

GSMA Response to the GSR-24 Consultation

What are the challenges and opportunities faced by policymakers and regulators in embracing transformative technologies for greater impact?

The pace of technological change creates challenges for the regulators and policymakers charged with fostering fairness and competition in the digital economy. If regulatory policies and institutions fail to adapt as new technologies are developed and the internet value chain evolves, markets risk becoming distorted in ways that harm competitiveness, slow innovation and deprive consumers of the benefits of technological progress.

In order to ensure that government and industry are aligned in their work to fully unlock these technologies' transformative economic, societal, and environmental potential, regulators should prioritise the adoption of dynamic, light-touch and market-specific regulatory frameworks and ensure that obsolete and counterproductive regulatory requirements are phased out in a timely manner.

Policymakers must also ensure that all sectors and citizens can access transformative technologies by addressing demand-side barriers to technology adoption. In countries around the world, mobile technology has generated enormous value and created unprecedented enablement for end-users, providing people with access to information, services, and life-enhancing opportunities, such as health information, financial services, and employment, often for the first time.

However, demand-side barriers – including a lack of local content, services, confidence, or digital skills – remain an obstacle to many who remain unconnected despite living within the footprint of a mobile broadband network. Government programmes such as digital skills training for the public, for example, are key to ensuring that all citizens are able to access and benefit from digital services. Regulators should also look to reform existing USFs, broadening the base of contributors to include additional stakeholders deriving benefits from the digital economy and using them to fund demand-supporting initiatives.

None of the barriers to technology adoption can be considered in isolation. The most successful governments will be those which adopt a whole-of-government approach and collaborate closely with multi-stakeholder partners to identify and remove unnecessary regulatory burdens, ensure policies are aligned across government, and harmonise regulations horizontally across sectors.



What are the key regulatory measures and guiding principles to follow to foster the positive and inclusive impact of transformative technologies?

Policymakers must seek to create a level playing field across the digital ecosystem; when required, regulation should be flexible and technology-agnostic, and applicable to all competitors providing the same service. This should be achieved through a combination of deregulation and increased use of horizontal legislation to replace industry-, technology- or service-specific rules. Policymakers, following transparent and accountable decision-making processes, can also put in place predictable pro-investment and pro-innovation policies that reduce costs and uncertainty around licenses and permits via long duration and simple renewal processes, adopting best practices on tax policy, and removing obstacles to infrastructure deployment.

Policymakers should also make use of regulatory sandboxes, pilot programs and impact assessments to evaluate the effects of new technologies and business models without imposing undue burdens on businesses. In all cases, impact assessments should be part of the development phase when adapting, amending, or developing regulations to address these transformative technologies, including consideration of the impact of an increased regulatory burden on already heavily regulated licensees.

At the international level, efforts to adopt global governance frameworks should prioritize convergence on governance standards and a level playing field to prevent fragmentation of the policy landscape. To be effective, such frameworks need stakeholder buy-in which comes from multi-stakeholder, bottom-up approaches, instead of top-down, centrally mandated, oftentimes restrictive, and rigid regulations.

How to drive positive behaviours of market players? How to minimize risks while maximizing benefits?

A holistic policy framework that reflects the changing digital landscape, reduces costs and barriers to investment, and sets sufficient incentives to encourage network deployment will deliver the best social and economic outcomes. Policymakers should give priority to solutions that encourage voluntary behaviour by operators instead of imposing regulatory obligations on them – an approach that requires active stakeholder engagement and a concerted effort from government to build a close working relationship with industry representatives, civil society organizations, and the public in regulatory initiatives to gather input and feedback. By adopting a dynamic and light-touch regulatory framework and implementing confidence building measures, policymakers can ensure that government and industry are aligned and working to foster an inclusive digital future for all.

