



COMPANY



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 COMPANIES

- > Connect with a diverse group of actors to help set global standards to protect and respect freedom of expression and privacy rights
- > Access to learning opportunities in public and private settings with GNI members, including on sensitive topics on a confidential basis
- > Manage risk exposure and improving company decision making by implementing the GNI Principles and Implementation Guidelines
- > Participate in the GNI Assessment process that reviews GNI company members' internal policies to protect users' rights
- > Leverage GNI's spaces for international advocacy engagement to promote the rights to freedom of expression and privacy around the world
- > Gain real-time insights into the risks and opportunities of a rapidly changing regulatory environment

BECOME A GNI COMPANY MEMBER

The company constituency is open to private ICT sector entities who feel they would benefit from implementing the GNI Principles and Implementation Guidelines. These may include equipment manufacturers, network operators, telecommunications or Internet service providers. Such entities are usually for-profit or benefit corporations but may also be not-for-profit in nature. Applicants to this constituency may apply first for a one-year **"observer" status**, which allows for participation in GNI's policy and learning (but not assessment/accountability) activities on a trial basis. Learn more about the value of GNI membership for companies in this [one pager](#).

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM OUR MEMBERS

- > Adopt the GNI Principles and GNI Core Documents. The GNI Principles provide guidance for ICT companies seeking to formalize their responses to government requests consistent with international human rights law, notably the **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights**. The **Implementation Guidelines** offers concrete steps companies should take to ensure the effective implementation of the GNI Principles.
- > Support the GNI Principles and GNI **mission** through the company constituency.
- > Contribute to shared learning, accountability, and collective action among GNI members.
- > Participate in the independent **assessment process** through which company members are evaluated periodically for their good-faith implementation of the GNI Principles and improvement over time.
- > After one year of full company membership, companies typically complete a “self-assessment,” which prepares them for undergoing a full assessment as part of GNI’s accountability mechanism.
- > Actively participate in GNI meetings and activities.
- > Companies pay annual membership fees on a sliding scale according to revenue. Observers pay a reduced fee of 30 percent of full membership.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply for GNI membership or observer status as a company, 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 company constituency and specify if you are applying for membership or observer status.
- > A brief description of your organization including an institutional link, your areas of expertise and focus, the location where you are incorporated, and the geographic areas where you operate. Please also specify who your clients are (e.g., “Internet users around the world” or “technology companies based in Southeast Asia”)
- > Your interest in joining GNI, more specifically:
 - How does GNI’s work relate to the work of your organization?
 - Linked examples of your organization’s official positions on human rights issues. For example, a company Human Rights Policy that meets the standards of the **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights** (UNGPs) (see no.15 and no.16) or official statements that speak to human rights issues.
 - Has your organization ever participated in GNI events/activities or worked with other digital rights organizations, including any **GNI members**? If yes, please explain.

2

Follow Up

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

3

Consultation with existing GNI participants

We will talk with members of the constituency that you plan to join, in this case the company 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.