

EU Parliament Endorses Internet Openness, Transparency Ahead of WCIT

November 22, 2012

The European Parliament today approved a Joint Resolution calling on EU Member States to promote and protect Internet openness at the upcoming World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT).

The resolve of the Parliamentarians who drafted the resolution deserves recognition. The result is a strong statement of confidence in the civic and economic value of the open Internet, as well as the virtues of transparent, inclusive models for Internet governance.

The public's ability to submit comments in the drafting process is testimony to the work of Dutch MEP Marietje Schaake, a steadfast advocate for civil liberties in the digital age. MEP Schaake invited the public to comment on a draft of the Resolution on her website, providing a strong example of an open, inclusive approach to policy work -- and one that has been lacking in many of the preparations for the WCIT. CDT was grateful for the opportunity, and [submitted its own comments](#) [1].

Resolution Highlights

The Resolution laments "*the lack of transparency and inclusiveness of the negotiations for the WCIT-2012,*" also a key issue in our comments. (Quotes in italics found in line 2 of the resolution.) It expresses support for the open, transparent, participatory bodies that currently form the Internet governance landscape and urges that no "*centralized international institution...[should] assert regulatory authority over either internet governance or internet traffic flows.*" (line 3) In addition, it asks the Council to "*coordinate the negotiation of the revision of the ITRs on behalf of the European Union based on inclusively gathered input from multiple-stakeholders, through a strategy that primarily aims to ensure and preserve the openness of the internet, and to protect rights and freedoms of internet users online.*" (line 9)

The Resolution also makes reference to WCIT proposals that would institute new fee models for Internet traffic, as well as those that would impose a two-tiered system for online traffic, dividing flows between "quality of service" and "best-effort" delivery approaches. Both of these proposed policies would threaten Internet neutrality and users' rights of free expression and access to information. The Resolution notes that these so-called new profit mechanisms "*could seriously threaten the open and competitive nature of the Internet, driving up prices, hurting innovation and limiting access.*" (line 6) We published two papers that focus on these proposals, while highlighting the potential [human rights](#) [2] and [economic](#) [3] consequences, if enacted.

Much of the debate around the upcoming WCIT focuses on the threat of the ITU expanding the scope of its International Telecommunications Regulations (ITRs) to include Internet policy. The European Parliament's Resolution presses on this point, urging Member States to vote in favor of proposals to "*maintain the current scope of the [treaty] and the current mandate of the ITU...*" (line 7) Our comments to MEP Schaake argue that maintaining existing definitions is "imperative to preserving the [treaty's] present scope and sphere of influence." Several ITU member states, along with the regional group representing the Americas, have also endorsed proposals to maintain the existing scope of the ITRs.

The Joint Resolution represents a strong vote of confidence in the open Internet and the vital importance of protecting and promoting the exercise of human rights online. We urge other ITU Member States to uphold the principles endorsed in the Resolution as they determine how they will vote at the WCIT.

CDT's comments on the Draft Resolution posted by MEP Schaake, along with those of other civil society stakeholders, can [be found here](#) [1].

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[1] <http://www.marietjeschaake.eu/2012/11/request-for-comments-draft-parliamentary-resolution-on-wcit-2012/#comment-1474>

[2] <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/cynthia-wong/2106radical-proposal-now-table-itu>

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