What is Internet Infrastructure?

Often overlooked or misunderstood, the Internet infrastructure is the most fundamental part of what we call the Internet today -- the layer that undergirds everything. Without functioning "pipes" there wouldn't be a way to transmit anything, be it important emails or streams of video games.

Internet infrastructure is the physical hardware, transmission media, and software used to interconnect computers and users on the Internet. Internet infrastructure is the neutral foundation responsible for hosting, storing, processing, and serving the information that makes up websites, applications, and content, basically everything that exists online.

It starts with data centers, the fundamental building block of the Internet's infrastructure, which store everything that runs on the Internet. These are the proverbial cloud, servers connected to each other and the rest of the net, hosting the rest of the infrastructure: 'web hosting' or 'domain name system' services (DNS), storage, backup, virtual private network (VPN), or acceleration services. DNS services, for example, route viewers through a globally distributed network. They are the pathway between a series of numbers and signals and the 'web' as the average consumer would describe.

Together all these applications and services make up the infrastructure level of the Internet. The Internet Infrastructure Coalition (or i2Coalition) counts as its members' global infrastructure companies and diverse businesses that built the Internet, including cloud providers, data centers, domain registrars, registries, and other foundational Internet enterprises, many headquartered or doing business in the EU.

Our members ensure the proper functioning of millions of other businesses online, as well as maintaining services crucial for end-users, from domain name services and VPNs to web hosting and data center companies. The infrastructure stack is a crucial, but overlooked part of the Internet, and any attempt at regulating it must take into account its unique role and limitations.

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