



Youth

Internet Governance Forum

Germany

Input to the CWG-Internet: Online Open Consultation on the role of public policy in promoting multilingualization of the Internet

Summary: The Youth Internet Governance Forum Germany advocates for a multilingual Internet to enhance accessibility, inclusion, and cultural preservation. Key actions include promoting Universal Acceptance (UA) of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), diversifying digital education, and leveraging AI responsibly. Multistakeholder collaboration, involving governments, businesses, and civil society, is essential to address challenges like low UA awareness and readiness. Youth and cultural heritage are key considerations, with forums like the Internet Governance Forum crucial for advancing these goals.

The Youth Internet Governance Forum Germany would like to make the following remarks concerning the role of public policy in promoting multilingualization of the Internet.

- (1) On the question of what ITU and its members and other stakeholders could do to ensure that the Internet becomes more multilingual in nature and thus accessible for more of the global population

The Youth Internet Governance Forum Germany emphasizes that the multistakeholder approach is the most effective way to address the issue of multilingualism. Insights from all stakeholders should be incorporated, enabling meaningful contributions to developing a multilingual Internet. One underlying challenge that we see has already been addressed in the ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Envoys' Vision for Digital Development in Europe Towards 2030 it is the predominance of English in programming languages, creating a language gap in programming but also later in the applications running on the Internet. The multistakeholder community, including ITU and its member states, should therefore diversify and thereby extend the educational offering on digital technologies in terms of languages, targets and type of contents. To do so Artificial Intelligence could be leveraged but thorough care must be taken to ensure it does not perpetuate existing gaps or biases.

A multilingual Internet **supports meaningful connectivity and digital inclusion**, priorities also recognized in the Global Digital Compact (GDC). To achieve these coordinated efforts are needed by the multistakeholder community to **promote and financially support Universal Acceptance (UA)**, the technical foundation for a multilingual Internet. UA facilitates Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) and advances digital inclusion.



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Another point we consider important when addressing the issue of multilingualization of the Internet is the role of youth as a stakeholder. The young generation represents the largest user group of the Internet of today and at the same time young people are the ones most affected in their prospects and by a lack of multilingualization as an even larger share of their lives depends on the Internet and connectivity. Furthermore, we should also recognize the important role a multilingualized internet could play in the protection of intangible cultural heritage and indigenous cultures. To enable this, we need increased universal acceptance across applications based on and preserved by the Internet, in which UNESCO could collaborate with ITU.

- (2) The benefits and challenges of multilingualization of the Internet, including through UA of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), or the lack thereof.

The benefits of a multilingual Internet are vast, including enhanced digital inclusion, preservation of local cultures, and expanded e-commerce opportunities (some reports estimate a \$10 billion growth opportunity). However, **the low awareness and adoption of Universal Acceptance are barriers that must be addressed.** A challenge all stakeholders should tackle is raising awareness about universal acceptance and IDNs. It should be a policy priority for governments to push market actors to UA adoption and encourage the use of IDNs. Procurement policies could favor vendors which can demonstrate that their systems are UA ready. ITU could play an important role in capacity-building together with ICANN to spread awareness of IDNs and UA. The UA day is a noteworthy initiative in this regard, and we commend the [UA Steering Group](#) for their efforts in this regard.

Civil society actors should also do their part and spread awareness and ensure that their services are also UA ready. This challenge of low UA readiness can only be overcome if we all gather around the common goal of a multilingual internet that is truly accessible to everyone.

We call on the business community not to forget their global responsibilities amidst current trends and shifts in some government's positions. It should be clear that UA readiness, but also greater diversity is a must have to remain a relevant service going forward, not a nice to have.

We should also recognize that the benefits of a multilingualized internet can only be reaped if one is able to access the internet, the issue of connectivity is deeply intertwined with digital inclusion and should be taken into account in efforts to spread UA adoption. Ultimately, a multilingual Internet can only be achieved through multistakeholder collaboration. There is one key forum to do so, which is the Internet Governance Forum. Proof of this can be found in the excellent workshop organized at the 2023 IGF in Kyoto on [Digital Inclusion Through a Multilingual Internet](#).