

18 August 2021

Request for Continued Deferral of IDN Implementation Guidelines v4.0

Mr. Maarten Botterman
Chair, ICANN Board of Directors

Dear Maarten:

I am writing to request the Board to continue the deferral of IDN Implementation Guidelines v4.0 following the presentations made to and discussions within the GNSO Council, and the discussion on this topic during the joint meeting between the ICANN Board and the GNSO Council on 24 June 2021.

The Council has discussed during its May and June 2021 meetings: (1) its previous approach for the implementation and adoption of the IDN Guidelines v4.0; and (2) the elements of the IDN EPDP Charter that was recently completed and approved. Specifically that the Council had:

- previously adopted the IDNs Scoping Team-recommended approach to implementing the Guidelines v4.0 that called for an IDN Operational Track to review the issues related to its implementation and develop a path forward, and
- decided to initiate the IDN EPDP, whose charter has just been approved. As the Charter was developed, it became apparent that the IDN EPDP will consider policy issues that intersects with the Operational Track.

Given this overlap, the RySG expressed concerns that the IDN EPDP and the Operational Track will approach these issues from a different perspective and develop what might be contradicting results. In any case, both efforts will involve the same informed set of players and so will result in redundant work if considered in both fora. In addition, both efforts might compete for the same resources.

The team developing the IDN EPDP Charter also recognized that these overlapping issues involve policy considerations, in addition to operational aspects, and are better suited for discussion in a policy development process.

In light of these recent realizations (described above), the RySG has requested and the Council has agreed to defer all work of the IDN Guidelines v4.0 Operational Track until the issues overlapping with the IDN EPDP can be fully deliberated by the IDN EPDP (at which point the Operational Track might no longer be necessary as its work will be covered by the IDN EPDP).

Importantly, the Council has considered the RySG's analysis of the security / stability impact of the deferral of the Operational Track and the adoption of IDN v4.0, and none of the new requirements were identified as having an effect on security / stability.

The Council thus respectfully requests that the Board continue deferring the adoption of the IDN Guidelines 4.0 until the issues overlapping with the IDN EPDP can be fully deliberated by the IDN EPDP.

In light of our exchanges during our GNSO Council – Board meeting on the potential security / stability issues, the GNSO council stands ready to assist if there is a need for further dialogue on this particular aspect.

Additionally, there are other IDN-related efforts occurring in parallel with the IDN Guidelines and the IDN EPDP; the Council intends to take advantage of that situation to the extent possible:

- The ccNSO is in the midst of undertaking an IDN policy development process in its ccPDP4 IDN Working Group, which also includes a subgroup on Variant Management. While GNSO and ccNSO policies are separable in the ICANN world, differences in outcomes governing IDN deployment can lead to confusing results for domain registrants and users. Therefore, we should continue to ensure that the GNSO and ccNSO efforts coordinate their respective policy development processes, with the aim of delivering consistent results between the two wherever possible.
- Once the policy development completes in both the GNSO and ccNSO, there would then be the opportunity to review the IDN Guidelines v4.0 for consistency with that policy work.
- Similarly, the IDN EPDP can coordinate with the SubPro IRT so that the SubPro implementation work will not be delayed in any way. The Council does not believe the continued deferral of IDN Guidelines v4.0 will or should negatively impact the timing of any future rounds of new gTLDs.

As described above, there are now several IDN-related efforts for the purpose of enhancing their availability, ease of use and security. The GNSO Council is working to take advantage of the timing of this EPDP to reconcile the various efforts so that there is a coherent approach to IDN policy making and ensuring a good user experience.

Best regards,

Philippe Fouquart
Chair, GNSO Council