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**Building an enabling environment for access to the Internet**

1. **What are the elements of an enabling environment to promote Internet connectivity?**
2. **What are the elements of an enabling environment to promote an affordable Internet?**
3. **What are the elements of an enabling environment to promote the quality of access to the Internet?**
4. **What are the elements of an enabling environment to build confidence and security in the use of the Internet?**
5. **What is the role of Governments in building an enabling environment?**

The Ministry of Communications and Informatization of the Republic of Belarus welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the discussion of the Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues on an enabling environment and would like to provide the following information.

**Connectivity and Affordability**

In order to ensure an enabling environment it is vital to eliminate (or at least minimize) factors, that prevent people from using ICTs. Among those factors are:

* lack of accessible and demanded ICT services, including e-services;
* lack of necessary infrastructure and appropriate investments;
* inadequate availability of skilled professionals to develop relevant infrastructure;
* insufficient digital literacy;
* specific conditions of remote areas which limit ICT infrastructure development due to lack of commercial attractiveness for telecom providers and investors;
* lack of enabling environment for public-private partnership (for instance due to absence of proper legal framework);
* lack of competitive marketplace leading to inadequately overpriced telecom services;
* lack of specific legal framework in the sphere of telecommunication, investment.

It is necessary to act holisticaly to overcome the abovementioned constrains. Otherwise, if to concentrate only on one or more separate measures to promote Internet connectivity, it might be insufficient to ensure an enabling environment.

According to the wide international experience, elaboration of national action plans on ICT development is one of the most effective ways to ensure a holistic approach towards achieving a true digital society.

The main elements of the Belarusian policy on digital development are stipulated by the *Strategy on the development of informatization in the Republic of Belarus for 2016 – 2022*. Practical measures of its implementation are envisaged in the State programme on development of digital economy and information society for 2016 – 2020. In particular, the abovementioned document sets the following priorities in the sphere of the development of national ICT infrastructure:

* development of the fixed broadband Internet access with the use of modern access technologies based on multiservice telecommunication networks and infrastructure development with the use of fiber-optic communication lines. This will allow to increase quality of fixed broadband Internet access and to use resources of the developed infrastructure for providing the user of basic and additional telecommunication services, including automation of critical technological processes;
* development of wireless broadband Internet access based on existing 3G and LTE (4G) mobile telecommunication network, as well as national resources of satellite communication and broadcasting;
* development of cloud technologies, that ensure user’s access to necessary information and computing resources regardless of his geographical presence.

**Quality of Internet Access**

In order to increase the quality of Internet access it is important to focus on the following aspects in informatization infrastructure:

* development of an effective and transparent system of public administration by means of introduction of innovative ICT solutions in all spheres of life;
* ensuring transparency, safety and usability of communication means uses by citizens, business and government by means of converting these communication into electronic form;
* further development of a single information space to provide e-services by means of integration of information systems and providing access to open data;
* facilitation and promotion of the use of e-services;
* growth in production and secure uptake of high-tech innovative ICT goods and services;
* ensuring of continuity, fault tolerance and safety of data streams.

**Confidence and Security**

In order to ensure confidence and security in the use of ICT special security policy requirements and specifications have been elaborated for state information systems, as well as a number of information, hardware-software systems that guarantee secure functioning of state system of data protection.

**Government’s Role**

Among the main functions of the Government in building an enabling environment are: policy-making; coordination; management and monitoring of the implementation of ICT policy, analysis of the current state of the ICT sphere and its comparison with the global indicators; elaboration and planning of further priorities of informatization development, standardization and licensing.