

GNSO Expedited Policy Development Process on Internationalized Domain Names (GNSO EPDP on IDNs) Phase 2

Update to APF

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Overview

- EPDP on IDNs: The background
 - What are IDN variants?
 - EPDP Objectives & Phasing
 - Principles developed under Phase 1
 - Comparison of Phases 1 and 2
- Phase 2 Charter Questions
 - Phase 2 Background
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- IDN Implementation Guidelines
- Conclusions
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Background (1 of 3)

- Internationalized Domain Name (IDN) variants refer to different representations of a domain name in different scripts or languages
 - 匯豐銀行 is “HSBC” in Traditional Chinese script
 - 汇丰银行 is “HSBC” in Simplified Chinese script
- For Chinese speakers, these are identical words, but in different scripts, and can choose to use either of them depending on the context
- However, for the Domain Name System, these are completely different Unicode code points
- There needs to be consensus policy in order for the DNS to get them to function similarly
- IDN variants have not been available at the top level because of the lack of such policy

Background (2 of 3)

- ❖ In May 2021, GNSO initiated the EPDP on IDNs in order to develop policy for managing IDN Variants at the top (Phase 1) and second (Phase 2) levels:
 - Based on a Charter developed by a team appointed by GNSO
 - Based on multiple reports of prior work done by ICANN, including SubPro, Staff Paper on IDN variants, and IDN Implementation Guidelines 4.0
 - Based on GNSO's EPDP model
 - Coordinated with ccNSO's ccPDP4, which was developing policy for variants at the top level ccTLDs
- ❖ The EPDP commenced its work on 25 May 2021

Background (3/3)

- Principles evolved by the EPDP on IDNs Phase 1 work on IDN variant TLDs:
 - RZ-LGR as the sole source of variants
 - The integrity of the variant set
 - The “Same Entity” Principle
 - The principle of Conservatism
- From an end-user perspective, the EPDP’s work would enhance the user experience
 - But concerns were expressed about the potential impact of too many variants on the security and stability of the Root zone
- The EPDP Team’s work since ICANN78
 - Phase 1 Final Report published (Nov 2023) after considering inputs received through public comments
 - All 69 recommendations of Phase 1 Final Report approved by the GNSO Council in Nov 2023
 - For Phase 2 CQs, a face-to-face meeting was scheduled in order to expedite the completion of discussions

Comparing Phase 1 and Phase 2

Aspect	Phase 1	Phase 2
Focus	Top-level IDN variants	Second-level variants
Current situation	No policy exists for IDN variants at the top level	Registry-level policy exists for 2nd level variants
Meant for	ICANN, particularly for the next round of new gTLDs	Mostly for registries
Main stakeholders	ICANN, applicants, registries	Registries, Registrars, Resellers, Registrants, end-users
Identification of variants	Through the Root Zone LGR	Through registry-level IDN Tables
End-user importance	Generally lower	Higher, as end-users have to work with IDN variant domain names

Phase 2 orientation

- Compared to Phase 1, where the policy is at the level of ICANN itself (as gTLDs are the subject), variants at the second level is handled somewhat differently:
 - All cross-registry policies are part of of ICANN policy
 - Intra-registry policies are left to Registries (with some requiring coordination with ICANN)
 - Aspects of security and stability are handled through IDN Implementation Guidelines v4.1, which are binding on the contracted parties
- As the consequence of these factors, several of the CQs have been left without recommendations by the EPDP, leaving them to Registries to evolve their own policy

Phase 2 CQs

- The Phase 2 Charter questions included the following topics
 - How the principles applies to Phase 2:
 - At the second level, RZ-LGR is not used. Instead, a registry-level mechanism called IDN tables is used. In order to achieve consistency, a further step called harmonization would be required
 - There are discussions whether harmonization should be registry-level or across registries for a given script(s)
 - Also, the same-entity principle is applicable and the second level, but may work differently, as there are no mechanisms currently in place that makes the identification of an “entity” feasible within registries
 - The definition of the variant set may need to be expanded to include the second-level variants of all the top-level variants of the gTLDs
 - Transitional exceptions (aka “Grandfathering”) would be required for some cases of existing/delegated gTLDs
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Phase 2 CQs (2)

- Examining how legal/contractual structures would change at the second-level when variants are to be accommodated
- Examining if there is any impact on Rights Protection Mechanisms and dispute resolution mechanisms
- The issue of pricing of the variant set is outside the remit of the EPDP and is meant to be Registry Policy

Progress at the Meeting at KL

- Preliminary discussions completed on all CQs
- One CQ (C4) required more discussion between RySG and technical Staff at ICANN. A small group has been constituted to resolve the existing differences by the end of Dec 2023
- A few questions require language changes although there is rough consensus
- The ALAC team's inputs were well received throughout the EPDP's work
- The Phase 2 Initial Report will be published for Public Comments in Feb 2024 (which will extend until after ICANN79)
- During the Public Comment period, the EPDP Team will be presenting the important CQs at CPWG meetings for inputs

Summary of CQs (1/2)

CQ	End-user Impact	Topic	Rec no
C4	High	Mutual coherence of IDN tables	1
C5	Low	Method used for harmonization	
C6	Low	Format for IDN tables: XML?	
C1	High	"Same entity" at 2nd level	2
C1	Medium	Grandfathering of existing DN	3
C2	Medium	Same entity for existing variant DN	4
C3	Low	Identifying the registrant for "same entity"	
C3a	Low	Additional requirements if ROID is to be used	
D4	Medium	"Same entity" across life cycle of DN	5
D4	Medium	"Same entity" across life cycle of DN	6

Summary of CQs (2/2)

CQ	End-user Impact	Topic	Rec no
D6	Medium	Transfer policy modification for "Same entity"	7
D7	Medium	Domain Name Suspension and "Same entity"	
C4a	Low	2nd level variant labels of already delegated gTLD	
D5	High	For reporting & fees, should the variant domain name set be considered as a single atomic set?	
D8	Low	Changes to RA	
G1	Low	Vehicle for IDN implementation guidelines	
G1(a)	Low	Separate mechanism for implementing IDNs for registries	
F1	Low	Rights-Protection Mechanisms	
D6(a)		TMCH	
D7(a)		UDRP	
		URS	
F2			

IDN Implementation Guidelines (1)

- IDN Implementation Guidelines are general IDN registration policies and practices that “...minimize the risk of cybersquatting and consumer confusion, and respect the interests of local languages and character sets”
- Although v4.0 of IDN Implementation Guidelines were published by the Expert Working Group (EWG) in 2018, GNSO Council asked for more time to study it, given that the recommendations were contractually binding on Contracted Parties
- The topics of work of the Experts WG were considered as “...somewhere between technical standards of IETF and consensus policy of GNSO”

IDN Implementation Guidelines (2)

- Some of the technical recommendations actually stepped into what was traditionally consensus policy, perhaps because the EWG Charter was not explicit about it (or mission creep)
- GNSO recommended to the Board that these items should be deferred because these required a GNSO consensus policy process (especially as these were contractual obligations)
- These would eventually be part of the charter of the EPDP on IDNs
- The Board published the non-deferred items as v4.1 of IDN Implementation Guidelines

Question to the EPDP

- The EPDP was asked in CQ G1 “What should be the proper vehicle to update the IDN Implementation Guidelines?”
- Options considered were: (a) an EPDP; (b) a CCWG; and (c) an improved version of the Experts Working Group
- Since this was a technical group, the CCWG was not considered appropriate
- Given that at the level of IANA, there was no difference between GNSO or ccNSO *vis-à-vis* the security and stability issues, both GNSO and ccNSO needed to be involved
- This rules out the EPDP model, which is GNSO-centric
- Consequently, the EPDP suggested a more rigorous version of the Expert Working Group model

Conclusions

- The Phase 2 of the EPDP on IDNs focused creating policy regarding IDN variants at the second level
- In contrast with Phase 1, many Phase 2 CQs were registry centric
- The EPDP made recommendations for those CQs that were cross-registry. In order to provide maximum flexibility, the remaining CQs were left to registries to create their own policy
- The EPDP also examined the continued renewal of the IDN Implementation Guidelines v4.1
- Most of the work of Phase 2 is complete. A few outstanding issues (such as IDN Table Harmonization) will be taken up at the next call. The preliminary report is expected in Feb 2024.

Thank you!

Questions?