ICANN Board Withholds Consent for PIR Change of Control

After a thorough evaluation process, the ICANN Board is withholding consent to the request for a change of control of the Public Interest Registry (PIR). Read more about the decision from ICANN Board Chair Maarten Botterman, and find the full Board resolution here.

A Glimpse at Stakeholder Experiences During COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, we reached out to some of our stakeholders in Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa to learn about their experiences and hear their thoughts. Follow our Instagram account to see more of the stakeholder experiences during COVID-19.

“COVID-19 changed the way we work as many businesses closed down or reduced their working hours, coupled by the activation of no travel and work from home policies. Many technological

“Hoster.by is taking all possible measures to ensure the safety of its employees and business continuity. Part of our team has been working remotely as we had already examined all the risks
solutions emerged to deal with public problems. This reveals that the technology is up to the challenge of supporting a large remote workforce, which could result in everyone feeling more connected to each other than before.”

Rolla Hassan  
Senior Manager of Internet Policy Analysis, NTRA Egypt  
Egypt - 8 April 2020

posed by remote work. We are providing for the health and safety of our employees who cannot work remotely, such as customer support and technical support team members.

As the .BY registry and a strong brand, we are attentive to each our client, and we try to alleviate the panic with personalized approaches and planned complex solutions at hoster.by.”

Sergey Povalishev, hoster.by  
Belarus - 26 March 2020

“COVID-19, fortunately to date has not taken toll on our staff in the sense of a reported case and to this extent we touch wood and hope none of our staff members will be infected. Whilst we are excited by what I consider good news, we seem to be slowly encountering a situation of social loneliness due to the lockdown, and we need to be ready to deal with its negative impacts. At the same time I believe we are standing at the pedestal of great things to come and how we conduct our business. Since the lockdown, our staff has been able to deal with the customer queries with great ease and enthusiasm, and to that we say thumbs up.”

Lucky Masilela, CEO of ZACR/RA  
South Africa - 14 April 2020

“From a technical standpoint, we have not experienced any problems due to COVID-19 at Registro .it despite of the sharp increase in Internet traffic. We have specifically developed a DNS organization for the ccTLD .it, based on an anycast architecture to ensure the maximum resilience of our services. This anycast architecture exploits both a third-party service and a proprietary infrastructure of sixteen nodes, carefully positioned around the world to intercept the Internet traffic in order to guarantee the responsiveness and the reliability of ccTLD.it DNS.

The impact of COVID-19 on the society and economy reflected also on domain name registrations. At the end of March, we received more than one thousand registrations related to COVID-19, and we are working closely with the public authorities to prevent abuses associated with these domain names.”

Marco Conti, Registro .it  
Italy - 8 April 2020
The DNSSEC Implementation Relaunch in Finland
By Juhani Juselius, Chief Specialist, Traficom

For almost two decades, .FI has been taken care of by a relatively small but highly motivated team at the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom, a team that believes in secure and up-to-date technology. As part of that vision, .FI-root was signed in 2010 and the registration system was updated in 2011 in order to provide Domain Name System Security Extensions (DNSSEC) for the second level. From the very beginning, it was obvious to us that we did not want to charge any extra fees for this important add-on service.

During the following years, we raised awareness via several activities such as presentations, media interviews, targeted events, user trainings, meetings with registrars, and master's theses supervision. I am quite sure that our message reached its target, and relevant people learned about DNSSEC.

However, not much happened after all, despite all of our efforts in raising awareness. At the end of 2018, I was not aware of any .FI registrar offering DNSSEC for their customers: Only 1 percent of domains were signed, and none of the three big ISPs were validating Internet traffic in Finland. Those were very depressing numbers, especially when compared to the success of DNSSEC in the other Nordic countries.

At the beginning of 2019, we asked our colleagues at the National Cyber Security Center for an opportunity to attend their meeting with the Finnish ISPs and talk about DNSSEC. In that meeting, we asked a question: "In your opinion, what should we do in order to boost DNSSEC usage in Finland?" They gave us the clearest answer so far: "We see DNSSEC as an important addition to security, but we don't want to do it alone. If it breaks something, our customers will switch to a non-DNSSEC supporting operator. We will implement DNSSEC if we don't need to do it alone." That was it! So simple. The idea of DNSSEC (re)Launch Day was born.

There were two main components in our DNSSEC Launch Day campaign. The first one was a campaign website with a public list of registrars and ISPs committed to implementing DNSSEC by the date of Launch Day. This was important to convince participants that they were not alone in implementing DNSSEC. The second component was to get publicity. First, there were some articles in professional online media, but the real game-changer was a one and half page article in the main national newspaper, the Helsingin Sanomat: "DNSSEC and its low adoption rate in Finland." The article was straightforward, and it made people wake up.

At the end of 2019, there were at least 250 registrars offering DNSSEC to their customers, 2 percent of domains were signed (low, but doubled in number), and the validation rate exceeded 90 percent, one of the highest in the world. In addition, our DNSSEC training session in cooperation with ICANN became very popular after the campaign, as people got interested in DNSSEC implementation more than ever before.

A Virtual “ICANN Month” for Students at Lodz University

With all face-to-face interactions with our
community suspended due to the COVID-19 crisis, engagement with stakeholders poses a new type of challenge: How do we adapt our engagement to these new circumstances?

Our good partner in Poland, The University of Lodz (UoL), adapted quickly to the new situation by opening their virtual doors for ICANN. Through this initiative, which we called the “ICANN Month”, we delivered online lectures to the students of Social Sciences Doctoral School at UoL for three consecutive weeks in April 2020. Each lecture attracted 25 to 50 students.

ICANN Month was comprised of three lectures by ICANN org members. Patrick Jones opened the series by presenting on “Managing Identifiers and Domain Name System Privacy in an Insecure World”. He was followed by Adam Peake, who presented on ICANN and the Internet, touching upon the fundamental importance of the DNS and global multistakeholder policy. Lastly, Gabriella Schitteck delivered a talk on ICANN, new generic top-level domains, and its rights protection mechanisms. The students were also invited to participate in ICANN via programs such as NextGen and Fellowship, and introduced to the ICANN Learn platform.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the University of Lodz, and Joanna Kulesza from At-Large leadership for the openness and flexibility that made the ICANN Month possible.

Should there be an interest in organizing similar activities for your institution in Europe, please contact Gabriella Schitteck at gabriella.schitteck@icann.org.

“The DNS in the Time of COVID-19” Webinar Attracts 210 Participants

On 9 April, the Global Stakeholder Engagement team in Europe, led by Chris Mondini, organized the webinar “The Domain Name System in the Time of COVID-19: A Technical Perspective” in collaboration with ICANN’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO). The webinar was attended by 210 participants from Europe and beyond.

Moderated by Chris Mondini, the webinar featured presentations by the Vice President of Research Matt Larson, and Chief Security, Stability, and Resiliency Officer John Crain with their observations of DNS resiliency and other COVID-19 related issues. They also discussed highlights from observations of DNS queries, along with news on community-based efforts to address DNS abuse. The webinar called on participants to join the ongoing efforts to combat DNS abuse.

If you’ve missed this webinar, you can still watch it here.

You can send feedback or questions to our OCTO team at octo@icann.org, and share ideas for future assemblies at engagement@icann.org.

EASTERN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA

A Reflection on the Post-COVID-19 Work in Eastern European and Central Asia
By Mikhail Anisimov, Head of Global Stakeholder Engagement for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

My ICANN journey as an org member started on 16 March 2020, around the time when COVID-19 was becoming a global crisis. As the world began facing one of the toughest
challenges in modern history, all planned activities came to a halt. Face-to-face meetings and community gatherings are now no longer viable in the foreseeable future. As a result, we are looking at different ways to continue our work.

When I was training for long distance running fifteen years ago, my trainer had advised this: If I had to slow down, it would be a good opportunity to look around and see where I am, and check how others are doing. Now that we all have to slow down, there is time to look around, and at our community. For us at ICANN, we will continue engaging with you, and raising awareness about ICANN’s work via the remote tools available to us.

Although many regional events have been postponed, the preparations continue for the ones later on in the year. Organizers are still discussing agendas and potential speakers. Currently, it seems things will get busy as of September. But until then, we can look at what work we have to do now, prioritize the regional needs in light of the new situation, and continue to work together.

In my new role, I look forward to working with you, our stakeholders across Eastern Europe and Central Asia! Please do not hesitate to contact me at mikhail.anisimov@icann.org for any questions or suggestions. I am here to support you.

MEAC Regional Plan Receives Feedback through Public Comments

To align with ICANN’s 2021-2025 Strategic Plan at the regional level, the Middle East and Adjoining Countries Strategy Working Group (MEAC-SWG) started work in October 2019 to develop a draft regional plan for the Middle East, summarizing the engagement priorities for the region.

On 18 February 2020, the MEAC-SWG published the draft Middle East and Adjoining Countries (MEAC) Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 for Public Comment, which remained open until 3 April 2020. Complementing these efforts to receive community feedback on the regional plan, a webinar was held on 18 March 2020, attended by 24 community members. The feedback received during this webinar and public comments were summarized and published in this staff report on 17 April 2020.

Next steps involve the incorporation of community feedback into the work towards finalizing the regional plan in May 2020. Then the MEAC-SWG will work on the year 1 action plan, which will be released in June 2020, in time to go into effect on 1 July 2020. This timeline might be affected due to the COVID-19, but we will keep the community updated in the event of any changes.

Interested in our work? Please write to us at meac.swg@icann.org.

ICANN67 Readouts in the Middle East

Following our first virtual public meeting ICANN67, two readout sessions were organized in the Middle East: One for the Middle East region in general, and one specifically for Turkey. These sessions complemented our efforts in keeping the regional community updated and engaged in our work.

ICANN67 Readout Session for the Middle East was held on 23 March and attended by 24
participants. The agenda covered updates from the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) and At-Large, Expedited Policy Development Process (EPDP), the new gTLD subsequent procedures PDP (SubPro), and Universal Acceptance. One key thing to note, was the positive feedback on the success of ICANN67, even exceeding some community expectations. You can find the recording [here](#).

ICANN67 Readout Session for Turkey was somewhat different, with additional topics covered by ICANN org members based in Istanbul. Some of these topics were Open Data Platform and highlights from the Root Server System Advisory Committee. The webinar was held on 22 April, with the participation of 39 people, out of which 19 were local community members. The recording is available [here](#).

Interested in our future readout sessions and other activities? Join our [mailing list for the Middle East](#) or [mailing list for Turkey](#).

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**27 Years of Internet in Turkey**

ISOC-Turkey celebrated the Internet’s 27th anniversary in Turkey by holding a webinar in collaboration with ICANN and Bilgi University Information Technology Law Institute. The event focused on how COVID-19 impacted the local Internet with regards to social, legal, and technical frameworks. Our Global Stakeholder Engagement team member in Istanbul, Seher Sagiroglu, presented on the Domain Name System during the time of COVID-19 and its implications.

We were pleased to be a part of this celebration and look forward to further collaboration with the local community.

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**ICANN’s New Regional Plan for Africa in the Making**

The work on ICANN’s Africa Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 kicked off in January 2020. The draft document, an effort to align the regional plan with ICANN’s Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025, has been developed by the new African Strategy Working Group (ASWG 2020), and posted for [Public Comment](#), which will remain open until 10 June 2020.

Following the Public Comment period, we will consolidate the comments, incorporate them into an updated strategy document, and formally launch the final document on ICANN Africa Regional Plan for Fiscal Years 2021–2025 by the end of June 2020.

This is the first time our regional plan is being developed fully remotely. We would like to thank our committed and versatile community for this success.

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**ICANN67 Readout for Africa Attracts Over 50 Participants**

The ICANN67 Readout Webinar for Africa took place on 2 April, opening the ICANN67 Virtual Public Meeting experiences of African community members to discussion. Some participants shared challenges to participating in the virtual meeting, mainly those caused by the time zone difference. Participants lauded ICANN org for the quick work in transforming ICANN67 into a virtual meeting, and the inclusion of French interpretation, which provided inclusivity for many community members from Africa. In addition to community feedback, several Supporting Organization and Advisory Committee leaders gave updates and shared highlights from the meeting during the webinar.
There was an encouraging turnout with 59 participants, and we hope to see many more of our community members attend our upcoming webinars. We appreciate our community members for their active participation even in these tough times.

For those who missed it, here is the recording of the session.

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**Welcoming Paul Muchene to the ICANN Family**

Paul Muchene has recently joined ICANN org as a Technical Engagement Specialist, reporting to the Adiel Akplogan, Vice President for Technical Engagement. Paul is based in Nairobi, Kenya, and will be working closely with the GSE Africa team. He will support the regional efforts for technical engagement and capacity development.

Paul holds a bachelor’s degree in computer science and is doing his master’s in computer science at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

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**ICANN NEWS**

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**New Learning Opportunities Now Available**

ICANN Learn, our online capacity-development platform, now offers new courses for learning about the ICANN ecosystem.

The Policy Development Fundamentals course provides newcomers with a basic, foundational understanding of how policy development works at ICANN. Policy Development Fundamentals, along with the recently launched Domain Name System (DNS) Fundamentals course, will serve as a cornerstone for developing capacity in the ICANN ecosystem.

The new Registrant Basics course is focused on educating registrants (also known as domain name holders), and the broader end user community about the rights and responsibilities of registrants and some of the ICANN policies that impact them.

Learn more here: [https://learn.icann.org/](https://learn.icann.org/)

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**Pandemic Effect on the DNS Traffic**

Lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to have a limited, but noticeable, effect on Domain Name System (DNS) traffic at ICANN Managed Root Servers (IMRS). ICANN’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) studied the impact of a nationwide lockdown in France on the DNS. Click here to read more detail.

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**Update from the 2020 Nominating Committee**

The 2020 Nominating Committee (NomCom) is working to find the most qualified candidates for open leadership positions. They are working closely with the ICANN Board and org to mitigate issues that arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Read NomCom Chair Jay Sudowski’s blog for a full update on their activities.
Prioritizing the Board’s Work and Goals

The ICANN Board is undertaking a number of actions to ensure that it is fulfilling its Bylaws-mandated responsibilities and addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the ability to work effectively together. The Board is working with ICANN org to develop a comprehensive continuity work plan, which will drive and direct the Board’s actions and goals in the coming months.

For the plan highlights, read ICANN Board Chair Maarten Botterman's blog.

WHAT’S NEW IN REVIEWS

Strategic Outlook Trends Identification Continues

Every year, the ICANN community, Board, and organization participate in trend identification sessions to discuss emerging trends that could affect ICANN. When ICANN67 became a virtual meeting, the org successfully adapted the trend identification work of the Strategic Outlook Program to take place virtually. By combining online tools such as Zoom and Google Drive, we were able to hold a series of virtual brainstorming sessions after ICANN67 with several community stakeholder groups across the globe to help identify new trends, opportunities, and risks. Two public sessions were held, as well as sessions with the Governmental Advisory Committee, Security and Stability Advisory Committee, Generic Names Supporting Organization Council, and the Intellectual Property Constituency. The findings will provide critical update to help inform ICANN’s strategy in an ever-changing environment. Approximately 80 community members participated. Click here to view all the inputs collected during these community sessions.

In the next phase of the program, the ICANN Board will oversee a trend analysis and impact assessment, so that new trends can be factored into the annual iteration of ICANN’s strategic and operating plans. For more information on ICANN’s Strategic Planning process, click here.

GDD UPDATE

ICANN UA Case Study Published

The ICANN org worked with the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) to publish a case study outlining the org’s ongoing efforts to become Universal Acceptance-ready. The document provides an overview of the process, including the three stages it recommends for achieving Universal Acceptance (UA), and best practices. You can view the case study here, and read an accompanying ICANN org blog here.

Has your organization updated its systems to accept all domain names and email addresses regardless of length or script? If so, reach out to talk about developing a case study with the UASG by sending an email to info@uasg.tech. The UASG wants to promote the efforts of all UA-ready organizations and share their lessons learned with the larger community.

For a list of all available UA resources, click here.

Relief for Registrants in Response to COVID-19
The COVID-19 pandemic may impact the ability of registrants to renew their domain names in a timely manner. In response, ICANN org announced that it has approved registrars to defer cancellation of domain names under Section 3.7.5.1 of the 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement for the second time. This clause permits registrars to temporarily forebear from cancelling domain name registrations that were unable to be renewed as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on domain name registrants. Read more in the blog published here.

**RDAP Replacement for the WHOIS Protocol**

The technology transition from WHOIS-based services to ones using the Registration Data Access Protocol (RDAP) continues. Many contracted parties are already offering RDAP services allowing users to access domain name and other Internet identifier registration data in a secure and structured manner. ICANN also offers a registration data lookup tool based on RDAP – bookmark this page!

RDAP was developed by the technical community in the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) as a replacement for the WHOIS protocol. Are you ready for this technology upgrade? Learn more here.

**Consensus Playbook Published**

The Consensus Playbook has been published for the ICANN community to reference and use in support of ICANN-related work. This Consensus Playbook aims to provide community volunteers with practical tools and best practices for building consensus, bridging differences, and breaking deadlocks in ICANN processes. It neither seeks to change the definition of consensus or the methods of decision-making of any community group, nor create any new requirements. Originating from the GNSO Policy Development Process 3.0 (PDP 3.0) initiative and a subsequent Additional Budget Request, the Consensus Playbook was developed by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), an external vendor contracted by ICANN org, with the requirement of broad applicability across the community beyond just GNSO PDP working groups. As part of the development process, CBI interviewed 14 community leaders across ICANN Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees, who shared their extensive consensus-building experience in leading and participating in working and community groups. Download the Consensus Playbook here!

**Initial Report on the Retirement of ccTLDs Now Available for Public Comment**

On 5 May, the Country Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO) Phase 1 Working Group of the third ccNSO Policy Development Process (ccPDP3) published its Initial Report for Public Comment. The report focuses on the retirement of country code top-level domains (ccTLDs) and specifically seeks community input on the duration of the retirement process and the procedures leading up to the removal of a
ccTLD from the root zone. The Initial Report will become part of the full set of policy recommendations that the ccNSO will present to the ICANN Board.

At-Large Plans DNS Abuse Discussion and Other Policy Sessions for ICANN68

For ICANN67, At-Large organized sessions on DNS abuse and other policy topics. Sessions utilized features such as polls and quizzes and involved interactive panels that received positive feedback from community leaders. For ICANN68, At-Large will continue discussions related to DNS abuse and its effects on Internet end users. Other sessions will include topics related to cybersecurity and geopolitics in a multistakeholder environment.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Join ICANN org at these upcoming events in the EMEA region:

- 18 May, Universal Acceptance Webinar for Turkey
- 10-12 June, EuroDIG, virtual meeting

Learn more about how ICANN will be participating in [regional events near you](https://icann.org/contact).