



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

Strategy

# International cyber strategy for Norway

2017



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## Foreword by the Prime Minister

Cyberspace is developing rapidly. The global nature of the internet offers enormous opportunities, and cyberspace continues to increase in its importance to national economies, security, growth and development.

At the same time, our dependence on digital solutions increases our vulnerability. Cyberspace offers potential for new, serious transnational threats from both state and non-state actors. Norwegian society is dependent on secure, stable and robust digital networks, and a serious cyberattack could harm critical social infrastructure.

Broad national and international cooperation is crucial for Norway to achieve the best possible protection. There is a need for greater national coordination of digital security work, and for the promotion of Norwegian interests in ongoing international development of cyber-related practice and regulation.

Various aspects of cyberspace will demand our attention going forward. One example is the dependence of a sustainable internet on the right balance between openness, security, robustness and freedom. Norway advocates a cyberspace that promotes innovation and international trade, fosters international stability and security and safeguards democratic values and universal human rights.

There is international agreement that, in principle, customary international law also applies in cyberspace. Nonetheless, international dialogue is needed on the question of how international law applies. At present, no UN conventions or global agreements deal specifically with state activity in cyberspace. Important decisions concerning the development and management of the internet are largely being made by commercial and other parties without the direct involvement of governments or citizens. Globally, opinions differ as to the right direction to take on these issues.

The Norwegian Government considers it important for Norway to have a comprehensive, coordinated policy for influencing developments in international cyberspace wherever possible. The Government therefore emphasises close collaboration between official bodies that represent Norway in arenas for the development of international cyberspace framework conditions and rules. In the white paper St. meld. 37 (2014-2015), the Government discussed global security challenges in the area of foreign policy. In response to the white paper, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a national cyber-coordination group in 2016, which is tasked with synchronising Norway's cyber policy positions in international forums.

Our international cyber policy is designed to serve Norway and Norwegian interests, secure robust, predictable framework conditions, and help prevent and protect against challenges and threats in cyberspace. Stronger national coordination will improve the effectiveness of our policy and help boost our international reputation in this field. This international cyber strategy is an important first step towards better national coordination in this area.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Solberg', with a horizontal line underneath.

Oslo, 31 August 2017

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## Introduction

Over a very short space of time, the internet has altered the global landscape of which Norway is a part. It has become the world's most important piece of infrastructure, facilitating global exchange of goods, services and information. In the very near future, the internet is expected to become the superstructure on which all other infrastructure depends. Cyberspace is of great and increasing importance to national economies, security, growth and development.

In response, countries have intensified their efforts to promote national interests in the development and use of cyberspace, through multilateral processes in forums such as the UN, NATO and OSCE, through bilateral usage and regulatory processes, as well as through security policy dialogue between allies and in global forums for the development of international trade, justice and transport policy. Contact and cooperation are also being pursued with the private sector.

Unlike in other areas of great importance to the global economy and global security, no UN conventions or global agreements currently deal specifically with the regulation of national activities in cyberspace. Although there is international agreement that, in principle, customary international law also applies in cyberspace, there is some doubt and disagreement as to how and when international law applies.

Norway's economy and security depend on a well-functioning global internet and robust global digital infrastructure. Norway has a fundamental, long-term interest in contributing to create good and predictable conditions for the future development and use of cyberspace.

Defence against digital threats is becoming ever more important. However, defence alone is no guarantor of security. As in the analogue world, the underlying causes of threats need to be addressed, and remedial measures must be weighed against the many benefits and opportunities offered by cyberspace. It is important to find the right balance between security and openness. The proper functioning of cyberspace requires both.

## Background

Cyberspace provides a foundation for national and global innovation, growth and development. With stable, robust digital infrastructure in place, there are almost no limits to what the internet can facilitate. Over the past 20 years, the internet has impacted on most spheres of society. Manufacturing, trade, entertainment, education, finance, health services, agriculture, communications, political activism, transport, media, security and interaction with public agencies are just some examples of this. The internet will continue to play an important role in social and economic development in the years ahead, particularly in developing countries.

Although central government plays a limited role in the *development* of cyberspace, the state has an important function as a *facilitator* of development, for example through innovation, research, teaching and ownership and protection of critical infrastructure. Internationally, national authorities are key players in the development of standards for cyberspace, both politically and operationally. However, the evolution of the internet and digital product and service development are primarily being driven by private companies and research and development institutions. Moreover, the backbone of the internet – global digital infrastructure – is largely in private hands. The Government considers private ownership to be positive in principle, as it promotes competition and continued innovation and development. On the other hand, important decisions relating to the development and security of cyberspace are largely being made by commercial and non-state actors outside traditional inter-governmental arenas.

Society's growing dependence on cyberspace has been accompanied by a sharp increase in digital security challenges and digital vulnerabilities. Cybercrime and network operations originating from both state and non-state parties represent very serious threats to Norway's security and economy. This must be reflected in Norway's international cooperation and security and foreign policy. The present cyber strategy document sets out Norway's governing principles and strategic priorities for this area.