Implementation Status: Thick WHOIS Policy Recommendations

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT ICANN61 IN RELATION TO THIS TOPIC?

The Implementation Review Team is not planning a session at ICANN61. Because the implementation is dependent on the outcome of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) discussions, the IRT is planning a session at the ICANN public meeting following the GDPR resolution.

WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?

ICANN specifies WHOIS service requirements through Registry Agreements (RAs) and the Registrar Accreditation Agreement (RAA) for the generic top-level domain (gTLD) registries. Registries have historically satisfied their WHOIS obligations under two different models. The two models are often characterized as "thin" and "thick" WHOIS registries. This distinction is based on how two distinct sets of data are maintained.

In a thin registration model, the registry only collects the information associated with the domain name from the registrar. The registry in turn publishes that information along with maintaining certain status information at the registry level. Registrars maintain data associated with the registrant of the domain and provide it via their own WHOIS services, as required by Section 3.3 of the RAA for those domains they sponsor. In a thick registration model, the registry collects both sets of data (domain name and registrant) from the registrar and in turn publishes that data via WHOIS.

The Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO) Council initiated a Policy Development Process (PDP) to consider a possible requirement of "thick" WHOIS for all gTLDs. The PDP WG finalized its report and submitted it to the GNSO Council on 21 October 2013. The GNSO PDP WG recommends all gTLD registries to provide thick WHOIS services with a consistent labeling and display (CL&D). It would improve stability of and access to WHOIS data, as well as potentially reduce acquisition and processing cost for consumers of WHOIS data. During its meeting on 31 October 2013, the GNSO Council unanimously adopted the recommendation to require thick WHOIS for all gTLD registries. Following the public comment forum and the notification of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC), the ICANN Board considered the recommendations and **adopted** these during its meeting on 7 February 2014.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF THIS PROJECT?

The CL&D of the Registration Data Directory Service (RDDS) Output for All gTLDs policy has completed implementation by the policy effective date of 1 August 2017.

Verisign, the registry operator for .COM and .NET, has proposed changes to its Registry-Registrar Agreement (RRA) to accept Thick WHOIS data. However, Verisign and the Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG) hit an impasse when they could not agree on the RRA proposed by Verisign. During its meeting on 29 October 2017, the ICANN Board adopted a **resolution** to defer enforcement of the policy. This effectively allows an additional 180 days for the implementation before enforcement takes effect for the Thin to Thick Transition policy.

MORE INFORMATION

- PDP Webpage: **gnso.icann.org/en/group-activities/active/thick-whois**

- IRT Workspace: **community.icann.org/x/t77hAg**

- Public Comment period on CL&D Policy Proposal: **icann.org/public-comments/rdds-output-2015-12-03**

- Public Comment proceeding on Transition from thin to thick for .COM, .NET and .JOBS: **icann.org/public-comments/proposed-implementation-gnso-thick-rdds-whois-transition-2016-10-26**

- Thick WHOIS Transition Policy for .COM, .NET and .JOBS: **icann.org/resources/pages/thick-whois-transition-policy-2017-02-01**

- Registry Registration Data Directory Services CL& D Policy: **icann.org/resources/pages/rdds-labeling-policy-2017-02-01**

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