

Draft Board update for GNSO Council consideration

TO: The ICANN Board of Directors

FROM: The GNSO Council

Draft 9 December 2011

RE: GNSO Council activities relevant to implementation of SAC 051 (SSAC Report on Whois Terminology and Structure)

The GNSO Council would like to thank the ICANN Board for the opportunity to provide input with respect to the Board's resolution (2011.10.28.27) for ICANN staff to create a "Roadmap" for the coordination of the technical and policy discussions necessary to implement the recommendations outlined in SAC 051.

The GNSO Council is currently engaged in two WHOIS protocol-related issues, and the outcomes of both may contribute in important ways to the construction of the WHOIS Roadmap. These efforts include the WHOIS Service Requirements Survey Working Group (WSWG) and the joint GNSO-SSAC Internationalized Registration Data Working Group (IRD-WG).

The GNSO WHOIS Service Requirements Survey Working Group:

The WSWG aims to draft, implement, and analyze the results of a survey measuring the level of support for various technical requirements outlined in a GNSO WHOIS service requirement report, published in July 2010 at the request of the GNSO Council. <http://gns0.icann.org/issues/whois/whois-service-requirements-final-report-29jul10-en.pdf>. This report is a compilation of potential future requirements for WHOIS service, based on current requirements and a review of previous GNSO WHOIS policy discussions. The GNSO Council resolution requesting this staff report reflected increasing community concerns that the current WHOIS service is deficient in a number of ways, including data accuracy and reliability, as well as in other technical areas noted in recent SSAC reports, such as accessibility and readability of WHOIS contact information in an international environment.

The Final Report includes the following potential technical requirements: a mechanism to find authoritative WHOIS servers; structured queries; a well-defined schema for replies; standardized error messages; improved quality of registration data; support for internationalization; security elements; and thick vs. thin WHOIS. Staff published a first draft of the report in March 2010 and solicited input from SOs and ACs before finalizing the report in July 2010. The report is a compendium of potential technical requirements and did not intend to make policy recommendations. However, upon review the GNSO concluded that certain of the assumptions and conclusions in the report should be reviewed by the GNSO community to estimate the level of agreement for those conclusions or assumptions. Thus, in May 2011 the Council decided to charter this working group to develop such a survey. The Council is hoping that the results might help determine whether a working group should be initiated to develop a plan for considering the technical requirement recommendations in the report. (See: Whois Service Requirements – Possible Next Steps, Prepared by Chuck Gomes of Verisign, 14 April 2011).

The WSWG intends to conduct the survey in May 2012 and publish its findings in October 2012.

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The GNSO-SSAC Internationalized Registration Data Working Group (IRD-WG):

The second relevant effort is the joint SSAC-GNSO IRD Working Group which currently examining concerns about Internationalized registration data, While standard formats are defined for domain labels, no standard format is required for elements of a domain name registration record (Registration Data), such as contact information, host names, sponsoring registrar and domain name status. As a result, there is little consistency in the way that characters from local languages in domain name registrations are submitted and displayed.

In 2009, the GNSO and SSAC, at the request of the ICANN Board, convened a working group to study the feasibility and suitability of introducing display specifications to deal with the internationalization of registration data. The IRD-WG draft Final Report, which was available for public comment until 17 November 2011, highlighted the fact that the current WHOIS protocol is not able to consistently support internationalized registration data. The IRD-WG considered display standards for internationalized registration data, and different models of translating/transliterating contact names to enhance the user experience. The report contains three recommendations, including a call for evaluation of a replacement protocol:

- Recommendation 1: ICANN staff should develop, in consultation with the community, a data model for domain registration data. The data model should specify the elements of the registration data, the data flow, and a formal data schema that incorporates the standards that the working group has agreed on for internationalizing various registration data elements. This data model should also include tagging information for language/scripts.
- Recommendation 2: The GNSO council and the SSAC should request a common Issue Report on translation and transliteration of contact information. The Issue Report should consider whether it is desirable to translate contact information to a single common language or transliterate contact information to a single common script. It should also consider who should bear the burden and who is in the best position to address these issues. The Issue Report should consider policy questions raised in this document and should also recommend whether to start a policy development process (PDP).
- Recommendation 3: ICANN staff should work with the community to identify a DNRD Access Protocol that meets the needs of internationalization, including but not limited to the work products resulting from recommendations 1 and 2, and the requirements enumerated in this report.

The GNSO Council looks forward to considering the IRD-WG's final report and the results of the WHOIS Service Requirements survey. The Council expects these outcomes to provide useful guidance as to technical requirements that underpin various functional capabilities and to inform policy discussions that will also likely be needed.

The GNSO Council thus recommends that the Roadmap consider and optimize the utility of the insights, analysis and recommendations reflected in these relevant work efforts. Thank you for your attention to and support for this important issue.