

Discussion paper ICANN Academy submitted for the Singapore meeting, June 2011

1. Introduction

Since the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) 2003 – 05 it became evident that Internet Governance (IG) is a new global challenge and a unique field of regulatory requirements that cannot be handled with traditional state or national instruments. The creation of a broader body like the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) besides ICANN with its fixed mandate was an appropriate answer to the new questions and interpretations around the disputed term “governance”. The evolving concept and model of IG was soon accepted by the Internet communities, since it describes the way in which the Internet has been governed since its early days.

2. Point of departure

Some of the particularities of this IG model were characterised by Multi-stakeholderism and enhanced cooperation and thus bypassing the former inter-governmental level with its state actors. The new concept included other actors like the business sector and civil society – “in their respective roles” – necessitating other forms of interaction, consultation and decision-making. One problem was: there were / are rarely any academic institutions where IG actors could study characteristics and complexity of the new IG model. Therefore capacity building was soon understood as one of the urgent requirements among the Internet communities to better understand the different thematic layers, emerging issues and existing regulation structures. The existing conferences like the annual IGF (since 2006) and the regular ICANN meetings (besides some other thematic events) were the few foras where actors and communities meet and discuss – but limited to an almost manageable size of people (“usual suspects”) and known insiders. At the IGF level, there is a slightly broader foundation and outreach by the thematic Dynamic Coalitions (DC) and related networks, whereas ICANN is still and broadly perceived as rather “technical” and limited on key issues like the DNS and IP addresses. It appears that it is very difficult and time consuming for new stakeholder groups to get into ICANN and understand processes, acronyms and policy. ICANN's At-Large structure with its five RALOs (besides the NCUC of the GNSO) are the few access or outreach points to constantly enlarge its narrow insider basis. The fellowship program is another side door where hand-selected newcomers can enter the ICANN biotope.

3. First / related models

In view of these few access tracks and trails to IG, some capacity building programs emerged over the last years: the European Summer School (EuroSSIG) since 2007, the Latin-American (South-SSIG) since 2009. An African version is under development and several training courses inspired by the SSIG-concept took place in the Asian Pacific area – besides several DiploFoundation's programs on IG and the like. Whereas the Diplo programs offer a first introduction into the complex IG sphere, the Summer Schools are more focused on a post-graduate level / upgrading students with advanced knowledge in the field. These capacity building programs are therefore more complementary than competing. They offer a holistic approach to legal, technical, economic, development, socio-cultural aspects and are a basic introduction to the IG and ICANN topics. ICANN's existing education tools like webinars should be included in any future programme.

4. ICANN Academy

The creation and developments of an ICANN Academy would therefore be complementary as well, focused on key issues of the ICANN mandate and mission. It should reflect the different backgrounds within the ICANN communities (technical, business, government, CS/At-Large/end users) and needs to promote a solid understanding of ICANN key issues, stakeholder groups and consultation processes – especially for newcomers from all stakeholder groups. So far, getting involved in ICANN themes and constituencies depends on various professional preconditions, business or

governmental affiliations – for the rest, particularly the At-Large community, on plenty of coincidences, detours, learning-by-doing and the privilege to regularly participate at ICANN meetings.

Here some starting points for further discussion:

- An ICANN-specific capacity building program could promote a “standardised” access and introduction gateway, a better understanding of key and current themes, actors, roles, (vested) interests, processes, conflicts of goals and decision-making.
- Such a capacity building program must strengthen a better public participation at ICANN (without “wasting” much time before newcomers understand basics).
- It should promote At-Large’s outreach and inreach initiatives.
- It should improve “professional” representation of roles by a focused introduction into stakeholder roles at ICANN.
- Whilst training all stakeholder groups in one “camp” it should promote interaction and consent finding among SOs and ACs (to bridge or overcome silo cultures and thinking for the future interaction).
- Getting familiar with ICANN-specific communication tools and channels.
- Learn from (long-term) expertise and experience of old-hands.
- Constantly reflect the specific needs and challenges of ICANN.
- After defining some key areas of existing lacks and gaps, develop a module based standard ICANN curriculum covering the various requirements for newcomers.
- Such a capacity building curriculum should be repeatedly tested and evaluated (compared with other existing offers, see above) and once “matured” become part of the regular ICANN meetings (2 – 3 days before beginning). It would be a valuable investment in ICANN’s own future and human resources.

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