

Report: Site/network blocking

Summary of the discussions:

Site/network blocks can respond to a variety of reasons: economic, political, ethical, administrative/network management. Are there any cases of legitimate blocking? Who has the authority to do so?

Reasons for site/network blocking

1. Economic reasons

Uruguay: A very recent attempt to block betting agencies as an economic measure. The reason was that, although betting is legal in Uruguay, it is a regulated activity.

Traffic shaping, which is a traffic control mechanism that seeks to avoid potentially overloading poorly sized networks and which can occur as the result of commercial interests.

2. Political reasons

Venezuela: DNS blocking, HTTP blocking.

How can people avoid this form of government surveillance? VPNs? Satellite connection?

The use of VPNs is not widespread, and some VPNs have already been blocked.

Very few can pay for satellite Internet.

The censorship mechanism is faster than citizens' efforts to avoid surveillance.

3. Ethical reasons

Are there any legitimate reasons for blocking? For instance, child pornography.

Uruguay: Plan Ceibal

Parents were asked to report websites they didn't want their children to see and these were blocked by the government. Nobody questioned this.

Paraguay: CONATEL

The government decided to pass a law requiring Internet service providers to block access to child pornography websites.

4. Administrative/network management reasons

Venezuela: Academic experience - university networks
Limited bandwidth controlled by State agencies.

From the point of view of management, they had to categorize network traffic and make unpopular decisions to achieve efficiency in academic activities by controlling the quality of service.

Are there any cases of legitimate blocks? Who has the authority to implement them?

Who has the legitimate authority to decide to block a website/network?

The agency with this power should have multistakeholder representation.

Ideally, these doors should not be opened (blocks, bans, censorship) because they set a precedent.

What can be done to deal with these blockings without damaging the rest of the system?

Some blocks are legal under the legislation in force, but that same legislation was drafted by the very same people who want to control the network. The fact that something is legal does not make it right.

Any kind of block or ban, regardless of who has the authority to implement it, must never go against fundamental human rights. The problem is when fundamental rights are in conflict. The solution may lie in finding principles that legislators and regulators can take into account when making those decisions.