

Closing the JIG: what's next?

Executive Summary

At their (joint) meeting(s) in November 2013 the ccNSO and GNSO Councils recognized further work would need to be done in relation to IDNs, in particular to IDN Variants and Universal Acceptance of IDN TLDs, which are two of the three topics of common topics identified.

Most of the upcoming activities related to the topics will likely be specific to each of the two SOs, with the possible exception of activities related to Universal Acceptance of new (IDN) TLDs. In this regard ICANN is launching a project on Universal Acceptance of all TLDs, for which it will be seeking community input and assistance. The JIG therefore proposes that, as a next step, the ccNSO and GNSO Councils (jointly) monitor progress of, and help to ensure the involvement of their community members and other stakeholders in ICANN's Universal Acceptance Project.

1. Introduction

In 2009 the JIG (Joint ccNSO-GNSO IDN Working Group) was created to discuss issues of common interest between the ccNSO and the GNSO on IDNs (Internationalized Domain Names), especially IDN TLDs.

The JIG identified 3 issues of common interest:

1. Single Character IDN TLDs
2. IDN TLD Variants
3. Universal Acceptance of IDN TLDs

After submitting its Final Report on Universal Acceptance of IDN TLDs, the ccNSO and GNSO Councils recognized further work would need to be done in relation to IDNs, in particular to IDN Variants and Universal Acceptance of IDN TLDs. The Councils requested that the JIG suggest how to deal with these issues and deliver its suggestions to the Councils by the ICANN Singapore meeting (March 2014).

2. Current status issues of common interest

Single Character IDN TLDs

In May 2001 the Final Report of the JIG on the introduction of Single Characters was delivered to the Board and the ICANN Board directed staff *"to consult with additional appropriate and knowledgeable community participants across various languages/scripts on this topic, and to provide the Board and community a report that reflects this input, to enable consideration by the Board on delegation of single character IDN TLDs."*

Secondly, the Board resolved that the *"delegation of Single character IDNs will be made available after the first gTLD application round and conclusion of IDN ccTLD policy work"*.

The community and staff focus is currently on successful completion of the first round of new gTLD applications and completion of the IDN ccTLD Policy. Consideration of issues related to the introduction of Single Character IDNs has shown that these will go beyond the scheduled completion of the application period for the first gTLD application round.

For practical purposes the current ccNSO Recommendation on IDN ccTLDs does not contain a proposal to introduce Single Character IDNs. This rule may be part of the proposed review of the IDN ccTLD policy in five years.

IDN TLD Variants

The activities of the JIG with regard to IDN TLD Variants did not result in recommendations to the Councils. The JIG decided to monitor ICANN's IDN Variant TLD Program and await the output of the Program, which was initiated in late 2010 and publicly announced in April 2011. Members of the JIG participate as do other community volunteers in the different projects under the Program.

As initially indicated in the Board resolution of 25 September 2010 *"No changes will be made to the next version of the Applicant Guidebook with respect to the handling of gTLDs containing variant characters. I.e., no variants of gTLDs will be delegated through the New gTLD Program until appropriate variant management solutions are developed....."*

The ccNSO recommendation contains a placeholder with regard to IDN Variant Management issues, to be revisited once the IDN Variant Program has been completed and potential policy issues have become apparent.

Universal Acceptance of IDN TLDs

In January 2014 the JIG's Final Report on Universal Acceptance of IDN TLDs was submitted to the ICANN Board of Directors. To date it has not yet been discussed by the Board.

However, at another level ICANN has re-initiated its project on Universal Acceptance of TLDs, with the imminent delegation of new gTLDs. The project was launched in 2012.

At the Singapore meeting, a panel session will be organized, with the purpose to solicit views on how to engage and involve the broader communities, including the TLD operators and technical community in a coordinated and collaborative effort to address (some of) issues regarding Universal Acceptance of all TLDs in general, including IDN TLDs.

3. Next set of activities pertaining to issues identified

Single Character IDN TLDs

In response to the request of the ccNSO and GNSO Councils further steps and actions related to the introduction of Single Character IDN TLDs have been deferred, and will follow different schedules and methods:

- The next steps and discussions with regard to Single Character IDN gTLDs are envisioned to start after the successful introduction of the first round of new gTLDs.
- With regard to IDN ccTLDs, although not explicitly stated, assuming the ccNSO Recommendation for the selection of IDN ccTLD strings will be adopted by the ICANN Board of Directors, the policy will need to be changed at some point in time. Most likely and for practical purposes this will only be done as a result of the review of the policy after 5 years.

IDN TLD Variants

With regard to IDN TLD Variant issue, there are already current ICANN projects involving the community. ICANN staff has engaged community members in the projects, and is seeking further participation and feedback from the community at large ¹. Further, the inclusion of IDN Variants under the new gTLD and IDN ccTLD Programs will follow different paths. As stated, inclusion of IDN ccTLD Variants will need to be embedded in the IDN ccTLD policy, which will require a ccPDP. What will be required under the new gTLD Program will likely depend on the progress and outcome of ICANN's Variant Project.

Universal Acceptance IDN TLDs

Resolution of the issues pertaining to Universal Acceptance of IDN TLDs go beyond ICANN and will require the involvement of the technical community and software industry, among others. It is envisioned that ICANN could play a (limited) role, as proposed by the JIG, and in particular in co-shaping and facilitating the requisite coordination and collaboration efforts, which could involve both the ccTLD and gTLD community.

4. Securing community involvement pertaining to issues identified

The JIG considered the following options:

1. Re-charter the JIG and make an additional call for volunteers to monitor progress on the identified issues in order to recommend further action to the Councils if needed and appropriate.
2. Close the JIG and set-up 3 new joint working groups at an appropriate time

¹ For example recently (3 March 2014) community members, specifically those working on Internationalized Domain Names, including IDN ccTLD and new gTLD applicants and experts, were requested to provide input and feed-back on one of the deliverables under the IDN TLD Variants Program. See <http://www.icann.org/en/news/public-comment/msr-03mar14-en.htm>

3. The ccNSO and GNSO Councils, in a combined effort, to monitor progress of the topics and ensure the involvement of community members and other stakeholders in the various projects and Program.
4. The ccNSO and GNSO individually take next steps they each consider most appropriate.

Re-chartering the JIG or setting-up new working groups will take a considerable effort and disproportionately increase the workload, including coordination of efforts, of both community members and ICANN (support) staff.

Assuming both the (re-) chartering can be completed and the call for volunteers completed successfully in a limited timeframe, volunteers and ICANN staff will be challenged to maintain the momentum in the working groups while being involved and engaged in a related ICANN project as well as ensure that all these efforts are and will be coordinated and complementary. Experience to date has shown that WGs tend to focus on engaging in the ICANN projects or Program and then await the results of these projects and Programs², before continuing the efforts of a WG. It has also been the experience that the engagement and involvement of WG participants proportionally decreases in relation to the duration of a project.

Further, as stated in section 3 above, the next set of activities pertaining to Single character IDNs, IDN TLD Variants and Universal Acceptance are not common with respect to IDN ccTLDs and new gTLDs. Therefore, for the ccNSO and GNSO to maintain a uniform and common approach across all 3 topics is not optimal as an approach.

4. Recommended next steps for the ccNSO and GNSO Councils

Based on the assessment above, the JIG advises the ccNSO and GNSO Councils to:

1. Close the JIG
2. With respect to Universal Acceptance of (IDN) TLDs, in a combined effort, monitor progress and ensure the involvement of the community members and other stakeholders in ICANN's Universal Acceptance Project. For that matter it is advised that each of the Councils appoint each one (or more) of its member(s) as rapporteurs (or similar) on this topic, in accordance with its own rules and procedures, and ensure that it is a regular item of discussion at their (joint) meetings.
3. With respect to IDN TLD Variants, the Councils are advised to ensure that community members of each SO remain engaged and actively participate in the IDN TLD Variant Program. Specific activities related to the introduction of IDN TLD Variants as IDN ccTLD and new gTLD, should be organised by each SO as appropriate.
4. With respect to Single Character IDN, it is advised that the Councils inform each other as to when next steps are taken by the SO.

² For the JIG, the experience with the IDN TLD Variant Program, and it has also been the experience of the DSSA WG, in relation to the Board Risk Framework WG

5. References

Progress IDN Variant Program

<http://www.icann.org/en/resources/idn/variant-tlds>

Progress Root zone LGR project

<https://community.icann.org/display/croscomlgrprocedure/Root+Zone+LGR+Project>

Progress LGR work (Integration and Generation Panels)

<https://community.icann.org/display/croscomlgrprocedure/All+Panels+Status+Updates>

ICANN TLD Acceptance project

<http://www.icann.org/en/news/announcements/announcement-31may12-en.htm>

<http://www.icann.org/en/resources/tld-acceptance>