

The Hague Global Principles for Accountability in the Digital Age

The Hague Global Principles: An Internet of Values

The digital world is changing everything.

As much as advances are improving our lives and economies, it is changing the way individuals and organisations communicate, act and react to each other. Interactions on the internet are complex and raise a number of questions including the protection of human rights, integrity and dignity. In any case, however, human rights and societal values need to be protected from malicious acts and other threats.

An internet, where each stakeholder is accountable for the consequences of acts and omissions, accountable to others and to society, is integral and crucial to the success of the digital society and economy.

Accountability may refer to personal, social, professional, economical, ethical, philosophical and legal factors and, in this context, principally refers to the duty for Internet actors to be responsible for the consequences of their actions and to operate within the confines of the rule of law. It also refers to an open and accessible Internet for all, in line with universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In recent years, a number of attempts have been made to establish frameworks and principles of Internet Governance, including the R.O.A.M principles for Internet Universality, endorsed by UNESCO's 195 Member States, which call for a human-Rights based, Open, and Accessible internet that is governed by Multi-stakeholder participation, as well as the World Summit on the Information Society 2005 Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. Relevant internationally agreed standards include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The Hague Global Principles seek to uphold an accessible, open and accountable internet – encompassing all internet-related applications from Artificial Intelligence to the Internet of Things – which are essential to the building of Knowledge Societies and the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. They seek to serve as a reference point to consider the impacts of balancing freedom of expression and privacy onto the broader dimensions of Rights, Openness, Accessibility and Multi-stakeholder participation in the digital domain.

Citizens need to be able to trust that their personal integrity and democratic values and rights are safeguarded and protected through a free, open and transparent digital domain. Digitalization and accountability must evolve hand in hand.

This requires, where not yet implemented already, making concerted effort to protect the integrity and rights on the internet of individuals and societies, and explore and construct a basis for accountability in a connected and digital world, one which positions human beings, human rights and universal values at the center of internet governance frameworks.

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Our Key Principles:

With these – The Hague Global Principles for Accountability in the Digital Age– the signing partners outline a framework of key accountability principles that we consider essential, within the existing applicable Rule of Law, for the protection of personal integrity on the global internet, and for establishing accountability and safeguarding democratic values on the internet for individuals, society and relevant public and private stakeholders. Without prejudice to the existing fundamental rights and related frameworks within the applicable Rule of Law, we believe that a common goal to be pursued is to strive to position human rights and human values at the heart of internet governance and use.

1. **Internet of Values:** We take these values and perspectives as a starting point for analysis and action:
 - a. Human and societal values, including human rights and democracy;
 - b. The notion of rights and responsibilities, and finding a reasonable and meaningful balance between them;
 - c. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as the overall goal to be achieved;
 - d. Respect for the Rule of Law;
 - e. Multi-stakeholder participation in a multi-faceted context;
 - f. Accessible, transparent, enforceable redress, and measurable remedies
2. **Accountability by default:** Adopt the highest appropriate level of accountability and ensure that it is configured into the design of services, ecosystems, platforms, processes, technologies, operations, architectures, and value and business models.
3. **It Is Everyone’s Task:** Anchor being accountable throughout society including the highest governmental, societal and business levels, and all the way through local, national and international contexts. It is everyone’s task to be accountable.
4. **Education and Capacity Building:** Include internet accountability and digital skills both in educational curricula as well as career development tools, to facilitate both capacity building and resilience, and to lead the transformation of skills and job profiles needed for the future.
5. **Transparent & Technology-Neutral:** Inclusive and overarching principle-based, transparent and technology-neutral approach by default addressing all technologies linked through the internet.
6. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Drive and encourage public private partnerships and other joint initiatives, including all relevant stakeholders, in order to implement the Principles in the various parts of the digital world without undue delay.
7. **Continuous Co-Creation:** Co-create with a permanent multi-stakeholder dialogue the relevant subsets of principles, parameters, indicators and metrics that may represent the ability of internet providers and users to be accountable, including but not limited to general awareness-raising, media and information literacy, good practice codes, informed recommendations, statutory legislation or regulation. Apply the expertise developed for the quantification of similar human and societal values to measure accountability in the Digital Age.
8. **Policy Frameworks & Enforcement Collaboration:** Participate in a permanent multi-stakeholder dialogue and network in order to share new insights, information on incidents and trends, and facilitate discussion on effective redress and remedies. Promote local, national, regional and international collaborations in good practices, standardization, regulation and awareness, as well as appropriate, effective and readily accessible alternative dispute resolution and cross-border law enforcement.