

At-Large IDN Variant TLD Program – Interim Report

Examining the User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs Workspace

| Comment Close Date | Statement Name | Status | Assignee (s) and RALO(s) | Call for Comments | Call for Comments Close | Vote Announcement | Vote Open | Vote Reminder | Vote Close | Date of Submission | Staff Contact and Email | Statement Number |
|--------------------|--|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------|---------------|------------|--------------------|--|--------------------|
| 22.11.2012 | IDN Variant TLD Program – Interim Report Examining the User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs | Adopted 14Y, 0N, 0A | Edmon Chung (APRALO) | 03.12.2012 | 07.12.2012 18:00 UTC | 07.12.2012 20:00 UTC | 07.12.2012 | 11.12.2012 | 12.12.2012 | 13.12.2012 | Steve Sheng steve.sheng@icann.org | AL/ALAC/ST /1212/2 |

| Comment/Reply Periods (*) | | Important Information Links |
|---------------------------|------------------|---|
| Comment Open: | 23 October 2012 | |
| Comment Close: | 22 November 2012 | |
| Close Time (UTC): | 23:59 | Public Comment Announcement |
| Reply Open: | 23 November 2012 | To Submit Your Comments (Forum) |
| Reply Close: | 13 December 2012 | View Comments Submitted |
| Close Time (UTC): | 23:59 | Report of Public Comments |

Brief Overview

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------|--|
| Originating Organization: | ICANN | | |
| Categories /Tags: | Top-Level Domains, Internationalized Domain Names | | |
| Purpose (Brief): | To receive community feedback on the interim report of the document " Examining the User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs " [PDF, 558 KB] | | |
| Current Status: | ICANN is opening a 30-day public comment on the interim report "Examining the User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs" | | |
| Next Steps: | Based on the input received in this public forum, ICANN will produce a draft final report that incorporates the community feedback, with proposed guidelines and recommendations for active variant TLDs. The draft final report will be published for second round of Public Comment in January 2012. | | |
| Staff Contact: | Steve Sheng | Email: | steve.sheng@icann.org |

Detailed Information

Section I: Description, Explanation, and Purpose

The IDN Variant TLD Program has been exploring the issues associated with the potential inclusion of IDN variant TLDs in the DNS root zone at the request of the ICANN Board and the community.

Should ICANN activate variant TLDs in the root, many parts of the Internet ecosystem will be affected, with corresponding impacts on the user experience. Examples of user roles that have been identified previously include registrants, registrars, registry operators, system administrators, network operators, application developers, and end users. As the coordination body for the DNS, ICANN has a responsibility to investigate possible impacts of new developments, and to proactively identify and publicize potential issues.

To better understand and address these challenges, the interim report: 1) summarizes and compares, from a user experience and registry management perspective, variant practices in several ccTLD registries; 2) proposes a set of guiding principles to define an acceptable user experience; and 3) identifies how various users communities (e.g., end users, system/network administrators, application developers, registrants, registrars and registries) will be impacted by active variant top-level domains.

The proposed guiding principles and the list of identified challenges are neither considered comprehensive nor final. By publishing this interim report, we seek to establish a dialog with the community to refine these principles and impacts, which will guide the second part of the study to formulate the guidelines and recommendations for active variant TLDs.

Based on the input received in this public forum, ICANN will produce a draft final report that incorporates the community feedback, with proposed guidelines and recommendations for active variant TLDs. The draft final report will be published for second round of Public Comment in January 2012.

Section II: Background

On 20 April 2011, ICANN announced the IDN Variant Issues Project to explore the issues associated with the potential inclusion of IDN variant TLDs in the DNS root zone. This project was initiated in response to a 2010 ICANN Board of Directors [resolution](#). The project completed with the publication of the final Integrated Issues Report on 17 February 2012.

The IDN Variant TLD Program follows on from that work. The Program consists of several projects, and continues as a multi-phase multi-year program. The Program Plan was announced – after substantial public input and comment - on 23 August 2012.

This project considers the user experience implications when two or more IDN variant TLDs are activated (i.e., have resource records in the DNS). The study findings are expected to inform the formulation of rules and guidelines for active variant TLDs.

Section III: Document and Resource Links

[Interim Report Examining the User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs](#) [PDF, 558 KB]

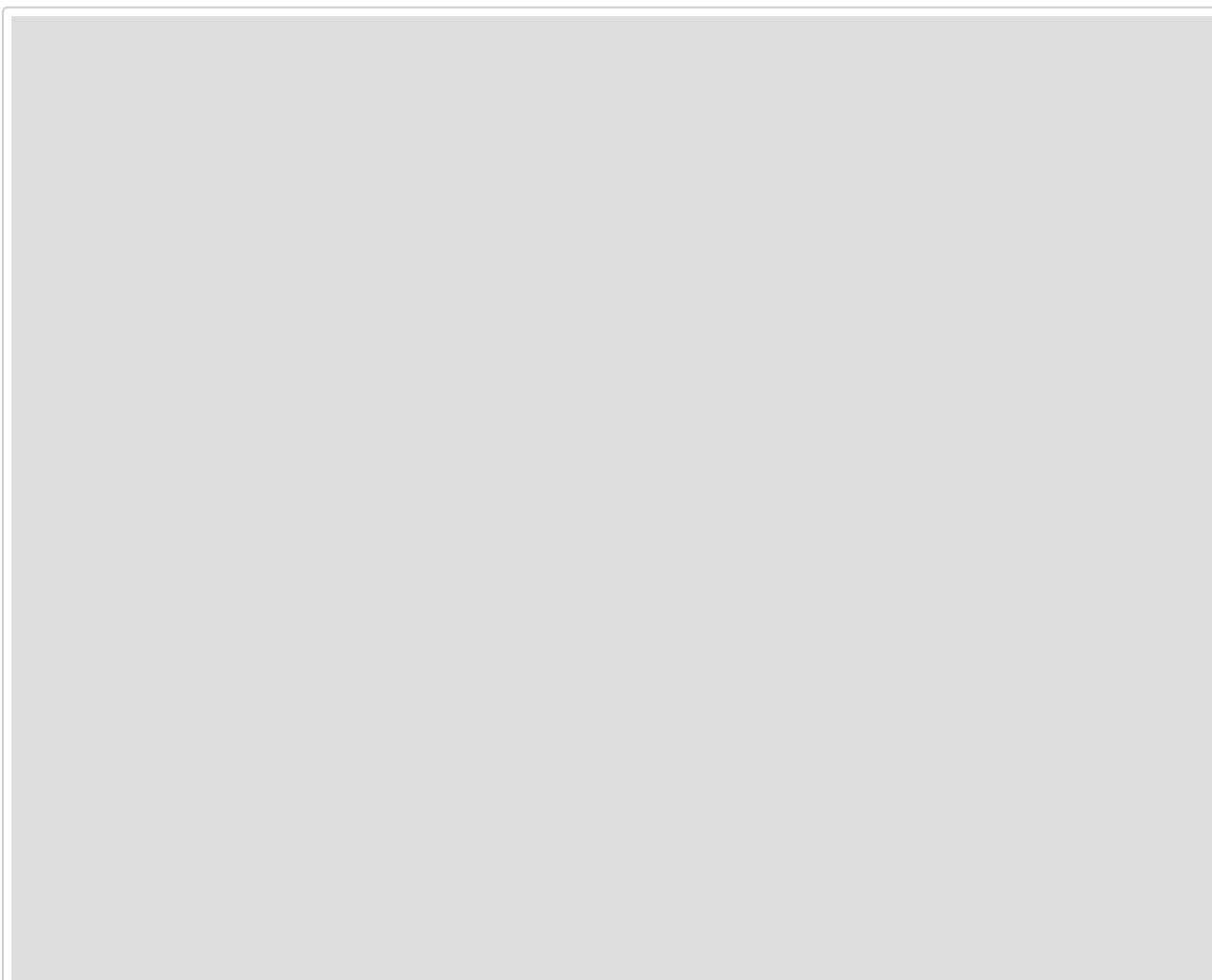
Section IV: Additional Information

None

() Comments submitted after the posted Close Date/Time are not guaranteed to be considered in any final summary, analysis, reporting, or decision-making that takes place once this period lapses.*

FINAL VERSION TO BE SUBMITTED IF RATIFIED

[Please click here to download a copy of the PDF below.](#)



FINAL DRAFT VERSION TO BE VOTED UPON BY THE ALAC

The final draft version to be voted upon by the ALAC will be placed here by 07.12.2012 20:00 UTC.

The ALAC thanks the IDN Variant TLD (Project 6) team for publishing the Interim Report on Examining the User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs for public comments. First of all, the ALAC commends the generally thorough stocktaking of issues related to user experience of IDN Variant TLDs presented by the Interim Report. At the same time, the ALAC makes the observation, which the document also touches on, that these issues may be mitigated against by registry policy measures along with relevant materials and resources for users (including administrative and technical users).

The ALAC makes the following inquiries to the team:

1. The Interim report explains that "the final report, to be published within ninety (90) days after the closure of the public comment forum" and that "based on community input, the final report will include guidelines and recommendations to address or mitigate the negative impacts identified in this report." Furthermore, it explains that "this report is the first part of one study to examine potential challenges from a user experience perspective when variants of IDN TLDs are activated" and that "by publishing this interim report, we seek to establish a dialog with the community to refine these principles and challenges, which will guide the second part of the study to formulate the guidelines and recommendations for activating variant TLDs." What is unclear is that whether we are talking about 2 types of "final report", one for the finalizing of this report which identifies the issues (supposedly to be completed within 90 days after the closure of the public forum), and another completely different one which is the second part of the study which contains the guidelines and recommendations? Or in fact they are one and the same. Should they be two completely different reports, the process makes sense. If however, they are one and the same, there is significant concern that the community is not involved properly in the development of the guidelines.
2. The Interim Report identifies that there may be differences in the needs and user expectations for different linguistic communities. This is consistent with the community consensus on the subject as understood by ALAC and expressed in its previous correspondences on the subject. However there is no indication of whether the guidelines and recommendations would be differentiated between languages, how they would be arrived at and how affected linguistic communities would be consulted before such recommendations made and guidelines are developed. It would be useful for the team to better describe the process through which these anticipated work will be compiled.
3. The Interim Report correctly points out that "Linguistic communities are primarily concerned with end users, and consequently may advocate for a maximal variant label set to enable a diverse linguistic expression and easier accessibility. The technical community, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the security and stability of the Domain Name System (DNS), and therefore stipulates the minimal number of variant labels (if any) be added to the root zone." As such, as an overall ICANN policy matter, the implementation of IDN Variant TLDs require the balance between the two. The Interim Report did not go further to explain how this study (and the further guidelines and recommendations) would /could be used to mitigate against the predominance of either of the two views of conservativeness to achieve at a reasonable compromise suitable for the implementation of IDN Variant TLDs.

In considering the work as presented so far in the Interim Report, the ALAC provides the following advice:

1. In considering the presented potential issues, and how the ICANN community can mitigate against them, the team should provide better clarity to distinguish between 1. Issues that can and should be implemented as ICANN policies (e.g. directly through Registries and Registrars); 2. Issues for which ICANN policies have stronger influence (e.g. recommendations for registrants); and 3. Issues which ICANN and the ICANN community would produce materials and conduct outreach to raise awareness (e.g. guidelines for the technical community or the legal community).
2. Guidelines and recommendations sensitive to linguistic communities are important and thus should be developed with consultation from and best through bottom-up processes by the affected linguistic communities. More importantly, to identify critical aspects that should be implemented as requirements for IDN TLD registries. For example, in the Chinese IDN Variant TLD case, the statistics in the report showed that close to 20% of queries are directed towards the IDN Variant TLD. This means that there is 1 user using the IDN variant TLD for every 4 users using the primary IDN TLD. This presents strong evidence that ICANN should implement policies to require all Chinese IDN TLD registries to serve the preferred variant as the IDN Variant TLD, to ensure both consistency in the root and a reasonable user experience and consumer trust for IDN TLDs.
3. Separate guidelines and recommendations should be developed for different linguistic communities. As evidenced in the report, the requirements and needs of different linguistic communities for IDN Variant TLDs are different from each other. All the relevant policies, guidelines and recommendations should be developed with consultation and through bottom-up processes by the affected language communities.

FIRST DRAFT SUBMITTED

The first version is as follows:

ALAC thanks the IDN Variant TLD (Project 6) team for publishing the Interim Report on Examining the User Experience Implications of Active Variant TLDs for public comments. First of all, ALAC commends the generally thorough stocktaking of issues related to user experience of IDN Variant TLDs presented by the Interim Report. At the same time, ALAC makes the observation, which the document also touches on, that these issues may be mitigated against by registry policy measures along with relevant materials and resources for users (including administrative and technical users).

ALAC makes the following inquiries to the team:

1. The Interim report explains that "the final report, to be published within ninety (90) days after the closure of the public comment forum" and that "based on community input, the final report will include guidelines and recommendations to address or mitigate the negative impacts identified in this report." Furthermore, it explains that "this report is the first part of one study to examine potential challenges from a user experience perspective when variants of IDN TLDs are activated" and that "by publishing this interim report, we seek to establish a dialog with the community to refine these principles and challenges, which will guide the second part of the study to formulate the guidelines and recommendations for activating variant TLDs." What is unclear is that whether we are talking about 2 types of "final report", one for the finalizing of this report which identifies the issues (supposedly to be completed within 90 days after the closure of the public forum), and another completely different one which is the second part of the study which contains the guidelines and recommendations? Or in fact they are one and the same. Should they be two completely different reports, the process makes sense. If however, they are one and the same, there is significant concern that the community is not involved properly in the development of the guidelines.
2. The Interim Report identifies that there may be differences in the needs and user expectations for different linguistic communities. This is consistent with the community consensus on the subject as understood by ALAC and expressed in its previous correspondences on the subject. However there is no indication of whether the guidelines and recommendations would be differentiated between languages, how they would be arrived at and how affected linguistic communities would be consulted before such recommendations made and guidelines are

developed. It would be useful for the team to better describe the process through which these anticipated work will be compiled.

3. The Interim Report correctly points out that "Linguistic communities are primarily concerned with end users, and consequently may advocate for a maximal variant label set to enable a diverse linguistic expression and easier accessibility. The technical community, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the security and stability of the Domain Name System (DNS), and therefore stipulates the minimal number of variant labels (if any) be added to the root zone." As such, as an overall ICANN policy matter, the implementation of IDN Variant TLDs require the balance between the two. The Interim Report did not go further to explain how this study (and the further guidelines and recommendations) would /could be used to mitigate against the predominance of either of the two views of conservativeness to achieve at a reasonable compromise suitable for the implementation of IDN Variant TLDs.

In considering the work as presented so far in the Interim Report, the ALAC advises the team to:

1. In considering the presented potential issues, and how the ICANN community can mitigate against them, the team should provide better clarity to distinguish between 1. Issues that can and should be implemented as ICANN policies (e.g. directly through Registries and Registrars); 2. Issues for which ICANN policies have stronger influence (e.g. recommendations for registrants); and 3. Issues which ICANN and the ICANN community would produce materials and conduct outreach to raise awareness (e.g. guidelines for the technical community or the legal community).
2. Guidelines and recommendations sensitive to linguistic communities are important and thus should be developed with consultation from and best through bottom-up processes by the affected linguistic communities. More importantly, to identify critical aspects that should be implemented as requirements for IDN TLD registries. For example, in the Chinese IDN Variant TLD case, the statistics in the report showed that close to 20% of queries are directed towards the IDN Variant TLD. This means that there is 1 user using the IDN variant TLD for every 4 users using the primary IDN TLD. This presents strong evidence that ICANN should implement policies to require all Chinese IDN TLD registries to serve the preferred variant as the IDN Variant TLD, to ensure both consistency in the root and a reasonable user experience and consumer trust for IDN TLDs.
3. Finally, separate guidelines and recommendations should be developed for different linguistic communities. As evidenced in the report, the requirements and needs of different linguistic communities for IDN Variant TLDs are different. This would be consistent with the community consensus understanding of the matter.