

# One Internet: A social compact for the digital age

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**Internet penetration increased almost sevenfold in the past 15 years, from 6.5% of the world population in 2000 to 43% in 2015. The expansion of broadband networks has already brought 3.2 billion people online worldwide. Some 116 billion devices are already connected to the Internet and this number is growing faster than the number of Internet users. Internet and software companies such as Facebook, Apple and Google have all overtaken traditional companies such as GE or Exxon Mobile.**

These examples are just a foretaste of how fast the Internet is transforming our economies, our societies and our cultures. That is why we must strive to get the rules governing this incredible platform for growth and social well-being right. The “One Internet” report from the Global Commission on Internet Governance sets us on the right path.

Three lines of action in the report particularly resonate with the OECD:

**First, the need to increase access for a truly inclusive global digital economy.**

Access to the Internet is essential to benefit from the digital economy. Yet, over 50% of the world population remains offline, most of them living in emerging and developing countries. To increase access and make it affordable, policy leaders must encourage private investments and promote competition among providers, while increasing digital literacy. But we must also support governments in developing countries who want to provide free access internet spaces for their citizens.

**Second, the importance of promoting Internet openness.** The Internet is a global network of networks. We can capture its full potential only if we preserve the global free flow of information and promote the cross-border delivery of services. As the report notes, the open and accessible qualities of the Internet are the very qualities that encourage creativity and innovation. This is why the OECD has made Internet Openness and Innovation one of the four themes of our ministerial meeting on the digital economy this June.

**Third, the undisputed necessity of building an environment of trust.** Lately, many important companies such as Target, Home Depot, eBay or LinkedIn reported hacks and data breaches. Public safety is challenged when criminal and terrorist networks exploit the Internet, while important financial losses can result from cybercrime. We need to do more to strengthen trust across borders. Policy leaders, the private sector and civil society must join forces to effectively manage digital risks. Otherwise, as the report notes, users will modify their behaviour, and the online engagement that has made the Internet such a successful platform for growth, development and innovation will be eroded.

Besides these key areas of action, the report also touches upon a wide range of forward-looking aspects that are worth pointing out. It includes a framework to understand the Internet as an ecosystem of technologies, protocols, hardware, software and content, as well as recommendations to ensure human rights for digital citizens.

The report is also a call on governments, corporations, civil society, the technical community and individuals to create a new social compact for the digital age: a social compact that may bring about a completely new mode of interaction, of exchange of ideas, of negotiation that could also enhance policymaking processes in all areas, with the idea of making them increasingly open, transparent and, in the end, democratic.

Getting Internet governance right has never been more pressing. In the past few years, we have benefited significantly from the expansion of the Internet, the most powerful information system the world has yet seen. But this outstanding evolution has brought new

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challenges that we must address, collectively, if we want to keep an accessible, inclusive, secure and trustworthy Internet. Count on the OECD to help achieve these goals and develop better digital policies for a better world.

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For this editorial online, see <http://oe.cd/1oH>

Read also the OECD Secretary-General's opening remarks at the Cancún OECD Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy, 22 June: <http://oe.cd/1Dh>

For the "One Internet" report, see [www.ourinternet.org/report](http://www.ourinternet.org/report)