Overview policies, related guidance, and practices relevant for ccTLDs

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Over time, and in accordance with its mandate the ccNSO has developed various policies, policy related advisories and interpretation, and practices that may be relevant for ccTLDs. The purpose of this document is to provide a current overview of those policies, policy related advisories and interpretation, and practices and those which are under development. In addition, mechanisms are included that may support a ccTLD in structuring its relationship with ICANN.

In 2003 the ccNSO was created with the specific mandate (to the exclusion of other groups) to develop and recommend to the ICANN Board global policies relating to country-code top-level domains (Article 10.1 ICANN Bylaws). The scope of this mandate was further detailed in Annex C of the Bylaws: the ccNSO's responsibility is limited to and with exclusion of others to develop policies specifying the rules and conditions under which data will be processed (included, altered or deleted) in the root-zone database.

In addition, the ccNSO is mandated to develop voluntary best practices for ccTLD managers, assisting in skills building within the global community of ccTLD managers, and enhancing operational and technical cooperation among ccTLD managers. Adherence to these practices will be voluntary.

As ccTLDs pre-date both ICANN (which was established in 1998) and the ccNSO, basic rules and conditions for how IANA would process data with respect to ccTLD, including the data that designates and distinguishes a ccTLD from other TLDs, were in place: RFC1591. When the ccNSO was created this was acknowledged in Annex C of the Bylaws.

In summary, this document sets out the key elements of policy and practice that form a framework for how ICANN/PTI and ccTLDs relate to each other and structure their relationship.

1. **Policy mandate ccNSO**

The specific mandate (with the exclusion of other groups) to develop and recommend policies to the ICANN Board global policies relating to country-code top-level domains (Article 10.1 ICANN Bylaws). The scope of this mandate was further detailed in Annex C of the Bylaws: the ccNSO's responsibility is limited to and with exclusion of others to develop policies specifying the rules and conditions under which data will be processed (included, altered or deleted) in the root-zone database.

Topic	Document	Adoption ccNSO	Adoption ICANN Board	Implementation
ccNSO mandate policy re IANA naming Function ccTLDs	ICANN Bylaws: section 10.1, 10.6 & Annex C	N/A	June 2003	N/A
ccNSO mandate Guidance/best practices voluntary basis	ICANN Bylaws section 10.1		June 2003	N/A
Local Accountability ccTLD Manager	RFC 1591 - March 1994 & ICANN Bylaws - Annex C	N/A	June 2003	Guidance ccTLD-ICANN Accountability Framework

2. Selection of country code Top Level Domains

From RFC 1591: *"In the Domain Name System (DNS) naming of computers there is a hierarchy of names. The root of system is unnamed. There are a set of what are called "top-level domain names" (TLDs). These are the generic TLDs (EDU, COM, NET, ORG, GOV, MIL, and INT), and the two letter country codes from ISO-3166."* Further: *" Country Codes - The IANA is not in the business of deciding what is and what is not a country. The selection of the ISO 3166 list as a basis for country code top-level domain names was made with the knowledge that ISO has a procedure for determining which entities should be and should not be on that list."*

For Internationalized Domain Names country code Top Level Domains (IDNccTLDs), the relation between the IDN country code and ISO3166 list is maintained. An IDNccTLD string has to be a meaningful representation of the name of a county or territory listed on ISO3166 in a designated language and related script of that listed country or territory.

Process	Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
Use of ISO 3166-1 standard list two-letter country code as ccTLD	RFC 1591 - March 1994	N/A		Qualifying top-level domain strings
Use of some Exceptionally reserved codes as ccTLD (.eu)	Board resolution	N/A	Board decision 2000 Re EU	Qualifying top-level domain strings
Definition of IDN country codes TLD	IDN Working Group Board Proposal	June 2008	June 2008	Fast Track Implementation Plan (2009), latest version 2019

Pending (under development/to be adopted)

Process	Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
Definition of IDN country codes TLD and their variants	Part A of Board Report ccPDP4	June 2024	Pending	

3. **Delegation, Transfer, Revocation and Retirement of ccTLDs**

Delegation of a (IDN)ccTLD - According to the FoI, "Delegation" (section 3 of RFC1591) refers to the process by which the IANA Operator initially assigns management responsibility or assigns previously assigned responsibility (after a revocation) for the management of a ccTLD.

Transfer of a (IDN)ccTLD - According to the FoI , "Transfer" (section 3.6 of RFC1591) refers to the process by which the IANA Operator transfers responsibility from an incumbent manager to a new manager with the consent of both parties.

Revocation of a (IDN)ccTLD - According to the FoI, "Revocation" (section 3.5 of RFC1591) refers to the process by which the IANA Operator rescinds responsibility for management ofa ccTLD from an incumbent manager.

Retirement of a (IDN)ccTLD - According to the retirement Policy (section 2.1), retirement of a ccTLD is a process that is orderly and reasonable up to, but excluding, the removal of a ccTLD from the Root Zone.

Caretaker (operations) - According to description it means that the domain is in a temporary transitional state designed to sustain basic operations.

Process		Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
RFC 1591 - March 1994	Delegation	RFC 1591 - March 1994, FoI 2015		June 2015	Delegating or transferring a country-code top-level domain (ccTLD)
	Transfer	RFC 1591 - March 1994, FoI 2015			Delegating or transferring a country-code top-level domain (ccTLD)
	Caretaker				Caretaker operations for a top-level domain
	Revocation	RFC 1591 - March 1994, FoI 2015			No public facing documentation at this time.

Framework of Interpretation RFC1591	https://ccnso.icann.org/workinggroups/foi-final-07oct14-en.pdf	October 2014, https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_46795/foi-final-resolutions-11feb15-en.pdf	June 2015	Delegating or transferring a country-code top-level domain (ccTLD)
Retirement Policy	Board Report	September 2021	September 2022	Retirement of a Country-code Top-level Domain (ccTLD)

Pending (under development/to be adopted)

Process	Document	Adoption ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
Deselection IDNccTLD strings	Board Report ccPDP4, Part A section 12	June 2024	Pending	

4. **Possible Mechanisms to assist a ccTLD to resolve a dispute with ICANN/PTI (=IANA Function Operator)**
   Overview of processes which offer ccTLD managers, and applicants for new ccTLDs mechanisms to assist in resolving disputes with ICANN/PTI pertaining to the delegation, transfer, revocation, and retirement of (IDN) ccTLDs and (de-)selection of IDNccTLD strings.

Mechanisms available to an (IDN) ccTLD as direct customer of IANA Naming Services

Process	Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
IANA Complaint Procedure Customer Complaint Resolution Process	IANA Naming Services Contract section 8.1 (a) This procedure includes escalation to the management team of the PTI and to the Ombudsman.	N/A	October 2016	https://www.iana.org/help/complaint-procedure
Mediation procedure direct customer - PTI	IANA Naming Services Contract section 8.1 (c)	N/A	October 2016	—

Mechanisms available for actions pertaining to the retirement of (IDN) ccTLDs and selection of IDNccTLD strings

Note: If ccPDP3 review mechanism and ccPDP4 (de-)selection are fully implemented, the two mechanisms listed below are no longer available

Process	Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
ICANN's Independent Review Mechanism for covered actions (retirement and IDNccTLD string selection) Note: Disputes pertaining to the delegation and redelegation of ccTLDs are excluded (Section 4. 3 (c) ii.)	**ICANN Bylaw Article 4. 3**		October 2016	
ICANN's Reconsideration Process Note: Disputes pertaining to the delegation and redelegation of ccTLDs are excluded (Section 4. 2 (d) i.)	**ICANN Bylaw Article 4. 2**		October 2016	

Ombudsman Mechanism available to (IDN) ccTLD for matters that the IRP (section 4.3) has not been invoked

Process	Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
ICANN's Ombudsman. Note the Ombudsman may act as dispute resolution practitioner for those matters the IRP set forth in Section 4.3 of the Bylaws have not been invoked.	ICANN Bylaw Article 5		October 2016	Ombudsman Website

Pending (under development/to be adopted)

Process	Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
ccNSO Policy Review Mechanism	Board Report ccPDP3 Review Mechanism	June 2023	Pending	

	Clarification and Interpretation of policy Review Mechanism	September 2024		
Applicability review mechanism IDNccTLDs	ccPDP4 Board Report, part A section 13	September 2024		

5. Voluntary practices

Over time the ccNSO has developed voluntary practices for ccTLD managers, assisting in skills building within the global community of ccTLD managers, and enhancing operational and technical cooperation among ccTLD managers. In addition, the ccNSO has developed voluntary practices to assist ccTLDs and ICANN to structure their bilateral relations. Adherence to these practices is always voluntary.

Voluntary practices regarding wildcarding and use of emoji's as second level domains

Topic	Document	ccNSO	ICANN	Implementation
Advice on wildcards	Final Report Wildcarding Study Group		N/A	N/A
Advice not to use Emoji's	Final Report Study Group	September 2019	N/A	N/A

ccNSO Guidelines to assist ccTLDs and ICANN to structure their bilateral relation

Topic	Document	Adoption ccNSO	Adoption ICANN Board	Implementation
Guidance Accountability relation ccTLD- ICANN	Guideline ccTLD – ICANN Accountability Framework	19 January 2005	Letter ICANN CEO 2005	Overview Agreements ccTLDs- ICANN: https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/cctlds/cctlds-en Templates: EoLand Template letter ccTLD- to ICANN Template letter ICANN to ccTLD Template Accountability Framework
Guidance ccTLD financial contribution to ICANN	Guideline Financial Contributions	20 November 2013	Letter ICANN CEO to ccNSO accepting Guidance	Annual Overview Financial Contributions

Voluntary Practices relating to IDN Tables and registration of IDN Second and higher level domain names

Topic	Document	Adoption ccNSO	Adoption ICANN	Implementation
Advice to IDNccTLD Managers with respect to IDN Tables A. Submission of IDN Table	ccPDP4 Final Report Report Part B, C1	Adopted by ccNSO Council 07 March 2024	N/A	https://www.iana.org/help/idn-repository-procedure & https://www.iana.org/domains/idn-tables
Advice with respect to registrations under the IDNccTLD (variants) under management	ccPDP4 Final Report Part B, C2	Adopted by ccNSO Council 07 March 2024	N/A	N/A

6. Other Relevant Documents

Process	Document	Adoption ccNSO	Adoption ICANN Board	Implementation
General framework of principles and guidelines for the relationship between national governments, the ccTLD Manager associated with that country, and ICANN	GAC Principles 2005	N/A	N/A	See various Delegation Reports. latest

7. Archived

Process	Document	Adoption ccNSO	Adoption ICANN Board	Implementation
ICP-1: Internet Domain Name System Structure and Delegation (ccTLD Administration and Delegation	Archived		ICP-1 was adopted by the Board in May 1999 Was archived by Board resolution on adoption of FoI: June 2015	Current practices of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) in administering RFC 1591

- Structure of the root zone - is there a policy that relates to what sorts of domain names there are, beyond RFC1591? That's the foundation - ccTLDs are a subset. May be useful to reference it as 'the next step up the chain'.
- See inclusion of .test in various language/script combinations: https://www.iana.org/reports/2007/testetal-report-01aug2007.html