

International internet-related public policy issues on harnessing new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs for sustainable development

SUMMARY

With more than 4 billion of people disconnected in the world, it is fundamental that the public policies works not only promoting economic policies to improve the market of the sector as the only possible solution to connect the unconnected. It's important that the State assume your hole in the telecommunications as a conductor to universalize the internet access as a human right, promoting and stimulating also public policies in a social manner, as smart/digital cities, shared IXPs and backhaul, community networks for example.

In this context, in a complementary way, it's possible to create policies to capacity building and education about how to use and understand the functionality of the ICTs in the schools and other educational spaces.

A shared infrastructure is imperative to reduce the costs not only in equipment, but also, about the traffic that the public policies and other relevant digital services will consume in the near future, than, the State needs to change the regulatory environment to create a safe and sustainable scenario for all the players in telecom, not only the market, but the other instances of the government and social initiatives that will work with ICTs to include all the people in the information society.

How will new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs impact both the internet and sustainable development, including the digital economy?

Internet access consolidated itself as a human right to give the support for consolidating several sustainable development goals and in search of a multi participative path for the democratization of the media in times of digital convergence. However, the challenge is that a centralizing model still exists, in the sense that this access is given by private means and aimed only at commercial purposes or at the expense of guaranteeing inalienable rights, such as privacy, freedom of expression and access to information about free and fair way. In this sense, it is necessary to take a special look at social public policies, since a good part of government initiatives has been following a line of applying only economic policies to encourage the private sector, forgetting its role on sovereignty in telecommunications and the search to stimulate social policies for universal access to the internet. If we turn our eyes to this other side of the telecommunications sector, we can envision policies that increase the population's access through new regulatory frameworks that facilitate the creation of emerging networks not only by small commercial providers, but also by public and community initiatives without ends profits that allow a synergistic environment to reduce the digital divide. Policies such as national broadband plans, digital / smart / knowledge cities, community networks, among other actions, can and should integrate with the cause of reducing inequalities still perpetuated by economic models that exclude more than half of the population from access to opportunities in information society. It is therefore vitally important that this public consultation reinforces the role of the State as an inducer of policies for access not only in economic terms, but mainly in social terms.

What are the opportunities and challenges for the adoption and growth of the new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs and internet?

As for the opportunities, in a broader aspect, we can see research already done that for every 10% of the population digitally included, there is a significant increase of 1.38% or more in relation to GDP. It is worth emphasizing that the increase in GDP by excluded populations, with all the controversies regarding GDP as an indicator of development, leads us to a reflection that they are generally excluded people and that they tend to develop economically by having access to the same opportunities as others, digitally included, bringing a new share of innovation, qualification and generation of work and income. A more specific look at the opportunities for growth in access to ICTs, not only through economic but also social policies, we will see an expansion and improvement of services based on the increase of players in the sector, promoting greater competition in the market and complementing the access as a right through public and community services for the part of the population still in socio-economic development, in areas that are unattractive or economically unfeasible. The challenges still lie in the political and economic game of interests, even if legitimately, the big operators still hold on to an oligopoly that does not allow access for the entire population or is still permissive for the application of practices that hurt in several aspects the fundamental rights of the citizen. In this sense, it is necessary that the spaces of participation and governance of the internet are preserved and expanded, as well as those public policies have their social bias guaranteed. From this space of guaranteed equality, it is possible to design both economic and social actions in an equitable manner that ensures that all sectors of society share the benefits of ICTs for sustainable development.

How can governments and the other stakeholders harness the benefits of new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs?

The expansion of access involves the expansion of infrastructure and within an ecosystem where traffic tends to increase exponentially in the coming years, it is unthinkable to imagine infrastructures linked to models of private oligopolies / monopolies. It is necessary to think about how the construction of infrastructures can take place in a shared / collaborative way, adding companies, governments and civil society so that the social function of communications actually occurs in its fullness. As soon as there is a regulatory framework that guarantees private market interests and at the same time allows access as a right for all citizens, we can safely and economically plan the evolution of smart cities, community networks, and so many other policies that will allow sustainable development in countries that adopt more democratic practices in decision-making in information societies. In addition to socioeconomic development, we will have more participatory democracy, more transparency and more access to information so that these actions impact on the political and economic transformation towards a more just and equal society in terms of access to fundamental rights.

What are the best practices for promoting human skills, institutional capacity, innovation and investment for new and emerging telecommunications/ICTs?

In many countries, there was a wave of privatization of telecommunications after State control. In general terms, in more democratic countries this progress was relatively positive due to the balance in decision-making on sector policies, in others the concentration of the market reached such a point that it made new participants unfeasible, keeping the level of competition always below or almost inexistence of minimum levels for the development of a healthy and innovative telecommunications market. Despite the efforts in the qualification of ICT professionals, these generally end up becoming more manpower in large corporations,

therefore, it is necessary that the political, economic and legal environment promotes the training not only of manpower, but of new entrepreneurs, from innovators in the ICT sector, while generating more opportunities and a safe environment for the development of new participants in this sector.

With this brief introduction, it is necessary to reinforce that it is up to the State to promote such policies, looking at all shades of society, not only delegating to the market the resolution of the abysmal problems of infoexclusion in the globe. In a purposeful way it is feasible to create social and economic policies that serve not only companies, but also public and community initiatives that have sustainable models for universal access to the internet and the other rights promoted by it.

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