

**HUMAN DIMENSION SESSIONS  
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ENGLISH only

**WORKING SESSION 4: FREEDOM OF MEDIA**

**Written contribution of Estonia**

**“INTERNET AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION”**

Freedom of expression has to apply regardless of the medium used to convey the message. All human beings, regardless of their whereabouts or status should have equal access to knowledge and ideas. After all, safeguarding the freedom of expression and opinion on the Internet is an inseparable part of fundamental rights, dignity and worth of the human person.

At least in theory information has never been as free as it is today. Information networks are helping people all over the world to discover new facts and communicate their ideas to the rest of the world, thus making the governments more accountable. Moreover, the new technology stimulates citizens to take a more active role in the governance of their country. E-governance, on-line social networks, search engines, you tube – to name just a few – they are all irreplaceable tools in promoting democracy. After all, the more freely information flows, the stronger societies become.

As 76% of people living in Estonia use Internet daily, e-services on the Internet have become essential for people and for economy. E-Government applications on the Internet have improved the delivery of services in health, education and business, reducing costs and transaction time. For example, in 2001, the central database X-Road was launched being a comfortable and secure online environment, where residents can despite of their physical location securely view their information registered in different national databases. Thus countries along with digital progress more and more facilitate the use of all services on the Internet and must not leave media and social media as a useful medium for their people an exception.

Estonia calls on all states to guarantee their citizens the exercise of freedom of expression and opinion on the Internet and to support the persons and institutions, who use new technologies for promoting human rights and democracy development.