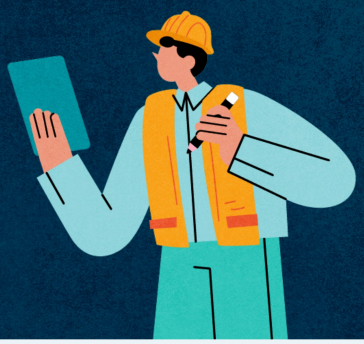
Accountability



Overview

GNI maintains a detailed, multistakeholder-designed framework aimed at advancing freedom of expression and privacy across the tech sector. Central to this effort is GNI's independent assessment process, which is now in its fifth cycle.

GNI's assessment process involves accredited, independent, third-party assessor review of corporate policies, systems, and decision-making frameworks, accompanied by case studies demonstrating real-life implementation. Findings are compiled into confidential reports which are reviewed by the GNI Accountability Committee and the GNI Board to determine whether member companies are implementing the GNI Principles (and their accompanying Implementation Guidelines) in good faith with improvement over time. Companies are also provided with recommendations to better implement the GNI Principles. Technical details of the assessment process are set out in the fifth cycle Assessment Toolkit.



Calendar year 2025 Assessments

Verizon, MTN, Wikimedia Foundation, Google, Meta, and Zoom completed both their Accountability Committee and GNI Board Assessment Review Meetings in 2025. Due to the staggered nature of the fifth cycle assessment process, Cloudflare, Ericsson, Microsoft, Nokia, Orange, Telenor, and Yahoo, who began their assessments during calendar year 2025, are scheduled to complete those assessments in 2026. A summary of their Process Review and Case Studies will be included within GNI's 2026 Annual Report.

Accommodations in the Assessment

From time to time the GNI Board makes adjustments and accommodations to GNI's assessment process. In 2024, the GNI Board permitted Frontiir, an ISP operating exclusively in Myanmar, to engage an independent consultant to conduct an "abridged assessment" due to unique operational and economic challenges related to the ongoing conflict in Myanmar. That abridged assessment began in 2025 and will be completed in 2026, with a summary to be included in GNI's 2026 Annual Report.

Preparations for the Sixth Assessment Cycle

GNI continuously evolves its assessment process between cycles to remain effective amid shifting political, technological, and membership landscapes. Preparations for the sixth cycle began in October 2025 with the Board's approval of a strategic, phased workplan targeted for completion by the end of 2026. This phased approach involves gathering multistakeholder feedback, refining improvements through consultation with the Accountability Committee, membership, and accredited assessors to maximize value for members. Further details on the evolution process and final design of the sixth cycle will be provided next year and summarized in GNI's 2026 Annual Report.



Fifth cycle assessments

The fifth assessment cycle introduced substantial structural and methodological changes, as highlighted by a GNI Confluence Blog from August 2024.

The five key changes are highlighted below:

1. **Incorporating Mandatory Due Diligence Regulations:** Companies and assessors can now use evidence from mandatory human rights frameworks like the DSA, Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) during assessments. (See August 2024 GNI Confluence Blog.)

2. **Enhanced Participation and Improved Mechanics:** GNI's Accountability Committee, composed of a broader range of representative members, now conducts reviews and submits determinations and recommendations to the Board, while the assessment process was staggered into three tranches over a two-year cycle. (See January 2025 Confluence Blog.)

3. **Sector-Specific Tailoring:** Explicit guidance was provided to help assessors evaluate relevant government restrictions and demands based on specific technical capabilities and business models. (See September 2024 Confluence Blog.)

4. **Addressing New Trends in Platform Governance and Information Integrity:** The fifth assessment process better accounts for the increased sophistication of government restrictions, thereby ensuring assessments remain relevant in an evolving digital landscape. (See December 2024 Confluence Blog.)

5. **Government Demands on AI and Due Diligence:** Assessors were equipped to assess how companies conduct due diligence on AI-enabled products and features in light of corresponding government restrictions, further detailed in the GNI Policy Brief on Government Interventions in AI, launched in October 2025.