

IGF POLICY NETWORK ON INTERNET FRAGMENTATION

Briefing note for the Multistakeholder Expert Working Group (PNIF-MWG) 23 May 2022

This briefing note is to provide a basis of discussion for the MWG's first meeting.

ABOUT THE PNIF

The PNIF proposal was born out of a [community initiative](#) by a multistakeholder coalition of civil society, business and technical community organisations in 2021 to raise awareness of the technical, policy, legal and regulatory measures and actions that pose a risk to the open, interconnected and interoperable Internet.

The IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) selected the [PNIF proposal](#) for one of the two policy networks of the IGF 2022 intersessional programme.

ABOUT THE MWG

The primary purpose of the PNIF Multistakeholder Working Group (MWG) is to advise on the substance scope and implementation of the PN.

The MWG is expected to ensure that

- the subject focus is of *relevance for the global community*,
- the PN implementation is in accordance with the main IGF principles of being *bottom-up multistakeholder, open and transparent, inclusive and non-commercial*.

MWG meetings are open to observers.

[PN Multistakeholder Working Group Terms of Reference](#)

PROPOSED DELIVERABLES

The objectives of the PNIF are

- Offer a systematic and comprehensive *framework to define Internet fragmentation*, its intended and unintended causes, and its potential effects;
- Collect and analyze *case studies* to fine-tune and complement this framework;
- Establish *shared principles, recommendations or codes of conduct* that prevent fragmentation and preserve the open, interconnected and interoperable nature of the Internet.

It is proposed that in 2022 the PNIF focusses on developing the framework and collecting case studies, and then re-submits a proposal to continue in 2023 with a focus on recommendations and codes of conduct.

Mailing lists

The PNIF has two mailing list:

- pnif-mwg@intgovforum.org / PNIF Multistakeholder working group of experts list

This is a [closed mailing list](#) for the PNIF multistakeholder working group to plan and coordinate the work. The list archives are publicly available.

- pnif@intgovforum.org / PNIF public mailing list

This [public mailing list](#) is open to all and will be an important venue for the PNIF to reach out to and engage with the community. You can subscribe at https://intgovforum.org/mailman/listinfo/pnif_intgovforum.org

PNIF webpage www.intgovforum.org/en/content/policy-network-on-internet-fragmentation

PNIF-MWG 1st meeting - 23 May 2022, 16:00 UTC

Draft Agenda

- (1) Welcome & Brief Round of introductions (5 min)
- (2) Overview of the PNIF proposal, Overview of the MWG (10 min)
- (3) Items for MWG discussion
 - (a) Organisational (MWG structure, frequency, ...) (10 min)
 - (b) Work plan - Content & focus of the 2022 work (15 min)
 - (c) Community involvement (15 min)
- (4) Next steps & data of next MWG meeting (5 min)
- (5) Details about the launch of the PN

Options & proposals

MWG - Options for format and leadership structure

In order to support the MWG, it is proposed that the MWG is facilitated either through

- A Chair / Facilitator
- Two co-Chairs / Facilitators
- Chair(s) / Facilitator(s) supported by a representative of each stakeholder group who would act as a coordinator between the larger group and the smaller stakeholder group within the MWG

The PNIF is supported by an IGF Secretariat consultant. (Wim Degezelle)

MWG- MAG Liaison

It is proposed that the MAG members participating in the PNIF-MWG agree amongst themselves on how to organise the liaison role.

MWG - Proposed decision making

It is proposed that the MWG makes decisions by consensus. Should consensus cannot be reached, and only on an exceptional basis, Chair(s)/Facilitator(s) may propose a vote (on a majority basis) to make a decision.

MWG - Proposed frequency of meetings

The MWG should meet at least once a month online, for a one hour meeting.

It should also host periodic briefings with the wider IGF community (those subscribed to the public mailing list).

Work plan - PNIF content and focus

It is proposed that in 2022 the PNIF focusses on developing the framework and collecting case studies.

- The comprehensive framework to define internet fragmentation, its intended and unintended causes, and its potential effects should aim for a holistic, three-layered approach (Technical/backbone layer; Network/access layer; Application/content layer).
- Case studies should contribute to fine-tuning and complementing the framework.

Work plan - PNIF outputs

The PNIF is expected to present a (draft) output document by the IGF2022 meeting (28 Nov-2 Dec).

The PNIF is expected to host a session during IGF2022.

Outreach & community involvement

PNIF MWG

PNIF MWG meetings are open to observers, summary reports of the meetings will be published on the webpage and shared on the public PNIF mailing list.

The PNIF MWG mailing list archives are publicly available.

PNIF mailing list

The PNIF mailing list is open to all interested.

PNIF meetings

It is proposed to schedule 3 to 4 virtual community briefings for the MWG update on progress and request feedback.

A first meeting to be scheduled in June to present the proposed PNIF focus and work plan for 2022 and invite community feedback.

Community & stakeholder input

It is suggested that the MWG develops a plan to collect community and stakeholder input in the work of the PNIF, including but not limited to the collection of case studies.

The plan could include surveys, calls for contributions, calls for feedback on draft deliverables.

About the issue

In recent years, technical, legislative and policy developments have furthered the risk that the Internet fragments into siloed parts. These developments include bans or restrictions on international data flows, interference with free expression, privacy, and/or encryption; and Internet shutdowns. These developments pose a threat to the open, interconnected and interoperable Internet, along with its associated benefits to social and economic development, while also harming human rights. Internet fragmentation can take place at various segments and functions of the Internet, any of which can prevent an open, interconnected and interoperable Internet. Therefore, we propose a three-layered framework through which to analyze actions and measures that can contribute to fragmentation in order to gain a holistic view of the issue and identify potential solutions:

- Technical / backbone layer: whereby conditions in the underlying technical infrastructure impede the ability of systems to fully interoperate;
- Network / access layer: whereby conditions at the physical, network, transport layers prevent proper functioning of the Internet and/or hinder meaningful connectivity;
- Application / content layer: whereby policies and actions constrain or prevent certain uses of the Internet to create, distribute or access information.