

PROMOTING LOW-COST BROADBAND AND INTERNET CONNECTIVITY BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Participants in the ITU 2004 Global Symposium for Regulators, identified best practice guidelines to achieve low cost broadband and Internet connectivity. The goal is the creation of national regulatory frameworks that are flexible and enable competition between various service providers using multiple transport and technology options. The best practices outlined below are designed to help bring social and economic benefits to the world's citizens.

An enabling regulatory regime that encourages broadband deployment and Internet connectivity

1. Political support at the highest government levels should be given with such support expressed in national or regional policy goals. These include an effective, separate regulator insulated from political interference, a transparent regulatory process, and adoption and enforcement of clear rules.
2. Competition in as many areas of the value chain as possible provides the strongest basis for ensuring maximum innovation in products and prices and for driving efficiency.
3. Regulators are encouraged to set policies to stimulate competition among various technologies and industry segments that will lead to the development and deployment of broadband capacity.
4. The primary objective of regulation should be to secure fair and reasonable access for competitive broadband services, including Internet connectivity.
5. Maintenance of transparent, non-discriminatory market policies is encouraged in order to attract investment.
6. Regulators are encouraged to adopt policies that are technology-neutral and do not favor one technology over another.
7. Convergence of platforms and services should be considered in the context of regularly reassessing regulatory regimes to ensure consistency and to eliminate unfair market advantages or unnecessary regulatory burdens.
8. Regulators are encouraged to allocate adequate spectrum to facilitate the use of modern, cost effective broadband radiocommunication technologies. Innovative approaches to managing the spectrum resource, such as the ability to share spectrum or allocating on a license-exempt, non-interference basis, are also encouraged.
9. Regulators are urged to conduct periodic public consultations with stakeholders to inform the regulatory decision-making process.
10. Regulators should carefully consider how to minimize licensing hurdles.
11. Development of a regulatory framework that permits ISPs and broadband providers to set up their own last mile should be encouraged.
12. Regulators should be encouraged to provide a clear regulatory strategy for the private sector in order to reduce uncertainty and risk, and remove any disincentives to investment.

Innovative Regulatory Policies Must Be Developed To Promote Universal Access

1. Access to low-cost broadband interconnectivity should be promoted and integrated from “grass-roots” efforts to identify local needs, all the way through international law. Governments, business and non-governmental organizations should be involved.
2. Regulators should adopt regulatory frameworks that support applications such as e-education and e-government.
3. Each country should adopt policies to increase access to the Internet and broadband services based on their own market structure and ensure that such policies reflect diversity in culture, language and social interests.
4. Regulators are encouraged to work with stakeholders to expand coverage and use of broadband through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Complementary government initiatives that promote financially sustainable programs may also be appropriate, especially in filling in the market gap that may exist in some countries.
5. Regulators are encouraged to adopt regulatory regimes that facilitate the use of all transport mechanisms, whether wireline, power line, cable, wireless (including wi-fi or wi-max), or satellite.
6. Regulators are encouraged to explore programs that encourage public access to broadband and Internet services to schools, libraries and other community centers.
7. Regulators are encouraged to implement harmonized spectrum allocations consistent with the outcome of the ITU Radiocommunication Conference process and each country’s national interest. Participation in this well-established framework will facilitate low-cost deployment of equipment internationally and promote low-cost broadband and Internet connectivity through economies of scale and competition among broadband vendors and service providers.

Broadband is an Enabler

1. Regulation should be directed at improving the long term interests of citizens. Broadband can contribute to this by improving and enabling education, information, and increased efficiency. It can reduce costs, overcome distance, open up markets, enhance understanding and create employment.
2. Regulators are encouraged to educate and inform consumers about the services that are available to them and how to utilize them so that the entire population benefits.
3. Regulators are urged to work with other government entities, industry, consumer groups, and other stakeholders to ensure consumers have access to the information they need about broadband and Internet services.