

ICANN Prague Meeting
IDN Variant TLDs Program update - TRANSCRIPTION
Sunday 24th June 2012 at 16:00 local time

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Coordinator: The recordings have begun.

Stephane Van Gelder Thank you very much. Welcome back everyone. We have now a half an hour's session on the IDN Variant TLDs Program update. And here to provide that update for us and present the work on this issue is Dennis Jennings. Dennis, please take it away.

Dennis Jennings: Thank you very much indeed. The slides are up and I hope they're up on Adobe Connect as well. I'm going to run fairly quickly through this presentation. This is the same presentation that we'll be going through in detail on Thursday at noon with a lot more explanation. So I'd encourage you if you can to attend that session. But I'll go through it quickly and take question.

So this is an update on the IDN Variant TLDs Program. And you'll remember that - well let me just give the agenda. The agenda is going to look at the program, we're going to look at the projects that we're going to undertake and hopefully complete this ICANN fiscal year '13, 2012, '13; look at the follow on projects that hopefully we will get to.

This week we're going to announce the team, the staff and the consultants for each project. We're going to call for volunteers for one particular project and take questions. And that's just the same program as we're going to go through as I said on Thursday.

So the background is that the issues project was launched to look at approaches to IDN variant TLDs. It was initiated by the Board in 2010. And we took an approach of having six case study teams - community teams - volunteer teams as support by ICANN to look at six different scripts.

And then with support from some of those team members, the ICANN put together an integrated issues report, which was finally completed and published after a round of public comment and so on earlier this year. Those of you who have read the six case studies and particular I commend you to read the integrated issues report would have some idea of the complexity of what we're trying to do in this program.

The goals for the program that arises now and so we call the first couple of phases issues phase having identified the issues. And in the integrated issues report it identified the number of next steps and a rationale for those next steps. We've taken those next steps and compiled them into the TLD program.

And the goal of the program is to define the processes that must be in place to enable the management of IDN variant TLDs. So an underlying assumption here is that we will work out how - the processes and those processes will be able to be implemented and will in due course be able to delegate IDN variant TLDs. There are a lot of ifs in that statement but that's the structure.

Now note the work is focused on exchangeable code point variants only. There was - well we got to this - we need to look at the comments. And I explain that. That is where the one code point is exchangeable - one unit

code point is exchangeable by another. So the code point variants are in some cases by - one code point by more than one in more complex cases.

The timeline for the program and there are a number of projects in the program as you'll see and we'll be going through was originally published in March 2012 or this year for public comment and has a number of projects as outlined on the slide that's on your computer screens if you're on Adobe Connect and here in the hall.

Okay. Sorry. I beg your pardon. My (unintelligible) tells that I'm speaking too far away from the microphones. So I'll try and speak up a little bit. So that was the original timeline was published. And it was published for public comment and we received quite a bit of feedback, which is listed her on the slide.

A number of people said well, why don't you do more scripts, which is implicit in what we've decided to do. A lot of support for variant TLDs for a variety of reasons but particularly to minimize user confusion and fraudulent use but importantly to prioritize the code point variants over whole string variants.

But to general categories of variants that are identified in the issue report and in the integrated issues report, code point variants - that's code points that are exchangeable and then variants that are associated with the whole string or particularly identified by the Greek case study where there are dialects.

And there's an analysis of this issue in the integrated issues report and basically it's hard to conceive of any deterministic way of establishing what are variant - whole string variants. And so rather than prioritize that, which would have delayed the rest of the project, the advice we got from the community was to defer consideration of hosting variants and prioritize code point variants.

A lot of focus on individual community needs of one sort or another. Some comments about giving advantage to or disadvantaging very strict communities, which is certainly not our goal.

We published a revised project plan and we have so far received some public comment, which is listed here and we'll be publishing an analysis of that when the public comment closes.

The main feedback we're getting is a desire to accommodate individual processes for different script communities. Basically to let some communities who are quote ready unquote move more rapidly.

A concern that we move rapidly enough so that it might be possible to include IDN variant TLDs in the first batch of the new gTLD program, which I think unfortunately is probably unlikely when you see the schedule - our schedule.

Collaboration with the technical and language communities you'll see that clearly as in the issues report this is going to be heavily dependent on community but - and some comments on the terminology.

Halfway through this we reverted from a label generation rule set or LGR for the root to IDN tables, which is a more - it's a term that has been used but unfortunately is less precise and we're probably going to revert back to the LGR or label generation rule set as a more precise technical term.

So the revised project plan, which is being published and is out for public comment focused on the critical path on three projects, an IDN table format tool project to get a standard tool for expressing the label generation rule set or the tables. Not (unintelligible) but maybe can have applicability elsewhere. Get a standard tool or useful task that's well underway. Kim Davies is leading that.

The IDN table creation maintenance process or the rule or the label generation rule set process, which is to agree the process that we will use to establish the label generation rules whether we'll try and get the whole label generation rule set done in one goal, what expertise is required, how changes are introduced, whether it's possible to partition it that approach and how that will work is the first process.

And interestingly Project 6 is focused on the user experience when variants are activated - delegated and activated (unintelligible). A primary concern is that the user experience will be at least acceptable or that what we mean by user experience but certainly consistent and acceptable so that it doesn't introduce further risk to (unintelligible) the humans are computers of IDN variant TLDs.

And we're reprioritized the other projects so the revised timeline pulls forward by deferring some projects - pulls forward the critical dates to this fiscal year and the middle of - towards the middle of calendar year '13 when we expect to have these projects completed and be able to move ahead with the follow on projects which are to do with implementation - preparing for the implementation.

So these projects to completed in this fiscal year - ICANN's fiscal year are the, as I said, the IDN table format specification. We'll be going through these in a lot more detail on Thursday. Highlight them here for this presentation.

Project 2.1. If you're wondering of the funny numbering, we kept the numbering of the original plans so that people didn't get doubly confused so the numbering's a little strange here. Project 2.1 is the key technical project, the process for creating and maintaining IDN tables for the root, so.

And there's a detailed timeline for that which again we'll go through too in more detail on Thursday - at the Thursday session, which you can see there on the screen publish a straw man in July, first round of consultations with the

volunteers in August, draft process published in September, second round of consultations with volunteers from September to October, revised draft processes and publish it in March 2013.

That's the goal and it's going to rely heavily on community volunteers. So but given our experience with the issues project, I think that's doable. The other project is examining the user experiences I've described. And the milestones for that are publish here in Prague a study proposal and conduct the first public consultation, which should start on Thursday.

Execute the study that's proposed once there's agreement on that. Draft report for public - second public consultation in Toronto revision. And in January we'll hopefully publish the final report on the user experience.

And then follow those once the public comment process has been gone through and the reports finalized with the go ahead hopefully from the Board. And actually using the process that's been agreed to populate the label generation rule set or the tables for the root zone and agree to them.

To update ICANN's gTLD and ccTLD programs to take account of these changes and to update ICANN's operations evaluation and so on to take account of these changes.

Now a number of issues have been identified as we go along and we expect that more will be identified. And these issues will be (unintelligible) and will be addressed. And what we hope is that we would have an opportunity periodically to consult with the GNSO and the ccNSO on these issues.

And they are issues such as the atomicity the indivisibility of the IDN variant TLD sets. So when you have a variant TLD set, a string - a set of code points in the string and its variants and for some reason or other there may be a challenge to one of the variants, does that break up the set or is it regarded as an atomic unit? And if one element of it fails, all fails. That's an issue.

Conditions for delegating are from the technical conditions, what are they?
That's an issue. Evaluation requirements, how are they going to be evaluated and what the fee should be is an issue. Registry-registrars ongoing fees and this should probably be of interest to this community.

The requirements contractual and otherwise for registries and registrars, who is relation to IDN (TTLDs) and their variants and write protection mechanisms particularly with the complexity of perhaps a number of small - maybe a large number of variants associated with a particular delegated string and what are those write protection mechanisms. And back to the beginning, how does that affect the bulk the variant set.

We think - our working assumption is that current policies are sufficient to deal with these issues. That may or may not be the case. And that's why we want to make sure that we're consulting with the GNSO and briefing the GNSO and the ccNSO from time to time should that - should there be policy issues that have to be addressed by the SOs. We think not but we don't know.

Most importantly the key technical project is technical both in the protocol technical sense but also in the linguistic language community script sense is going to be driven largely by volunteers. And there is - from the community. And there's a call for volunteers published for this project - Project 2.1.

We're thinking volunteers with expertise in DNS, IDNA, Unicode, linguistics and with some understanding and familiarity with ICANN's role and responsibilities including policy development. There's a lot of interest in this. I think our challenge is going to be not to get volunteers but to constrain the numbers of volunteers to a workable set.

We're also going to encourage organizations around the globe who have interest in this area to provide local support to their community. It's not for us to - for ICANN to call on organizations to do this.

But we hope that just as we got organizations to support the issues project, but there'll be many organizations around the world who will provide support, organizational, logistics, communications and financial to their local community to begin in address locally some of these issues and feed into our project.

If you're interested in volunteering, the closing date for volunteers and for responses to this call is the 13th of July. And the URL there is where you'll find the details.

And lastly, I mentioned the Thursday session. It's now on at 12:00 noon. I think the calendar has been updated - the schedule - public schedule. But those of you who have carefully noted this as an earlier time will discover it's now at 12:00 noon. It'll be on for an hour and a half. But the last half hour will be almost certainly focused on the user experience draft document, which will be discussed then.

And that's it. Any questions? Thank you Chair.

Stephane Van Gelder: Yoav, Ching. Yoav.

Yoav Keren: Hi. Yoav Keren (unintelligible). You mentioned that you had 12 languages. Did I get it right, 12 languages, that issued a - had an issue report?

Dennis Jennings: We did six studies but for six different scripts. The Chinese script, the Arabic script, the Greek, the Latin and the Cyrillic scripts.

Yoav Keren: Okay. And there's an intention as I understand to add additional scripts now in the process?

Dennis Jennings: The intention is to cover all scripts, the whole Unicode - code repertoire for the root. So not to do specific studies on particular scripts. We think out of the issues reports that we got over the case studies and the integrated issues report we've got some sort of handle on the issues. And now we're not dealing specifically with individual scripts but inviting all the global community to address the issue.

Yoav Keren: Thank you.

Stephane Van Gelder Thank you Yoav. Ching.

Ching Chiao: Thank you (Steve) - thanks Stephane and thank you Dennis for the report and we believe that the registry has made a statement to the revised program and we appreciate the - I mean the - I mean the revised timeline incorporates the feedback that was conducted during the Costa Rica meeting.

And I think that's very useful in terms of meeting the timeline if the program - the gTLD program runs on that particular timeline that for the next year - March 2013 that we'll be able to have a mechanism in to help the applicant to receive their variant TLD.

But so I have another question is actually about (seeking) for your thoughts on we have now seen the outcome of the application, which is close to 2000 application, 1930 listed, 10% about - less than 10% of the applications are actually IDN and where we see lots of - many of the Asian scripts such as Chinese and Japanese are in the pipeline.

So do you see any - I mean this portions of the application that may impact your - maybe - make it very clearly is that help you to prioritize your work in terms of actually figuring out for the Chinese? Thank you.

Dennis Jennings: Yes, thank you for the question. The - just responding to your first comment on the timeline. The March timeline is to have the process agreed and then there's a follow on project to actually fill out the table or the label generation rule set.

I think there'll be considerable interest in a process that allows segments of the table to be populated and the associated language and script communities to move forward more rapidly. But that's an outcome of this - of the first process.

If that is agreed then clearly you can see some differential movement in the implementation. So I'm not making any commitments though. I'm just saying if everybody agrees that that's the process, then for some communities we might be able to move quite rapidly in the implementation - filling out the table. And let's see how that goes.

In relation to your question, I (look) to comment on any specific current (unintelligible). But yes of course the information that's gleaned out of those applications will provide input to this process. It could be indicative of those that are interested and ready to move ahead.

There may be some people who have simply waited until this - the IDN program is finished before even applying. So I don't know what the situation is. But certainly there'll be information in the list of applicants that will be useful I think to the project.

One of the tools that ICANN needs and that will come out of this label generation rule set or tables process is a tool that will allow ICANN to say - to answer the questions what are the variants of this string and is this string a variant of some other string. And if there are variants what status should they end up in? Should they end up being permissible to be delegated or blocked?

We actually don't have that tool now so there is a big of a gap between the tool that ideally ICANN would have or to deal with the IDN applications in the new - in the existing round and the tools that will come out of this program.

But that's a key set of tools because ICANN needs to be able to say that is a variant of another - an existing or another application. And there will only be approximations to that at the moment until we've done this label generation rule set process and filled out the rule set. And I don't have a neat answer to how that's going to be handled.

Stephane Van Gelder: Thank you Dennis. Ching, you want to follow up?

Ching Chiao: A quick follow up because things - and thank you for the answer - for the reply. A quick follow up on in particular because we - I mentioned about the Chinese or other may - I mean that may contain the variant (revocations) simply because in the application, the applicants actually put on the - (require) or the desire or the potential variants it consider to be (value).

So I will assume that the team - I mean the VIP Working Group may already for - potentially will have in this to look at at least something handy and more practical to - I mean and then you've talked about how many should be delegated and what are the fees - I mean the evaluation procedures.

What I'm trying to make my point here is that you have already have that - I mean the variant list with the corresponding - I mean the applied for string. So I guess you have a - I mean the scope of this that you can look at at this point and then maybe to figure out in the six or ten month timeline. I just want to make that quick point.

Dennis Jennings: No I understand. I understand the point. And yes three would be information there, which would be very useful for Project 2.1. And there'll be information there on which communities believe they're ready to move more rapidly than other communities. So I think that's all very useful input but very important.

I'm just trying to draw a bright line between the IDN project and the existing (UTTP) - new gTLD program. I have some responsibility. So the IDN program that I have no responsibility and therefore mustn't be seen to be commenting the new gTLD program. It's just that - just trying to be careful. Okay. Thank you.

Stephane Van Gelder: Thank you very much. Yoav.

Yoav Keren: Just a follow up question. Being involved in almost I think all IDN working groups of ICANN since 2005 except for this one, I don't remember that there was such a thorough work done on variants before. As I understand this is done only for the top level. Was there an intention - I'm just saying - I haven't heard of - to use this work also for the second level.

Dennis Jennings: The strictly formal answer is that this project is only looking at the root. It's only looking at the root where ICANN has responsibilities for the root - for the delegation of TLDs in the root. I am confident - confidently expect that the sort of thorough work that we're doing will provide very useful guidelines both on the technology, on the variants, on the user experience, on good practice for variants at the second and subsequent levels.

But that's not - I'm pretty certain that out of this will come a lot of not only useful information but agreement on approaches and conventions because one thing that's become clear out of the issues report and I think will become even clearer out of the user experience study is that if the user, whether that's a application on a system or an end user, does not have a consistent understandable, predictable way of dealing with variants, then variants will not be used in my opinion.

And those TLDs who do not conform to whatever emerges as the rocking quotes right way to do it will be at an economic and other disadvantage to

those who adopt the experience coming out of the project. That's my expectation and indeed my hope. But formally we're only looking at the root.

Stephane Van Gelder: Thank you.

Yoav Keren: I'm just saying this might be something that we at the Council need to explore, you know, as an issue that we should talk about. Just raising it - just, you know, a sound bite right now but.

Stephane Van Gelder: Thanks Yoav. So we're about run out of time. I want to thank Dennis for the presentation and the useful dialog. Thank you. And as you've just - as you mentioned earlier on, there is a session on this on Thursday at 12:00. I forget the room but that is on the schedule. So it be for people to find.

Thank you very much. Operator please end the recording and the next session...

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