

1. The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA)

The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) is responsible for the global coordination of the root of the Domain Name System, of Internet (IPv4 / IPv6) addressing and other Internet protocol resources. IANA is currently a department of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and is responsible for coordinating some of the key elements¹ that require central coordination for the Internet to run smoothly.

2. What is the current situation?

On **14 March 2014**, the US Government announced that it would transition the stewardship of key Internet **domain name functions** to the "global multistakeholder community". NTIA further asked ICANN to convene global stakeholders and develop a proposal to transition the current role played by NTIA in the coordination of the Internet's **domain name system** (DNS). The USG clarified that any new model must have broad community support and address the following four principles: (1) support and enhance the multistakeholder model; (2) maintain the security, stability, and resiliency of the Internet DNS; (3) meet the needs and expectation of the global customers and partners of the IANA services; and, (4) maintain the openness of the Internet.

One key challenge of this transition is to ensure that governments fulfil their roles and responsibilities while at the same time prevent authoritarian countries from exerting undue influence or interference over the Internet by controlling key Internet domain name functions.

3. European Commission's perspective

- The Commission called for a globalisation of IANA since many years and most lately in its Communication on Internet Policy and Governance (12.2.2014).
- Commission therefore welcomed the announcement of the US Government to "transition out of the IANA function", which will allow a more global multi-stakeholder basis for an important element of governance of the Internet, and issued a public statement of support (15.3.2014).
- We believe that any movement towards further globalisation of the IANA functions should firmly keep the public interest as a primary condition.
- The consultation process convened by ICANN needs to be truly inclusive and based on an adequate engagement strategy to involve stakeholders beyond the ICANN environment.
- In terms of process, the creation of a multi-stakeholder IANA Steering Committee² to carry out lightweight coordination of the drafting of the IANA transition proposal represents a first positive step.
- The Steering Committee could operate by rough consensus and publicly document outlying views if full consensus cannot be achieved.
- The GAC should be able to select the GAC members that will represent them in the IANA Steering Committee instead of being selected by the chairs of the ICANN Board and GAC.
- It would be positive that the IANA Steering Committee acknowledged country code Top-Level Domains as "affected parties" as are the IETF, the IAB, ISOC, and NRO. Country codes are a sensitive issue and elements of sovereignty have to be carefully balanced.
- In terms of stewardship proposals surfacing in recent months, many of them concern functional or structural separation of IANA from ICANN. The Commission will assess them carefully, but

¹ <https://www.iana.org/>

² The Steering Committee should not come to replace the final "structure" that will replace the USG oversight role in the IANA functions.

notes that the current IANA contract already includes the notion of "separation of policy development and operational roles" (Bylaws C.2.5) and that removing those references may be a step backwards from the current situation and from the obligations of ICANN.

- Ultimately our main concern is to ensure that the current "last resort" function performed by the USG is not simply swept away, but rather: (1) that it is made more inclusive of the global community; (2) based on clear checks and balances; and (3) foresees external accountability mechanisms or oversight.
- The Commission has clearly stated and reiterates its **opposition** to purely inter-governmental approaches to this exercise but calls for further reflection around the roles and responsibilities of governments for the protection of human rights and the rule of law.
- Accordingly, the Commission suggests that the final IANA transition proposal considers a new stewardship model based on a multi-stakeholder "**G20-like**" entity that would act as a "**contact group**" and could be consulted by whichever organisation will perform the DNS-related IANA function in the future.
- The activities of this "contact group" could be based on a "silence-assent" rule, as most changes to the DNS root zone file are uncontroversial; appropriate structural separation between technical and the policy spaces must be ensured with a role for governments in policy changes that are perceived to be problematic.
- The multi-stakeholder nature of this "contact group" could be ensured through its inclusive and diverse membership (e.g. 5 representatives from government / public authorities; 5 from civil society; 5 from businesses; 5 from the Internet technical community).

NOTE: The recently launched ICANN accountability review process would benefit from an explicit link to the IANA transition discussions.