

Internet governance

Keeping the internet open, free and unfragmented

SUMMARY

The governance of the internet has been a topic of debate since its creation. The internet is not governed by a centralised entity, but rather by a decentralised patchwork of stakeholders, including national governments, the private sector, the technical community and civil society. They work together in various internet governance bodies, such as the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). Several United Nations specialised agencies, in particular the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), also participate in internet governance. The ITU manages resources that are critical for wireless services worldwide, for example.

It has long been debated whether governments should have a central role in internet governance or whether various stakeholders should be equally responsible for formulating principles, rules and procedures for the internet. The EU is a strong supporter of the multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance. This approach incorporates the views of a variety of stakeholders, including governments, businesses, technical communities and civil society on an equal footing. Not all actors share this view, however. China and Russia in particular believe that states should have a greater role in deciding on the content, operations and norms of the internet within their borders. China has also proposed to change the internet's protocol design.

The EU is a strong defender of an open, free and unfragmented internet that remains a singular, decentralised network of networks. This vision contrasts with the more controlled approaches of some non-EU states that limit their citizens' access to certain internet content and monitor citizens' online activities. Private companies can also be an obstacle to the openness and unity of the internet when they develop their own physical infrastructure and protocols.



IN THIS BRIEFING

- Introduction
- Main actors
- Internet Governance Forum
- Global Digital Compact
- Multilateral versus multi-stakeholder model for internet governance
- China's attempts to redesign the internet's infrastructure
- European Union's role
- Conclusion



Introduction

The internet has become an indispensable part of our life, transforming the way we communicate, conduct business and acquire information. How the internet is governed has been much debated since the [early days](#) following its creation. Internet governance is a constantly evolving, complex process, involving both states and non-state actors.

Even the term 'internet governance' does not have a uniform definition. Different actors see internet governance from different perspectives. For example, telecommunications specialists usually focus more on physical infrastructure, computer specialists more on technical aspects such as domain names, and politicians more on issues that relate to their electorate, such as cybersecurity, free online speech and child protection.

One of the most well-known [definitions](#) of 'internet governance' was proposed during the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2005 (see box). At this summit, internet governance was described as 'the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet'.

Effective internet governance is crucial for advancing economic prosperity, safety, security and democracy. It requires balancing competing values and interests such as freedom of expression, democracy, human dignity, equality, privacy and security, on which various actors involved in internet governance are likely to have different views.

Main actors

The internet is governed by a decentralised patchwork of [multiple stakeholders](#) such as national governments, the private sector, intergovernmental organisations, multi-stakeholder organisations and civil society. The same actors are often present in various forums. For example, governments of EU countries deal with the internet in a wide range of places: in multi-stakeholder forums, in international organisations and at the EU and national level.

Multi-stakeholder organisations

A number of multi-stakeholder organisations participate in internet governance and are particularly prominent in regulating the core components of the internet's [infrastructure](#) such as the domain name system and the internet protocol. States usually have a peripheral role in these processes. For

World Summit on the Information Society

The WSIS is a summit that the United Nations (UN) convened to address various issues concerning the global information society. The goal of the WSIS was to develop a common vision and action plan on how to build a people-centric, inclusive and development-oriented information society.

The first phase of the summit took place in 2002 in Geneva and the second phase in 2005 in Tunis. The first phase concluded with the adoption of the Geneva Declaration of Principles and the Geneva Plan of Action. The second phase concluded with the adoption of the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda. During the second phase of the summit, the participants decided to create the Internet Governance Forum.

The WSIS process has continued beyond the initial two-phase summit, involving a wide range of stakeholders. The WSIS Forum is held annually and is hosted by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and co-organised by several other UN organisations. The WSIS Forum usually gives out prizes to projects and initiatives that have made remarkable efforts in implementing the WSIS outcomes. The 2024 WSIS Forum was held on 27–31 May in Geneva, Switzerland. During the event, several workshops and high-level policy sessions took place on various topics related to artificial intelligence, the metaverse and sustainable development

Sources: [ITU](#) and [UN](#).

example, in the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), states only have an advisory role, and in the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) they have no formal role. Below are examples of these organisations.

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

The **Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)** is a non-profit organisation, established in 1998 by the United States Department of Commerce to perform the [functions of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority \(IANA\)](#), i.e. to manage, at the general level, the core internet infrastructure. ICANN helps to coordinate, for example, the internet protocol (IP) addresses¹ and manages the domain name system (DNS).² Since 2016, [ICANN](#) has been freed from US government oversight.

[ICANN](#) ensures that domain names are unique and match with the correct IP addresses. It distributes IP addresses to five regional internet registries, which in turn allocate smaller IP address blocks to internet service providers and other network operators. ICANN also has a role in the root server system,³ running one of the root identities. Although ICANN is one of the main actors in internet governance, it does not have direct authority over other internet governance issues such as cybersecurity, protection of privacy, content or reducing the digital divide.

[ICANN](#) develops policy by searching for a consensus in a multi-stakeholder process. This process involves a wide variety of actors all over the world, such as the technical community, businesses, national governments, academia and internet users. ICANN is managed by a [board of directors](#) composed of leaders from various geographical regions and sectors, such as business, academia and civil society. ICANN also has three supporting organisations (SOs)⁴ and four advisory committees⁵ to receive advice from stakeholders that do not directly participate in SOs.

Internet Society (ISOC)

The **Internet Society (ISOC)** is a non-profit organisation founded in 1992 in the US, but it is not under the oversight of the US or any other country. The ISOC [supports](#) an open, globally connected, secure and trustworthy internet, and [works](#) on a number of broader internet governance questions such as digital literacy, internet access, safety online and the fight against internet shutdowns; it has created a tool called [Netloss Calculator](#) to estimate the cost of such shutdowns. The ISOC also provides computer-networking training in developing countries, supports the work of other bodies, and provides administrative and financial support to the technical standardisation body, the Internet Engineering Task Force.

The ISOC is organised at both global and local level. It is present in more than 100 countries around the world and has national chapters such as [ISOC France](#). It has individual members, '[organisation members](#)' such as Amazon, Mozilla, Google and the Internet Numbers Registry of Africa, and [special interest and standing groups](#) on topics like artificial intelligence, accessibility, cybersecurity and online safety. The ISOC's activities are governed by a [board of trustees](#).

Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)

The **Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)** is a private technical standardisation body founded in 1986 in the US. Initially the IETF was supported by the US federal government, but since [1993](#) it has had no ties with the US government. The IETF is an open, cooperative and consultative body, which involves a wide range of stakeholders such as network designers, operators, vendors and researchers. Most of the IETF's work is done in [working groups](#), each dealing with a specific aspect of internet standards and technology. The decisions are made on the basis of a 'rough consensus', [meaning](#) that disagreements are noted but they do not have veto power. When there is significant opposition, there is no 'rough consensus'. The IETF has no official membership; anyone can participate in the IETF by signing up to its mailing list or registering for its meetings.

The IETF develops and promotes voluntary internet standards. Its focus is on protocols that enable devices to connect to the internet and communicate with each other. It is responsible for core internet protocols, such as the original IP, which defines how to send and receive data. The IETF publishes its standards as 'requests for comments' documents (RFC), which define how internet technology works in detail, and how it can be operated and managed at scale.

The ISOC and the IETF [collaborate](#) closely. Besides providing administrative and financial support, the ISOC appoints the IETF's Nominating Committee chair and encourages others to support the deployment of the IETF standards. The IETF appoints trustees to the ISOC's board of trustees.

World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international non-governmental organisation where member organisations such as private companies and universities, full-time staff and the wider public work together to develop various [standards](#) and protocols for the world wide web.⁶ W3C was [founded](#) in 1994 by the inventor of the world wide web (Tim Berners-Lee) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Laboratory for Computer Science to ensure the long-term growth of the internet. W3C aims to ensure that the internet is open, accessible and safe, and is not under any country's governance.

W3C operates through working groups and interest groups. Its [working groups](#) produce recommendations, technical reports and sample code, and have produced recommendations on various technologies that directly affect how web content is created and presented – for example, on HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)⁷ – as well as [guidelines on web content accessibility](#). W3C's [interest groups](#) gather information, explore new ideas and discuss various issues such as the security of web payments, privacy and media features on the web.

World Trade Organization

The World Trade Organization (WTO) deals with the rules of trade between countries, including trade in IT products and telecommunications and computer services. Although the WTO does not have a role in technical aspects of internet governance such as domain name management, its activities affect the digital economy and trade on the internet. For example, the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services ([GATS](#)) sets out the principles on how countries should treat foreign service providers, including those providing internet services. In short, it forbids countries to discriminate against products and services coming from another WTO Member State, although derogations are possible. Another WTO agreement – the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights ([TRIPS](#)) – sets basic principles on how to protect intellectual property rights around the world, including on the internet.

United Nations

International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is a UN specialised agency in charge of information and communication technologies (ICT) which facilitates international connectivity in communication networks. Its membership comprises 194 Member States and more than 1 000 companies, universities and international and regional organisations. ITU has multiple roles in the context of internet governance:

- It manages [global radio-frequency spectrum](#) and satellite orbit resources, which are critical resources for wireless services worldwide.
- Study groups from ITU's Telecommunications Standardization Sector ([ITU-T](#)) develop international standards called ITU-T recommendations with experts from across the globe. There are thousands of ITU-T [recommendations](#) in force on topics such as network architecture and security, next generation networks and internet protocols.

- It assists governments, particularly governments of developing countries, with ICT [data collection and dissemination](#).
- It works to strengthen global [cybersecurity](#) through initiatives such as the [Global Cybersecurity Index](#) and [Global Cybersecurity Agenda](#).
- Its Telecommunication Development Sector ([ITU-D](#)) helps to reduce the digital divide.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

The **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)** is a UN specialised agency established in 1967 to promote and protect intellectual property all over the world. WIPO participates in internet governance debates on issues related to copyright protection in cyberspace. The [WIPO Copyright Treaty](#) and the [WIPO Performances and Phonogram Treaty](#) (referred to as the Internet Treaties) set down international rules aimed at preventing unauthorised access to and use of creative works in the digital environment.

Internet Governance Forum

During the United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society in 2005, the UN decided to establish an **Internet Governance Forum (IGF)**. The IGF is a multi-stakeholder forum that brings together representatives of governments, industry, civil society, academia and the technical community to discuss on an equal footing various [issues](#) related to internet governance. In the IGF, stakeholders have discussed, for example, how to reduce the digital divide, manage spam and protect children online. The IGF is not a decision-making body but a forum for dialogue that serves to share best practices, shape discussions and influence internet governance at regional, national and international level. It also acts as an interface with various organisations and institutions and helps to improve the availability and affordability of the internet in developing countries.

Once a year, participants gather for the global IGF, in which an [EU delegation](#) (including Members of the European Parliament) has been present. In the past, the [European Parliament](#) has been in favour of renewing the IGF's mandate, strengthening its resources and multi-stakeholder model of internet governance. On 15–19 December 2024, the global IGF will gather in [Saudi Arabia](#) to discuss how to find a balance between innovation and risks in the digital space and how to advance human rights and inclusion in the digital age.

In addition, [national](#)⁸ and [regional IGFs](#)⁹ take place throughout the year, including, in Europe, **the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG)**. EuroDIG is a multi-stakeholder platform bringing together European governments, parliaments, organisations, private sector and civil society groups, and the technical and academic community. It was [founded](#) in 2008 by a group of stakeholders working in the field of internet governance. It serves for European stakeholders to exchange their views and best practices on the issues to be discussed at global IGF meetings and to identify common ground. An annual conference takes place each time in a different European city.

Global Digital Compact

More recently, the United Nations proposed in United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres's report '[Our Common Agenda](#)'¹⁰ to agree on a global initiative called the **Global Digital Compact (GDC)**. The GDC outlines globally shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all. World leaders adopted the GDC on 22 September 2024 as part of the Pact for the Future.

The [GDC](#) addresses many topics, ranging from the digital divide to respect for human rights online, misleading content and international governance of artificial intelligence. The GDC highlights that internet governance 'must continue to be global and multi-stakeholder in nature, with the full involvement of Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, technical and academic communities, and all other relevant stakeholders'.

The GDC also reaffirms its support for the IGF, ensuring a more diverse participation of governments and other stakeholders in this forum and the provision of voluntary funding to this end. Furthermore,

the GDC calls to refrain from internet shutdowns and measures to limit internet access, and ensure that any restrictions comply with international law. Some stakeholders¹¹ have criticised the fact that the GDC was developed in a multilateral process between states, with little involvement of non-government stakeholders. [Others](#) have said that the voluntary funding of the IGF has been ineffective, in that [voluntary funding](#) can be unpredictable and vary from year to year.

The [EU](#) called on the GDC to respect human rights, promote privacy and data protection, help to fight against information manipulation and interference, avoid internet fragmentation, and support the multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance.

Multilateral versus multi-stakeholder model for internet governance

The desirability of a multilateral versus a multi-stakeholder model for internet governance has long been debated. The multilateral model means that governments dominate global internet governance, whereas the multi-stakeholder model means that governments are simply one of the actors who decide how the internet is governed. In the multilateral model, states play the central role and other actors have a supporting role. In the multi-stakeholder model, [states](#), the private sector, the technical community and civil society are all equally responsible for formulating principles, rules and procedures for the use and development of the internet.

[Supporters](#) of the multi-stakeholder model argue that this model allows a broader representation of interests than government representation of constituents. It involves a multitude of actors such as businesses, academia, activists and technicians alongside governments. Furthermore, a multi-stakeholder approach enables access to more [expertise](#), and helps to develop more sophisticated and nuanced conceptual approaches to internet governance.

[Critics](#) of the multi-stakeholder model point out that multi-stakeholder processes can be [cumbersome](#) and time-consuming, sometimes taking years. In addition, maintaining balanced representation of various actors is not always easy, since participating in multiple forums requires significant resources in terms of time, money and people. In practice, big global internet companies and bigger states tend to be better represented and civil society less well represented in multi-stakeholder forums, although in the end decisions are based on consensus. It can be challenging to achieve [policy coherence](#) with a multi-stakeholder approach due to the high number of actors with diverging interests and the lack of a centralised coordinating body. The same issue could be discussed in different forums by different interest groups who do not necessarily coordinate their decisions in the end.

While [states](#) like China, Russia and [Gulf states](#) have been rather in favour of the multilateral model, Western countries have generally favoured the multi-stakeholder model. For example, the US has been a great supporter of the multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance, proof of which is the transition of the [IANA](#)'s functions from a body under state control to a multi-stakeholder community. Initially, the IANA – a body under the responsibility of the US Department of Commerce – was responsible for some of the key elements that keep the internet functioning smoothly,¹² but gradually the US government agreed to move the IANA's functions to the global multi-stakeholder community, in particular to ICANN.

[China](#) has been arguing that states should be able to decide on the content, operations and norms of the internet within their borders. In terms of internet freedom, China ranks lowest in the world (see Freedom of the Net 2024 [report](#)). China believes that each state should have an equal say in the administration of the global internet and that it is up to states to balance the claims of citizens with the claims of businesses, other states and governing bodies. At the same time, China actively participates in various internet governance bodies such as ICANN, the IETF and ITU. Chinese delegations are usually among the largest, but their [impact](#) and engagement varies from one body

to another. For example, in the IETF working groups the Chinese have been [very active](#). Huawei is the second most active company in publishing or co-publishing RFC documents in the IETF.

Similarly, [Russia](#) has favoured multilateral agreements rather than multi-stakeholder processes and a stronger mandate for ITU in the field of internet governance. The Russian government has actively redesigned its internet infrastructure ('RusNet') to limit access to specific websites, block messaging platforms and control internet traffic on its territory. In addition, [Russia](#) seeks to reduce its dependency on foreign internet infrastructure and technology to have greater control over the internet within its borders.

The actions of China and Russia could have significant repercussions for the future of the internet. The internet's fragmentation into a multitude of non-operable and disconnected '[splinternets](#)' could hinder the free flow of ideas and information, create barriers between markets, slow trade and complicate cybersecurity efforts.

China's attempts to redesign the internet's infrastructure

In recent years, Chinese entities, in particular telecom giant Huawei, have proposed to [change](#) the way the global internet works. In 2019, [Chinese delegates](#) from Huawei, together with state-run companies China Unicom and China Telecom, and the country's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology jointly proposed at an ITU-T meeting [a new standard for core network technology](#), called 'the new IP'. According to [Huawei](#), the current IP design is not efficient enough to support cutting-edge technologies such as holographic communications or self-driving cars. They therefore proposed a number of changes, such as variable-length IP addresses. The proposal was rejected, but Chinese firms, academics and government representatives have since presented similar ideas in different forums.

The Chinese proposals have evoked [mixed reactions](#) from the international community. Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia and several [African countries](#) have supported the proposals, while [Western countries](#) such as the US, the UK, the EU and non-profit organisations¹³ have expressed concerns about them.

Some Western commentators, like [Monique Taylor](#), argue that 'Huawei's new IP proposes a centralised and deeply coupled architecture that integrates all possible functions and shifts control over the network to states'. [E. Campanella et al.](#) explain further that the new IP would 'connect devices and share information and resources across networks through a centralised control of data'. They argue that, while the traditional IP is unaware of the content or services it carries, in the new IP the network operator could identify the sender, the receiver and the content of the information shared. The network operator could also stop dissemination of and access to that information. Taking postal services as a comparison, applying the new IP proposal would mean that the postman could open the envelopes and see what is inside and decide whether to send the envelope to its addressee or not.

Other commentators are more careful in commenting on the Chinese proposals. For example, [Milton Mueller](#) does not characterise the new IP as a standard but a forward-looking white paper, and says that it is impossible to know whether the new IP 'would make global data communications more or less authoritarian'.

European Union's role

With its commitments to respect human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law,¹⁴ the European Union has a unique role in internet governance, both within its borders as well as outside. The [EU](#) has repeatedly committed to promoting the development of a single, open, neutral, free, secure and unfragmented internet.

The internet is constantly under threat. Some countries (like aforementioned examples Russia and China) have advanced a closed vision of the internet and limit their citizens' access to the global contents of the internet, by limiting access to specific websites and services, blocking messaging

platforms, or controlling the internet traffic across their territory more directly. [Private companies](#) can also be an obstacle to the unity and openness of the internet when they build their own independent technical infrastructure (submarine cables and data centres) and develop their own protocols.

The [EU](#) believes 'that the governance of the internet must be protected from political interference, and fundamental principles such as human rights, freedom of expression, and privacy must be respected'.¹⁵ This is reflected in EU treaties, in several EU laws, such as the [General Data Protection Regulation](#), and in the [Declaration for the Future of the Internet](#) that the EU proposed together with the US and other international partners in 2022.

The EU has been a strong advocate for an [open internet](#) and believes that internet traffic should 'be treated without discrimination, blocking, throttling or prioritisation'. The EU's [regulation on open internet access](#) prohibits internet services providers from blocking or slowing down specific types of internet traffic, except if it is necessary.¹⁶ According to this regulation, all traffic has to be treated equally and without discrimination.

Although the EU protects the internet from political interference, it has been following a more interventionist approach to the internet than some other countries such as the US. With several recently adopted EU regulations, such as the [Digital Services Act](#) and the [Digital Markets Act](#), the EU is seeking to create a safer digital space in which users' fundamental rights are protected and businesses can compete on equal terms.

Support for the multi-stakeholder approach

The EU has repeatedly committed to supporting a multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance and actively participates in various meetings and summits of international organisations that discuss internet governance issues. The EU also works with international standard-setting bodies to help develop technical standards that facilitate interoperability and security in the global cyberspace. Furthermore, the EU holds bilateral and multilateral dialogues with other countries and regions. For example, in the [EU-US Trade and Technology Council](#) the EU and US discuss various internet governance issues such as artificial intelligence and coordinate each other's positions in international standard-setting bodies.

The [European Council](#) believes that the EU's leadership in global digital affairs should be strengthened. However, this should not come at the cost of others. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also noted in her [political guidelines for 2024-2029](#) that the EU should 'recognise the legitimate concerns of partners around the world'.

To strengthen multi-stakeholder processes, the [European Commission](#) proposed back in 2014 that such processes should respect at least three principles:

High-level group on internet governance

Since 2004, a [high-level group](#) on internet governance made up of representatives from the EU Member States, academia, the private sector and international organisations has helped to coordinate the EU's approach in internet governance forums. It has also assisted the European Commission in preparing various initiatives and legislative proposals (including delegated acts) in the field of internet governance.

The high-level group helps to address important new policy and technical internet developments and monitors global internet governance developments and events. For example, during the June 2024 meeting the high-level group took stock of events such as NetMundial, the WSIS+20 Forum and the ICANN High Level Government Meeting. The EU External Action Service (EEAS) also gave a presentation on the Global Digital Compact, reminding group members that it offers a unique opportunity for the EU to promote its values and practices at a global level.

Source: European Commission, [Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities](#).

- 1 **Transparency:** All stakeholders should have access to and information on the organisational processes and procedures under which the multi-stakeholder body operates.
- 2 **Inclusiveness and balance:** All parties should have fair and affordable opportunities to participate in discussions at all key stages of decision-making (including via remote participation).
- 3 **Accountability:** Multi-stakeholder platforms should regularly give an account of their activities to stakeholders or independent supervisory bodies and any party should be able to seek redress through effective dispute resolution mechanisms.

Conclusion

The governance of the internet is a complex and multifaceted issue, shaped by a diverse range of actors. These actors include national governments, the private sector, civil society and the technical community, and they work together in various places to shape the internet's development and use. The same people can discuss the same issues in different forums, and not always in a coordinated way.

The EU has played a crucial role in promoting an open, free and unfragmented internet and is in favour of a multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance, where all stakeholders have a voice in decision-making. This approach ensures a diverse range of perspectives, access to more expertise and a more nuanced approach to internet governance. The US has also affirmed its support for the multi-stakeholder approach, by moving discussions on various internet governance issues from bodies under state control to a multi-stakeholder community.

However, not all countries share the EU's vision. Countries like Russia and China favour a more state-controlled internet with limitations on content and access. China has also made far-reaching proposals to redesign the internet's global infrastructure that could transform the open internet into a closed internet where state-run internet service providers could exert control over citizens' internet use. These differing approaches to internet governance pose a challenge for the future of the internet and require ongoing dialogue and cooperation. If the EU wants to keep the internet free, open and unfragmented, it is important that the EU continues to defend its values and increases its diplomatic efforts.

MAIN REFERENCES

Nanni, R., [Rising China and Internet Governance](#), 2024.

['Splinternets': Addressing the renewed debate on internet fragmentation](#), STOA, European Parliament, June 2022.

Kurbalija, J., [An introduction to internet governance](#), 7th edition, 2016.

Carr, M., [Power plays in global internet governance](#), 2015.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ [IP addresses](#) are unique identifiers (numbers) assigned to any computer or device connected to the internet. They allow computers and devices to locate and identify each other on a network.
- ² DNS converts text-based domain names into IP addresses (numbers). A domain name identifies a specific address on the internet that belongs to an entity such as a company, organisation, institution or individual. It usually consists of two or more textual segments separated by dots (e.g. europa.eu).
- ³ [The root server system](#) refers to a network of root DNS servers. The root DNS servers only know information about top-level domain (TLD) names (for example, .org, .com, .be). When a user tries to reach a website (such as www.icann.org), the query may first be directed to a root DNS server, which helps to direct the query to the appropriate server (such as the .org server, which only knows information about .org domains and will tell the user to try www.icann.org).
- ⁴ [Address Supporting Organization](#), [Country Code Name Supporting Organization](#) and [Generic Names Supporting Organization](#).
- ⁵ [At-Large Advisory Committee](#), [Governmental Advisory Committee](#), [Root Server System Advisory Committee](#) and [Security and Stability Advisory Committee](#).
- ⁶ The world wide web is described by [W3C](#) as 'the universe of network-accessible information' (websites or pages that users can access on their computers and other devices through the internet).
- ⁷ Cascading Style Sheets ([CSS](#)) is a mechanism for adding style (such as fonts, colours and spacing) to web documents.
- ⁸ Such as the Brazil IGF, Russia IGF, Hungary IGF and India IGF.
- ⁹ Such as the African IGF, Arab IGF and Asia Pacific IGF.
- ¹⁰ 'Our Common Agenda' is a report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in which he sets out a vision for the future of global cooperation.
- ¹¹ See an open letter sent to the United Nations on 1 July 2024 by a number of people involved in W3C, the IETF, ICANN and the ISOC.
- ¹² For example, management of certain top-level domains.
- ¹³ For example, the [Internet Society](#).
- ¹⁴ See Article 2 of the [Treaty on European Union](#).
- ¹⁵ As Peggy Vissers, First Secretary at the EU Delegation to the UN, said in 2023 on behalf of the EU and its Member States.
- ¹⁶ For example, to preserve the integrity and security of the network or to prevent network congestion.

DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT

This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its author(s) and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the Parliament.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy.

© European Union, 2024.

Photo credits: © sdecoret / Adobe Stock.

eprs@ep.europa.eu (contact)

www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu (intranet)

www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank (internet)

<http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)