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Commission to pursue role as honest broker in future global negotiations on Internet Governance

In the wake of large-scale Internet surveillance and reduced trust in the internet, the European Commission today proposes a key reform to the way the Internet is managed and run. The proposal calls for more transparent, accountable and inclusive governance.

Commission Vice-President Neelie Kroes said: "*The next two years will be critical in redrawing the global map of Internet governance. Europe must contribute to a credible way forward for global internet governance. Europe must play a strong role in defining what the net of the future looks like*."

The Commission is committed to an internet that continues to serve fundamental freedoms and human rights, Kroes noted: "*Our fundamental freedoms and human rights are not negotiable. They must be protected online*."

The Commission proposes:

- Concrete actions such as:
    - Establishment of a clear timeline for the globalisation of ICANN and the "IANA functions"
    - A strengthening of the global Internet Governance Forum
    - Launching an online platform for creating transparency on internet policies, the Global Internet Policy Observatory
    - A review of conflicts between national laws or jurisdictions that will suggest possible remedies
- An ongoing commitment to improve the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of the multi-stakeholder processes and those who participate in these processes
- A commitment to creating a set of principles of Internet governance to safeguard the open and unfragmented nature of the Internet
- A commitment to globalise key decision-making (for example the coordination of domain names and IP addresses) to safeguard the stability, security and resilience of the Internet.

Kroes said: "*Some are calling for the International Telecommunications Union to take control of key Internet functions. I agree that governments have a crucial role to play, but top-down approaches are not the right answer. We must strengthen the multi-stakeholder model to preserve the Internet as a fast engine for innovation*."

The Commission firmly supports a real multi-stakeholder governance model for the Internet based on the full involvement of all relevant actors and organisations.

Today's Communication is a foundation for a common European approach in global negotiations, such as the Netmundial meeting in Sao Paulo, Brazil (April 2014), the Internet Governance Forum (end-August) and the High Level ICANN meeting. This approach will be further developed with the European Parliament and the Council.

Background

Internet Governance is a term used to describe the global arrangements that organise the resources and functions of the Internet. It is meant to ensure the proper functioning of the Internet, for example that any website is accessible from anywhere around the world, and that technical systems all work together no matter where you are, or what web addresses can be used around the world. The Internet developed as a distributed network of networks and operates without a centralised governing body. It is governed by various actors and organisations in multi-stakeholder arrangements.

Recent revelations of large-scale surveillance have called into question the stewardship of the US when it comes to Internet Governance. So given the US-centric model of Internet Governance currently in place, it is necessary to broker a smooth transition to a more global model while at the same time protecting the underlying values of open multi-stakeholder governance of the Internet.

The EU has been a key player in the 2002-2005 World Summit on the Information Society, which led to the design of the Internet governance system we have today. In 2009 the European Commission adopted a Communication (COM(2009)277, "Internet governance: the next steps"). The European Parliament and the Council have repeatedly called for an inclusive approach to Internet governance, safeguarding the multi-stakeholder model while making sure that European priorities are duly taken into account.

Useful Links

Europe & the Internet in a global context Community

Internet Governance Communication

Hashtag: #NetGov, #internetgovernance

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