



ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

WHO WE ARE

The Global Network Initiative (GNI) is a multistakeholder organization that brings together individual experts (including academics joining in their personal capacity) and **academic institutions**, civil society organizations, information and communications technology (ICT) companies, and investors from around the world to protect and advance freedom of expression and privacy rights in the ICT sector. GNI facilitates this collaborative work by setting a global standard for responsible company decision making, conducting independent assessments of company commitments, fostering confidential dialogue among members, and serving as a multistakeholder voice in the face of government restrictions and demands. [See a full list of members and observers.](#)

WHY GNI MATTERS

Governments around the world are increasingly involved in Internet governance and policy as they face evolving challenges in relation to law enforcement, national security, and the protection of human rights in the digital age, leading to greater scrutiny of ICT companies, which provide the platforms, networks, and services for online engagement.

Every day, ICT companies make important decisions about data storage, selling or licensing technology, and responding to government requests to access data or restrict access to information. These decisions have implications for the rights to freedom of expression and privacy of billions of users. GNI provides guidance based on international human rights law to ICT companies on how to evaluate and respond to these scenarios.

GNI plays a critical role in the ICT ecosystem, providing inclusive solutions for challenging issues and increasing the collective ability to protect and advance the right to privacy and freedom of expression.

HOW GNI IMPLEMENTS ITS MISSION

GNI implements its mission through shared learning, policy engagement, a framework for responsible company decision making, and a unique accountability mechanism in the ICT sector. More specifically, we:

- > **SET** a global standard for free expression and privacy in the ICT sector through the [GNI Principles on Freedom of Expression and Privacy](#)
- > **HELP** ICT companies establish rights-respecting policies and procedures, particularly in relation to privacy and freedom of expression
- > **PROMOTE** accountability and continuous improvement of member companies' policies and procedures through periodic assessment by independent experts
- > **FOSTER** a unique, multistakeholder, safe space for shared learning and sensitive discussions
- > **RAISE** our collective voice to advocate for rights-protecting laws and policies, from fighting network disruptions to responding to extremist content without harming human rights



HOW GNI MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER

GNI strives to reflect global diversity within its four constituencies, which drive change by promoting the GNI Principles and working together on freedom of expression and privacy rights, while maintaining distinct roles.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, including human rights and media freedom groups, bring their in-depth expertise on human rights along with direct connection to people on the ground around the world.

COMPANIES undertake independent assessments on their implementation of the GNI Principles within their organizations and publicly report on their progress over time. These assessments provide valuable insights into how companies put their GNI commitments into practice, including how law enforcement mechanisms work and the challenges companies and their staff may face on the ground.

INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS (INCLUDING ACADEMICS) AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS inform GNI's learning and policy activities with research and analysis on current digital rights issues.

INVESTORS recognize that meaningful commitments to human rights can help companies in which they invest avoid risks and build trust, leading to more productive and sustainable user engagement. They promote the GNI Principles through their wider engagement in the ICT sector.

BENEFITS OF GNI MEMBERSHIP FOR ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

- > Contribute research and analysis to GNI's policy and learning initiatives reaching relevant audiences to help set global standards and promote and protect freedom of expression and privacy rights
- > Access to experts and materials to support up-to-date curricula on freedom of expression and privacy rights
- > Opportunities for public speaking engagements and publishing in GNI's events and publications
- > First-hand opportunities to interact with companies and learn about their policies and procedures to protect users' rights and inform companies' on-the-ground operations

BECOME A GNI ACADEMIC MEMBER

The academic constituency is open to individual experts (including academics) and academic institutions. Academic institutions may include research centers, clinics, institutes, or other entities affiliated with academic institutions of higher education involved in independent research and/or teaching in the areas related to **GNI's mandate**.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM OUR MEMBERS

- > Adopt the GNI Principles and GNI Core Documents.
- > Support the GNI Principles and GNI **mission** through the academic constituency.
- > Contribute to shared learning, accountability, and collective action among GNI members.
- > Actively participate in GNI meetings and activities.
- > Academic institutions pay nominal annual dues of at least \$100 USD.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply for GNI membership as an academic institution, here is the application process and information that we need from you.

1

A Statement of Intent

Send a statement of intent (1-2 pages long) to info@globalnetworkinitiative.org, following these requirements:

- > State your intent to join the academic constituency.
- > A brief description of your organization with an institutional link, your institution's academic interests and research focus, and the location where you are based. Please also state your mission and goals and specify if your work is relevant to specific populations and/or focused on particular geographical areas.
- > Your interest in joining GNI, more specifically:
 - How does your institution's work relate to GNI's mandate?
 - Linked examples of your organization's work as it relates to the **GNI Principles**.
 - Has your organization ever participated in GNI events/activities or worked with other digital rights organizations, including any **GNI members**? If yes, please explain.
- > Your expectations and commitments:
 - How will GNI membership benefit your institution?
 - Is your intention to join GNI informed by a specific experience of your organization regarding human/digital rights? If yes, please explain.
 - What does your organization plan to contribute to GNI?
 - Do you commit to implement and advance the **GNI Principles** and **Implementation Guidelines**, and contribute to shared learning and collective action on GNI-related issues?
 - Do you commit to actively participate in and contribute to GNI meetings and shared learning and collective action on GNI-related issues?
 - Do you commit to abide by the confidential nature of the discussions within GNI?

2

Follow Up

Once we have received your SOI, GNI staff may contact you to discuss membership in more detail, if your application is viable.

3

Consultation with existing GNI participants

We will talk with members of the constituency that you plan to join, in this case the academic constituency. As a next step, your application materials will be reviewed by our multistakeholder Membership Committee.

4

Decision by the GNI Board

As a final step, the Executive Director will make a recommendation to the GNI Board members who will then vote on your application.

5

Notification of the GNI Board's Decision

You will be contacted by the Executive Director who will inform you of the GNI Board's decision.