

AT-LARGE COMMUNITY POLICY ISSUES – WHY END USERS SHOULD CARE

The At-Large community is a growing global community of over 200 At-Large Structures (ALSes) and independent members. Its membership is diverse, ranging from Internet-related consumer rights groups, academic organizations, computer clubs, technical communities, to civil society and capacity-building organizations. Members of the At-Large community share a passion for furthering the development of ICTs and contributing to policies that influence the technical coordination of the Domain Name System to better serve end users.

Within the At-Large Community's bottom-up, tiered structure, the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) is the primary organizational home for the voice and concerns of the individual Internet user. Representing the At-Large Community, the 15-member ALAC consists of two members selected by each of the five RALOs and five members appointed by ICANN's Nominating Committee. Advocating for the interests of end users, the ALAC advises on the activities of ICANN, including Internet policies developed by ICANN's Supporting Organizations; it also participates in ICANN's outreach and engagement programs.

The purpose of this document is twofold. Firstly, it outlines the key policy issues of the At-Large community. Secondly, it sets out why end users should care about the specific policy issues. This document has been approved by the ALAC Leadership Team.

[Accountability & Transparency of ICANN](#)

Summary

- End users are an integral part of ICANN's multistakeholder community. Through At-Large Community, they play an important role in holding ICANN accountable.
- Their contributions are essential, especially since they are the primary affected party in matters of public interest. Working within ICANN and other Internet Governance fora, they are frequently able to propose innovative solutions.

Why should end users care?

- End users' participation will ensure the legitimacy in the process of enhancing ICANN accountability. Their participation will also strengthen an inclusive, transparent, global, and collaborative model of governance fit for our present and future.

[Contracted Party Agreements](#) (i.e. Registry Agreement, Registrar Accreditation Agreement)

Summary

- Contracted party agreements empower individual registrants to submit complaints to ICANN, if they believe certain contracted parties are in violation of agreements and treat them unfairly.
- Policy changes to the Registry Agreement (RA) and Registry Accreditation Agreement (RAA) directly affect individual registrants' rights, obligations, and overall experiences using the domain name registration services.

Disclaimer: Each topic title is linked to the At-Large website that provides more information

Why should end users care?

- As contracted party agreements are critical to the security and stability of the domain name system and have implications to the public interest, they also affect end users who do not have domain registrations.
- Individual registrants and end users can contribute to shaping contracted party agreements, specifically the RAA, through GNSO processes.

[Engagement & Outreach](#)

Summary

- Engagement and outreach efforts are a focus of the At-Large Community.
- At-Large has been collaborating closely with ICANN Staff departments on the development and implementation of a variety of programs and events, which aim to get end users involved in ICANN.
- Promoting diversity and inclusion, At-Large leads initiatives that target underserved communities (e.g. Applicant Support Program for New gTLDs applications, Captioning Pilot, Tribal Ambassador Fellowship, etc.).

Why should end users care?

- Outreach and engagement efforts are critical for maintaining a sustainable flow of end user volunteers from diverse regions, ensuring that they are versed in ICANN policy issues and can effectively collaborate with other stakeholder groups.

[IANA Functions & Stewardship Transition](#)

Summary

- **See comment.**
- Although the IANA functions are operational functions, they do require global governance and stewardship, in which end users play an important role.
- Specifically, an ALAC Liaison is involved in the operational oversight, previously performed by the NTIA, as it relates to the monitoring of ICANN's performance of the IANA naming functions.

Why should end users care?

- Ultimately, the Stewardship Transition matters to every end user, as its success will allow for the continued expansion, diversity, and innovation of one open, unified, and interoperable global Internet.

[ICANN Operations / Finances](#)

Summary

- End users are able to review and provide comments on ICANN operations and annual budget as well as monitor and comment on issues of concern.
- The At-Large Community can request additional funding through ICANN's special budget request process. Once approved, the At-Large Community can apply the resources to advance end user interests.

Why should end users care?

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- Since ICANN is the organization that manages the Domain Name System, end users should care about its operational excellence and financial wellbeing and responsibilities.

ICANN Policy Processes

Summary

- As an ICANN Advisory Committee, the ALAC publicizes, analyzes, and provides advice on ICANN policy proposals and decisions that reflect the views and needs of individual Internet users at regional and global levels.
- The ALAC acts in the best interests of individual Internet users. They include registrants, consumers, and Internet users.
- The ALAC not only advises on the DNS policies developed through ICANN's Supporting Organizations. It also advises on the work deliverables from ICANN Community, Board, and Staff on a wide range of topics.

Why should end users care?

- ICANN follows a multistakeholder model in which individuals, non-commercial stakeholder groups, industry, and governments play important roles in its community-based, consensus-driven, policy-making approach.
- The multistakeholder model of ICANN allows individual Internet users to influence the evolution of the critical logistical infrastructure layer of the Internet through engaging in both the policy development process within the GNSO and cross-community Working Groups as well as the policy advice development process within At-Large. The direct involvement of all stakeholders in the development of ICANN policy is unique in the field of Internet governance.

Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)

Summary

- IDNs give users around the world the ability to access the web in their native tongue, making it easier for them to discover/remember websites and promote local content via service providers likely in their own countries.
- It is expected that IDNs will increase the Internet penetration in emerging economies of Asia Pacific, Africa, and Latin America where English is not the primary language.
- Due to the lack of universal acceptance, using IDNs can be challenging across browsers, emails, and mobile apps.

Why should end users care?

- ICANN's work on the universal acceptance will ultimately improve user experience, increasing the IDN uptake and making the Internet truly multilingual.

Internet Governance

Summary

- Underrepresentation of any stakeholder in Internet Governance will adversely affect the Internet's smooth operation. End users' freedom to innovate is at the core of the Internet's success.

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Why should end users care?

- End users' participation ensures that the Internet Governance ecosystem is not dominated stifled by vested interests. Within ICANN, members of the At-Large community advocate for the best interests of end users.
- End user involvement contributes important skills and expertise to the Internet policy making process, as well as establishes a means to rapidly analyze the implementation of Internet governance policy and the impact on end users.
- Given the geographical diversity of the At-Large community, the diverse interests among users worldwide are represented in ALAC policy advice.

New Generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs)

IANA Functions & Stewardship Transition

Summary

- The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) coordinates the DNS Root Zone and the databases of number resources (IP and AS numbers) and protocol assignments. ICANN currently performs these administrative tasks on behalf of the global Internet community under a contract from the United States' Department of Commerce. On 14 March 2014, the National Telecommunications & Information Administration, an agency of the Department of Commerce, announced its intent to transition key Internet domain name functions to the global multistakeholder community.
- At-Large community members were appointed to each of the various groups set-up for the design of the transition plans. The ALAC coordinated the action of its appointees through its own working group on IANA Stewardship and ICANN Accountability by holding weekly calls with its stakeholder community.
- ALAC appointed members of these working groups remained active in the cross community working groups, often holding Chair or Vice Chair positions of responsibility in sub-teams and processes.
- In the proposed transition plan, an ALAC Liaison is involved in the operational oversight, previously performed by the NTIA, performed in the future by a Customer Standing Committee, as it relates to the monitoring of ICANN's performance of the IANA naming.
- The ALAC will also appoint representatives to the IANA Functions Review Process as per requirements.

Why should end users care?

- Although the IANA functions are operational functions, they do require global governance and stewardship, in which end users play an important role. End users require a secure, stable, and resilient Internet DNS.
- Ultimately, the Stewardship Transition matters to every end user, as its success will allow for the continued expansion, diversity, and innovation of one open, unified, and interoperable global Internet.

Public Interest

Summary

- Discussions on the topic of "public interest within ICANN's remit" are a source of continuing discussion within the ICANN Community.

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- Within ICANN, some community members are advocating to devise mechanisms that will more effectively address the public interest.
- The Public Interest is a key topic of the At-Large Community. It has a [Public Interest Working Group](#) with members from across At-Large. In particular, EURALO has advocated for related principles such as Open Access, Free Software, and Creative Commons since its inception.
- One sub-topic that At-Large cares deeply about is the Public Interest Commitments (PICs), especially pertaining to the Category 1 TLDs related to sensitive strings as defined by the GAC, such as .doctor and .bank.

Why should end users care?

- The Internet has become a critical part of the global public sphere. As the influence of commercial interests and state powers has been increasing, stakeholders need to work together and form a comprehensive vision on the Internet that addresses the protection of civil liberties, such as free speech and privacy.

[Reviews at ICANN \(Organizational Reviews & AoC Reviews\)](#)

Summary

- ICANN's ongoing commitment to its own evolution and improvement has been incorporated into its Bylaws. In particular, the [Article IV, Section 4 of the Bylaws](#) require the periodic review of relevant ICANN organizations and committees including each of the Supporting Organizations (SOs), each of the Advisory Committees (ACs), and the Nominating Committee.
- Currently, there is a review of At-Large focusing on the Regional At-Large Organizations and the At-Large Structures underway. This Review will evaluate the effectiveness of At-Large Structures and, more broadly, the At-Large Community's organizational effectiveness and how well it has fulfilled its mission of acting for the interests of end users worldwide within ICANN. Inputs from end users are essential.

Why should end users care?

- End users have a critical role in holding ICANN accountable. Their expertise, knowledge and experience are needed in various review processes.
- Specifically, end users are directly impacted by the Organizational Review of the ALAC and the wider At-Large Community.
- Recommendations developed from this Review, once implemented, will likely bring about improvements to the At-Large Community, impacting on the representation, participation, and influence of end users in ICANN.

[WHOIS](#)

Summary

- Every year, millions of individuals, businesses, organizations and governments register domain names. Each one must provide identifying and contact information which may include: name, address, email, phone number, and administrative and technical contacts. This information is often referred to as "WHOIS data." But the WHOIS service is not a single, centrally-operated database. Instead, the data is managed by independent entities known as "registrars" and "registries." Any entity that wants to become a registrar must earn ICANN accreditation.

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- WHOIS data is key for fixing system problems, maintaining Internet stability, and enhancing the accountability of registrants.

Why should end users care?

- The “one-size-fits-all” disclosure of identifying information may also expose registrants, especially individual registrants, to potential spam, phishing, and identity theft.
- Due to its implication in privacy, data protection, policing, security, and malicious use and abuse, WHOIS matters to end users, especially individual registrants.