

UK GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON ICANN AND THE MANAGEMENT OF THE INTERNET DOMAIN NAME SYSTEM

Government Response

On 10 May DTI issued a consultation paper seeking the views of the wider UK Internet community to help us develop our thinking on how ICANN should be reformed and what Governments' participation should be. This process formally ended on 14 June 2002.

In total we received 23 responses that related specifically to the ICANN consultation. Of those 13 were from members of the public, 5 were from companies and 5 were from trade associations/professional bodies. The views expressed herein have been summarised in the document below, and assembled under the main points raised in the consultation paper.

Copies of individual responses (apart from those where authors requested confidentiality) are available on request at icannconsult@dti.gsi.gov.uk

Summary of responses

A. ICANN'S Mission

The majority of responses offered general support for most of ICANN's current duties (including the co-ordination of root servers and allocation of IP numbers in particular). Some respondents thought that because country-code top level domains ("ccTLDs") were in effect global top level domains, ICANN should co-ordinate/harmonise ccTLD policies more. Others suggested that ccTLDs policies should be decided at the local level and that ICANN's only responsibility for ccTLDs was re-delegation and helping exchange best practice between ccTLDs on other policy issues. Views were mixed on whether ICANN should have a consumer protection role.

There was broad support for the view that ICANN should not run a root server itself or the .arpa and .int domains.

B. Funding

There was broad support that Governments should not fund ICANN directly but could help provide resources for the Government Advisory Committee (GAC) or the other ICANN services they used. We received general support for the principle of "user pays". One respondent was against funding based on the size of a registry's database. The overall consensus was for the majority of funding to come from gTLD registrations.

A small number of replies said that the root server system should be funded by ICANN from its budget.

C. Government Role

There was strong support for continued government participation in ICANN and for the GAC. Most respondents identified some of the public policy issues surrounding the management of the DNS and said that it was important for governments to input this dimension but there was a range of views on how this could be best achieved. Five respondents supported, or supported considering the idea that an intergovernmental treaty or some sort of multi-government oversight body should be developed. Other respondents however said that it was important for ICANN not to become too bureaucratic and slow moving and that it should remain private sector led.

D. Enforcement

We received broad support for the view that ICANN should enforce its policies through contracts and that it needed better enforcement of its current contracts. General support was received for ultimately working towards contracts with all stakeholders. One respondent supported the idea of contracts for gTLDs but not for ccTLDs where it thought ICANN's powers should simply be to persuade.

E. Root Servers

Four respondents said that there were too many root servers in the USA and that the distribution needed to be reviewed. However, they noted that technical and not political issues should decide the distribution.

ICANN REFORM AND THE WAY FORWARD

The ICANN Board met in Bucharest, Romania, on 28 June to agree a way forward on ICANN reform. Before that, on the 24-26 June, the ICANN Government Advisory Committee (GAC) also met in Romania to input advice on the reform package. The UK participated in these discussions. The GAC issued a Statement on ICANN Reform on 26 June 2002. This can be found at <http://www.icann.org/committees/gac/statement-on-reform-26jun02.htm>.

At its Board meeting, the ICANN Board adopted and endorsed a package of reform measures outlined in the report "A Blueprint for Reform." (This report can be found at <http://www.icann.org/committees/evol-reform/blueprint-20jun02.htm> and the minutes of the Board meeting can be found at <http://www.icann.org/minutes/prelim-report-28jun02.htm>)

The ICANN Board tasked the Evolution and Reform Committee (ERC) to oversee the detailed implementation of the Blueprint for Reform but to take into account:

- the geographic and cultural diversity of the ICANN structure
- the consideration of the creation of an At Large Advisory Committee as a potential vehicle for informed participation in ICANN by the broad user community;
- that the composition and operation of the Nominating Committee represents a balance among all segments of the Internet community;

- collaboration with critical infrastructure providers and the technical community to further the establishment of effective working relationships; and
- that ICANN's policy development processes enhance and promote a transparent bottom-up process.

The ICANN Board will take further decisions on reform at its Shanghai meeting at the end of October 2002. In the meantime, we strongly encourage the wider UK Internet community who are interested in the reform of ICANN and the management of the DNS to participate within the ICANN framework on the reform work. Further details about all reform effort can be found at <http://www.icann.org/committees/evol-reform/links.htm>.

Also, the DTI continues to welcome comments or feedback from the UK internet community on any aspect of ICANN or the Management Domain Name System.

Please contact in the first instance

Ian Broadhurst
CII2
151 Buckingham Palace Road
London. SW1W 9SS
Ian.broadhurst@dti.gov.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION ON ICANN

General information on ICANN is at <http://www.icann.org/general/abouticann.htm>

The ICANN President's Proposal for reform is at
<http://www.icann.org/general/lynn-reform-proposal-24feb02.htm>

Information on ICANN's functions is at
<http://www.icann.org/general/toward-mission-statement-07mar02.htm>

Information on the Government Advisory Committee is at
<http://www.icann.org/committees/gac/>

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