require additional multistakeholder dialogue and/or require the attention of policymakers, including in specified decision-making bodies.

BPFs typically work on topics for which the debate has sufficiently matured to make way for some general consensus in the community and the focus of discussions has shifted to implementation. The BPFs look at specific aspects within a broadly endorsed theme by the MAG (e.g. BPF Cybersecurity looked particularly at international cybersecurity agreements) and publish substantive output reports. The methodology and work plan of a BPF is defined in consultation with the BPF participants and tailored to the theme's specific needs and requirements. BPFs need to adhere to the core IGF principles. More details are included in the [BPF Definitions, Procedures, and Modalities](#) document.

The Dynamic Coalitions (DC) are formed organically and independently, when individuals and/or organisations decide to coalesce around a particular Internet governance issue or set of issues.² DCs choose the focus issues on their own (without the involvement of the IGF Secretariat or the MAG); they are also autonomous in developing their work methodologies, carrying out their work, and deciding what outcomes they produce, as long as the overall work adheres to the core IGF principles. Over the years, some DCs have published rich, substantive reports on specific IG issues, while others have conducted research or collected case studies. There are also DCs which have developed various sets of principles (e.g. Internet rights and principles) or have carried out advocacy missions to bring attention to sensitive issues (such as child safety). Unlike BPFs and PNs, individual DCs do not receive support from the IGF Secretariat, due to their independent and autonomous nature.

PNs are specifically dedicated to identifying status quo and current issues including the policy gaps, existing capacity and conditions, local specificities, good and bad practices and possible ways forward through actionable activities led by identified implementation parties. The work of the PNs is facilitated by a dedicated multistakeholder working group of experts, based on continuous consultations and active engagement with all other interested stakeholders. Work of past and current BPFs, which focus on collecting best practices, and DCs, whose work can take various forms, may serve as a valuable input for PN discussions.

Multistakeholder Working Group

Through active engagement and continues consultations with the interested community members, the PN's substantive work scope is identified and developed by a multistakeholder working group of experts (MWG), representative of different disciplines and regions. The core criteria for membership in the working group is knowledge and experience in the PN's subject matter.

As with the BPFs, the MAG members interested to actively support the work and with particular expertise to bring in, are encouraged to join the MWG and take additional responsibility of acting as liaisons between the PN and the MAG. The MWG would have between 15 and 30 members.

¹ <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/best-practice-forums-bpfs>

² <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/dynamic-coalitions>

Just as all other IGF intersessional workstreams, the PNs adhere to the core IGF principles and implement their work in an open, transparent, bottom up and inclusive manner.

The multistakeholder working group advises on the issues the PN should cover and further develops each aspect, taking into account the above mentioned elements: status quo, current issues, policy gaps, existing capacity and conditions, local specificities, good and bad practices and possible ways forward through actionable activities with identified implementation parties.

At the beginning of work, the MWG will be updated about relevant IGF outputs previously produced on the subject matter, including from the annual IGF meeting, BPFs, DCs and NRIs, to inform the PNs work and support thematic focus direction, set milestones and develop an overall implementation plan.

The work of the MWG is supported by the IGF Secretariat's expert consultant. The IGF Secretariat also supports the outreach and communication efforts of the PNs and in this respect, coordinates on additional support through MAG, MWG, other intersessional workstreams and broader community.

The MWG meets online, monthly on a pre-agreed agenda. All MWG meetings are open to observers. Specific meetings will be set for open discussions with community members, as agreed by the MWG. This can be done on the margins of the IGF's open consultations or other IG meetings. Specifically, the PNs will aim to engage with local communities through networks of NRIs or schools on IG, to consult on the work done so far and next steps, as well as to raise awareness on the PN's issues.

The IGF Secretariat would support the working group to liaise with relevant helpdesks and observatories for providing relevant information, expertise and advice. The overall substantive process would be based on broad community consultations.

Through an open mailing list, the IGF website and its social media accounts, the community will be continuously kept informed and consulted on any work stage of the MWG. The consultations can take different forms, depending on the MWG's agreed methodology (open meetings, surveys, polls, calls for contributions etc.). Each PN will announce its work plan for the current IGF cycle, at the beginning of its work. The goal is to create a collaborative atmosphere among a broad range of stakeholders and the MWG. The existence of the MWG does not imply any hierarchy. Its purpose is to ensure a high level of expertise on the subject matter in developing the final output document. The MWG agrees internally on how they wish to conduct their work (e.g. through smaller focus groups, work streams etc.)

Who convenes the PNs MWG?

The PN MWGs are convened by the IGF Secretariat in consultations with the existing network of experts. To support the overall stakeholder engagement in the IGF, the Secretariat will also aim to involve experts from knowledge areas and geographic regions that have historically been under-represented at the IGF.

PNs relationship with BPFs, DCs and NRIs

The PNs will work closely with other forms of intersessional workstreams of relevance (BPFs and DCs). These networks would be encouraged to dedicate one focal point for active participation in the PN work.

Also, the network of the 135 national, regional and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs) would be invited to provide feedback to each phase of the output document work, as well as to the final version of the output document. The NRIs would be invited to designate one or two liaison resource persons for this

process. The liaisons would be the key communicator between the local communities of the NRIs and PNE. This would also help raise awareness on the PN's focus issues at the local/NRIs levels and equip stakeholders with knowledge and experience to independently continue discussing those issues.

Impact strategy

On the basis of a dedicated contact database, those entities whose work is significant for raising awareness or which have decision-making power in relation to the PN's focus issues will be identified and invited to consider endorsing the ways forward developed by the MWG and integrating them into their work (e.g. governments could discuss it in cooperation with technical communities and businesses; universities could integrate the outputs of the PN in their curriculums etc.).

The output document would also be communicated to the IGF 2021 high-level and parliamentary tracks that would further be invited to develop collectively agreed actionable messages during their discussions at the annual IGF 2021 meeting and follow-up steps. As explained further below, the PNs outputs will be also discussed at the annual IGF meeting during a dedicated roundtable exchange.

Also, the PNs will cooperate with the NRIs on the output document's follow-up actions. The NRIs will help to build a database of all processes and entities that could make a difference in terms of awareness raising and decision making. The IGF Secretariat would map the regional and international processes that could endorse the document's outputs and integrate them into their work.

Further, the outputs could be presented and explained in dedicated webinars or at larger local and global community meetings, to raise awareness and foster understanding of the matters covered by the document.

This PN concept is a pilot within the IGF and in order to achieve its goals, it would need continuous effort. The IGF 2021 cycle will be the 'setting the foundations' process for building a firmer, more impactful process and stronger cooperation networks, long-term.

PNs at annual IGF meeting

The PN would have close linkages with the IGF's high-level and parliamentary tracks, that would receive the output document for their collective round-table consultations organised at the annual IGF 2021 meeting. These discussions would provide feedback on the document and aim for developing follow-up actionable advice on ways forward. The two tracks would also be invited to discuss the PNs outputs and develop collectively agreed actionable recommendations (e.g. could be during their discussions at the annual IGF 2021 meeting and follow-up steps).

Finally, as mentioned above, in regard to the para 93 of the Roadmap, the PN results could also be promoted through the envisioned multistakeholder high-level body (provided that it is established before the 16th annual IGF meeting).

The findings of the PNs work will be subject of a roundtable exchange at the annual IGF meeting. From there, the potential for continuation of the PN will be assessed.

Outputs

(i) Outcome document. The group will produce an in-depth outcome document, reflecting the status quo and current issues, existing capacity and conditions, local specificities, good and bad practices and

possible ways forward through actionable activities with identified implementation parties. The MWG will agree on the structure of the exact output document.

The goal would be to have its proposed policy approaches and recommendations relayed from the IGF to the appropriate normative and decision-making fora, and be broadly disseminated to the community. The final output document would be presented at the IGF 2021 annual meeting in Poland, ideally in the framework of an IGF plenary session. The PNs session’s messages will feed into the IGF 2021 messages.

(ii) Cooperation. It will also work on understanding convergences on the focus issue between stakeholders, mapping the existing cooperation networks, as well as issues around which new coalitions could be organized. This could be a long-term follow-up action of IGF 2021 PNs.

(iii) Policy development networks. The process would look at existing policies on the focus issue and identify policy gaps and recommend a way forward. The latter would particularly relate to establishing links between discussion and decision-making processes at local and global levels. E.g. looking at linkages between the national IGF and how the national parliament decides on IG policy. The IGF Secretariat will work on building a database of national, regional and international processes and entities that could make a difference in terms of awareness raising and decision making, familiarize them with the PN work and encourage to endorse the document’s outputs and integrate them into their work.

(iv) Observatory. Should the resources allow and based on the mapped work on above, an observatory on specific issues could be created to facilitate communication between those in need for good solutions and those that already have implemented it.

NEXT STEPS ON IGF 2021 PNs

POLICY NETWORK ON MEANINGFUL ACCESS (PNMA)

ACTION	ACTOR	DEADLINE
<p>Update proposal’s focus, to reflect the two BPFs</p> <p>Agree on a separate mailing list and how the BPF local content mailing list should be integrated</p>	Giacomo, Carlos, Roberto, Karim as MAG liaisons	By 26 March
<p>Form the multistakeholder working group</p>	<p>MAG liaisons IGF Secretariat suggest the list</p> <p>IGF Secretariat communicates the invitations</p>	<p>On 26 March communicate invites</p> <p>Forum the group by 22 April</p>
<p>Definition of scope of work for</p>	MWG to review relevant	

2021-22	outcomes from at least the last two IGFs and as appropriate, DCs and BPFs and propose a scope of work to the broader membership of the PN for input.	
Develop database and communication & outreach strategy	IGF Secretariat	By 25 April
Set milestones and final timeline	IGF Secretariat shares the proposal with the WG members	By 15 April

POLICY NETWORK ON ENVIRONMENT (PNE)

ACTION	ACTOR	DEADLINE
Contract consultant	IGF Secretariat	By 10 April
Form the multistakeholder working group		
Develop database, communication and outreach strategy	IGF Secretariat	By 10 April
Set milestones and final timeline	IGF Secretariat shares the proposal with the WG members	By 15 April