



ITU Backgrounders

Founded on the principle of international cooperation, ITU is the premier global forum through which parties work towards consensus on a wide range of issues affecting the future direction of the ICT industry.

ITU'S EVOLVING MEMBERSHIP

Bringing a cross sector of the ICT industry together

An organization based on public-private partnership since its inception in 1865, ITU is unique in the UN family in bringing together 193 Member States, over 700 private sector entities and more than 60 academic institutions.

ITU membership represents a cross-section of the global ICT sector, from the world's largest manufacturers and carriers to small, innovative players working with new and emerging technologies, along with leading R&D institutions and academia.

National governments join ITU as Member States. Private sector entities join as Sector Members or Associates, allowing them to contribute to global standards and best practices; engage in global and regional debates; launch innovative public-private partnerships; and network with ICT regulators, policy-makers and experts from industry and academia.

[Sector Members and Associates](#) have played a vital role in the work of the Union, helping Member States address emerging issues and rapid changes in the telecommunication/ ICT sector.

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Government membership structure explained

A total of [193 States are Members of ITU](#). The founding Member States of the Union were 20 European countries who signed the first International Telegraph Convention on 17 May 1865 in Paris. The most recent Member is South Sudan, which joined on 3 October 2011.

Member States elect to contribute a voluntary amount to the running of the Union, by choosing freely a 'class of contribution' which corresponds to a financial sum.

A single Contributory Unit for Member States for the period 2012-2015 is **CHF 318,000**. The scale from which each Member State chooses its class of contribution ranges from 40 units all the way down to 1/16 of a unit for UN-designated Least Developed Countries. There has been no increase in the amount of Contributory Unit since 2006.

You can find a full list of class of contributions and an explanation of how States join ITU [here](#).

Private-Sector and Academia membership structure explained

The three Sectors of ITU are open to private sector membership: [Radiocommunications \(ITU-R\)](#), [Telecommunication Standardization \(ITU-T\)](#) and [Telecommunication Development \(ITU-D\)](#).



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Each Sector of ITU has a number of Study Groups related to the Sectors' specific field. **Organizations/entities can join any or all Sectors of ITU.** Full Sector Members are entitled to participate in all of the Study Groups, while organizations/entities that have a specific focus can choose to participate in a single Study Group as an Associate.

Academia, universities and their associated research establishments benefit from preferential rates, as do Sector Members from some developing countries.

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ANNUAL CONTRIBUTORY AMOUNTS – PRIVATE SECTOR	
Standardization / Radiocommunication Sectors	
Sector Members	31,800
Sector Members from developing countries (per capita income not exceeding USD 2,000)	3,975*
Associates	10,600
Academia and research establishments	3,975
Academia and research establishments from developing countries	1,987.50
Development Sector	
Sector Members	7,950
Sector Members from developing countries	3,975
Associates	3,975
Associates from developing countries	1,987.50
Academia and research establishments	3,975
Academia and research establishments from developing countries	1,987.50

All amounts in CHF

* not yet a Sector Member and not a subsidiary of a multinational corporation with headquarters in a developed country

Open and inclusive

Academic membership

A total of 63 academic institutions have joined the ITU since the 2010 Plenipotentiary Conference in Guadalajara, Mexico where Member States opened Academia participation on a trial basis. The new category, 'Academia, Universities and Associated Research Establishments,' enables academic institutions to play an important role in the development of standards and recommendations while being recognized as experts in their field. Their participation in field-related study groups allows Member States, Sector Members and Associates to gather academic expertise and advice on ICT strategies. Meanwhile, professors and their students are able to gain access to world-leading ICT statistics and studies.

Proposals to further develop Academic inclusion will be reviewed at PP-14.



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NGO participation

NGOs are welcome to become Sector Members or Associates and participate in Study Groups, global and regional workshops and other events. Membership fees are sometimes waived in the case of key players having an international character in ITU's core area of work – one example is the Internet Society, which has enjoyed ITU membership at no cost since 1995.

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Of the 112 non-profit, international and regional organizations which have been granted exemption from membership fees, some 50% are NGOs. Exemption criteria are founded upon reciprocity. Exempted organizations agree to provide ITU with similar access to their meetings, publications and other benefits.

Based on advice of the **Council Working Group on Finance and Human Resources**, PP-14 will consider the feasibility of establishing a new category of membership for NGOs, while at the same time reviewing the existing criteria for fee exemptions.