Ranking Digital Rights: Generic Scope of Work
Multi-country Case Study of One Telecommunications Company

Overview

The Ranking Digital Rights project (http://rankingdigitalrights.org) is a research collaboration between the New America Foundation, the University of Pennsylvania, and Internews. The project's purpose in 2013 is to develop a methodology for evaluating and ranking the policies and practices of Internet and telecommunications companies on criteria related to free expression and privacy.

In order to develop a credible and sound methodology we are conducting a series of case studies, applying the project's draft criteria to a selection of major Internet and telecommunication companies in different parts of the world. The goal of this research is to identify: a) what are the baseline practices and policies that all companies should be expected to adhere to if they are to maximize respect for user rights no matter where in the world they operate; b) which company policies and practices require specific legal and political conditions in order to be implemented – and if so what those conditions are. The results of these case studies will enable the research team to refine and adjust the project's final ranking methodology and determine how various criteria ought to weighted.

Case Study:

The work of each case study team involves two main components:

1) Information Collection through desk research and company interviews, the results of which will be entered into a spreadsheet for internal use only by the Project Lead and other key members of the research team. This information will be used to refine and adjust the ranking methodology but will not be published.

2) Analytical Narrative Report, identifying the research team's conclusions about which elements of the criteria can possibly be followed by companies in that particular country, given today's legal and political context. A version of the report will be published pending the authors' consent.

Research teams will also be provided with a detailed Research Guidelines document, which all teams will be expected to follow. Drafted by the Project Lead in consultation with the research teams in order to address practical realities and concerns of the research process, these guidelines will include: language that researchers should use in explaining the project to companies; guidelines for the data collection and interview process; anonymization of interviewees in published documents, sourcing, handling of sensitive information, etc.

The **Information Collection** phase will include:

Apply the **Draft Phase I Criteria**, as finalized by the Project Lead in late June, to one single multinational telecommunications company and several subsidiaries or major joint ventures in a range of different countries. The number of subsidiaries/joint ventures and exact countries are to be determined through consulation between the case study team and the Project Lead prior to the beginning of research and is subject to adjustment.

Through desk research and company interviews, the research team will a) determine the "yes" or "no" answers to all of the criteria questions and b) in cases where the answer to a criteria question is "no," determine "why." Is the reason a particular company has not implemented a certain policy or practice due to factors related to the company itself (business priorities, lack of awareness, resources, etc.)? Or is the company prevented from changing its policy or practice by laws, regulations, or political conditions in either its home jurisdiction or other jurisdictions where it operates?

Research teams will be provided with spreadsheet templates into which they will record "yes" and "no" answers for each criteria question (as well as "partial" and "N/A" when appropriate), plus other information as detailed in the final version of the Research Guide and on the spreadsheet.

The **Analytical Narrative Report** for will include:

1. **Introduction / Summary of Conclusions**: After application of the criteria to the parent company and selected subsidiaries/joint ventures, which policies and practices can the company/subsidiaries/joint ventures reasonably be expected to adhere to, given present legal and political circumstances in which they are operating? Which issue areas, as outlined by the Phase I Draft Criteria, are the most problematic from a legal and/or political perspective? In which issue areas can companies improve given present legal and political circumstances?

2. **Overview of Legal and Political Climate**: This section should not require original research but rather should be a summary of existing work. The overview should address specific instances of domestic internet and/or telecommunications laws contradicting the principles of privacy and freedom of expression as well as instances where the selected subsidiaries/joint ventures were implicated in abuses of their users' privacy and freedom of expression.

3. **Core Analysis**: Structured along the three issue areas outlined in the Phase I Draft Criteria, this section will summarize the answers and explanations across the parent company and selected subsidiaries/joint ventures. What if

any are the key differences among the policies and practices of the parent company in its home market and the subsidiaries/joint ventures covered in the case study? Are these differences attributable to internal or external factors?

4. **Conclusion**: Overall, when it comes to respecting users' rights to privacy and freedom of expression, which policies and practices can this parent company and its selected subsidiaries/joint venture partners reasonably be expected to adhere to, given present legal and political circumstances? Given the project's goal of a) educating the public on ICT companies' choices regarding policies and practices affecting digital rights and b) creating incentives for companies to improve these policies and practices—and given the results of the case study research—what criteria does the research team recommend that a set of global rankings emphasize?

While there is no minimum length for the narrative reports, after submitting a first draft teams may be asked to make additions if the context and analysis provided is not sufficient for outside stakeholders and experts to understand the basis for the team's conclusions. The maximum length should be no longer than 10,000 words.

Supplementary record-keeping: Researchers should also keep a log of all information that will be relevant for future researchers who will be applying the final methodology produced in late 2013 to rank companies in 2014. This information submitted to the Project Lead each team should include:

- all relevant contact information for each company.
- all sources of information
- other resources that were helpful
- problems to avoid in future

This document will not be published. Sensitive information about interview sources, in countries where reprisals are a concern, can be limited strictly to the Project Lead and core research team upon request by the country case study team.