

14 September 2023

GNSO Council Guidance Statement on “.québec”

Dear EPDP-IDNs Team,

The GNSO Council received your request to provide guidance with regard to whether the public comments submitted by PointQuebec and CORE Association to the EPDP-IDNs Phase 1 Initial Report are within scope for the EPDP Team to address.¹ In considering this request, the GNSO Council reviewed the [discussion paper](#) developed by Policy Support Staff as well as the [letter](#) from the ALAC Chair, and held a discussion during the GNSO Council meeting on [24 August 2023](#).

The GNSO Council agrees with the EPDP Team’s assessment that these public comments intend to ask the EPDP to consider creating an exception process for String Similarity Review that may allow confusingly similar strings, which are not variants according to the RZ-LGR, to pass evaluation. The GNSO Council is of the opinion that this exception process and the challenge pertaining to the “.québec” string is not uniquely an IDN issue or a variant management issue. Therefore, the GNSO Council agrees that the public comments submitted by PointQuebec and CORE Association are outside the scope for the EPDP-IDNs Team to address. In addition, the GNSO Council also agrees that resolving this challenge should not be a dependency for launching the New gTLD Program Next Round.

Nevertheless, the GNSO Council understands the seriousness of the issue and the potential harm to the interests or needs of the intended language communities for the “.québec” string. The GNSO Council also understands that this challenge may be a broader challenge affecting other future applicants of non-variant but confusingly similar strings beyond “.québec”. As such, the GNSO Council agrees that requesting an Issue Report to thoroughly research and scope the problem is the appropriate step forward. The Issue Report will serve as the basis for launching a dedicated Policy Development Process on this topic, should the GNSO Council consider this path in the future.

Regarding the timing, the GNSO Council is committed to consider initiating the request of an Issue Report no later than the EPDP-IDNs Team’s submission of the Phase 2 Final Report. The GNSO Council is aware of the resource limitations facing the ICANN community and org. The Council also recognizes that there is likely strong subject matter expertise on the EPDP-IDNs Team that could potentially contribute to the policy work on this topic. Therefore, it would be advisable to request the Issue Report after the EPDP-IDNs completes its deliberation, but the GNSO Council is open to explore mechanisms to start this parallel effort earlier if capacity allows.

On behalf of the GNSO Council

Sebastien Ducos, GNSO Chair
Greg DiBiase, GNSO Council Vice Chair
John McElwaine, GNSO Council Vice Chair

¹ The comments in question were submitted by: [Nacho Amadoz on behalf of Amadeu Abril i Abril](#), [Louis Houle](#), [Normand Fortier](#), and [Claude Menard](#)