
ICANN72 | Virtual Annual General Meeting - GNSO RySG GeoTLD Group Community Outreach
Monday, October 25, 2021 – 14:30 to 16:00 PDT

SUE SCHULER: Hello and welcome to the GeoTLD group. My name is Sue and I am the remote participation manager for this session. Please note that the session is being recorded and follows the ICANN expected standards of behavior.

During this session, questions or comments submitted in chat will only be read aloud if put in the proper form, as noted in the chat. I will read questions and comments aloud during the time set by the chair or moderator of the session. If you would like to ask your question or make comments verbally, please raise your hand. When called upon, kindly unmute your microphone and take the floor. Please state your name for the record and speak clearly, at a reasonable pace. Mute your microphone when you're done speaking.

The session includes automated real-time transcription. Please note this transcript is not official or authoritative. To view the real-time transcription, click on the closed caption button in the Zoom toolbar. With that, I'll hand the floor over to Nacho.

NACHO AMADOZ: Thank you very much, Sue, and thank you, everyone, for attending the GeoTLD group meeting today. It's quite late for most of us, and it's remote, so it's going to be a challenge. We wanted to have this meeting mostly because this is the last official GeoTLD group meeting of the

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year, and therefore we have to go through some housekeeping, and we will do that immediately.

But besides that, we thought that we needed to be on ICANN's agenda as we've been doing for many meetings already. Even though the session is supposed to last 90 minutes, we won't complain if we can do this in a shorter format. That said, if anybody wants to comment or speak up at any time and there are things we need to discuss, we have the time allocated for that. So that won't be a problem.

I see people in the room, way more than we were expecting considering that most of ours are based in Europe. But that's great. I think that that should be it for the welcome. We could go to the housekeeping in order to keep this short. So, could you pass the next slide? That one, and over to you, Ronald.

RONALD SCHWAERZLER:

Hello everyone. Welcome. I'm acting as treasurer of the GeoTLD group, and one of my duties is to present to you the financials and some statistics of the group. As always, in the last meeting of the year, I can present to you the final results of the previous year.

As you see here, the three of us and the Executive Committee, Nacho, Josu and myself, we met on the 10th of September. We really met, which is probably unusual in these days. We took the chance because we were all in Frankfurt. And at that time, for the GeoTLD meeting we had this September. Next slide, please.

Here is the protocol of this meeting. We opened that meeting, we talked about the financials, we accepted these financials, these numbers that we got from our accountant, and then we closed the meeting. It took us about 45 minutes. Next slide, please.

Then you see the important numbers in more detail. My knowledge in French language is very little, so approbation des comptes de l'exercice clos le ... Yeah, 31/12/2020. I think it means we have to accept or presented and we accepted the standing, the balance of our association. And the result for the year 2020, we had a plus of euro 12,190 and nine cent, and altogether summarized over the years of existence of our association, we now have plus on our balance sheet for Euro 56,924 and 59 cents.

I have to admit, and I'm very proud of it, exactly, it's the same that I calculated in my Excel sheet, which shows that it is not a very complicated thing to calculate what we earn as membership fees. If we go to next slide, please, you'll see some of the details. And the details together with the forecast for this year, the 2021. financial year.

And I show you the real 2020 and the preview of 2021. And I have marked the red rectangles is where we have a little bit of a difference that probably needs to be explained.

We didn't think in March that we were really able to host a meeting or to do a meeting of the GeoTLD group. So we didn't plan any money to spend on that meeting. We had to spend 750 euros. It was a difference that we have spent more. It was for the evening dinner. It was for some travel arrangements.

And we had 5000 euros planned this year, the 2021 year for expenses of our marketing group work, for marketing things. Unfortunately, we were not able to spend a single euro on that. We spend what we planned for the website, for the website video, the membership fees, the consultancies, etc. So, if you go to the next slide, please.

We earned 27,000 this year, 28,000 the last year. You'll see that we lost one member. I hope it's only postponement of this member, one member or the company of one member got bought by another company and so they had to for this year get out of the to GeoTLD group and they think or hope that they will get in next year. So we had a little decrease of membership fees compared to the 2020.

We thought that the result would be [340 euros or plus minus zero.] And as you can see on the next slide, the membership fees that we earned were 26,000 euros, the expenses were 21,800. You remember the 5000 on the marketing group that we were not able to use, because we were not able to do any activities, at least not spend the money on it. Next slide please.

Again for this year, we will end up with a plus of approximately 5000 euros. For the 2021 preview we will end up with approximately 5000 euros plus again, short below 5000, 4700 something, which will bring us to a total of wealth of about 60,000-62,000 euros in our bank account by the end of the year of 2021. Are any questions for the 2020 or the 2021 budget? The one that has been approved by the financial accountant and the one that is the [inaudible] system numbers that are not really hard to calculate. But any questions?

I see a question from Maxim in the chat. “When tax agency starts asking questions about being a rich not-for-profit?” Maxim, yes, you're right. Normally Sebastian asks this question. It's okay, if you have at about two yearly budgets in plus, because there can be some circumstances that cannot be calculated or taken into consideration. If it's more than three, they start asking questions. So we are in a limit that is still okay. I asked this question to the tax accountant, said it's not a problem at the moment. So next slide, please.

So we have to formally approve the financials and the actions of the executive committee. And as I've showed you before, the balance sheets or the total ownership or the total property of the GeoTLD group is 56,924, and 59 cent. And I asked the members of the GeoTLD group being present here to approve the annual financial statement or to accept the annual financial statement. The ExCom has already approved it, but it must be brought to the members for to their knowledge, what is done hereby. And as usual, we carry over the result of the balance sheet to the following year, to the new year's account.

Formally, the action of the GeoTLD group executive committee in the year of 2020 are approved by the members during the annual general meeting 2021, which is today. If there is no voice against, I think if you get married, you're told to either say something now or be quiet for the rest of your life, something like this. At least in German, it sounds like that. So are there any voices, any objections of approving the ExCom's actions and financial results of the year 2020?

Okay, so this is it from my side, from the financials as your treasurer. I think we had a very good planning, but due to corona and the limited possibility of taking actions, it was not very hard to have such a good financial result. And I hope that it will be more complicated the upcoming year, because we want to have additional activities and spendings on money. So back to you, Nacho.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thanks, Ronald. Yeah, I think that the most complicated issue for our planning was, first, the possibility to meet or to sponsor meetings or activities in connection with meetings due to the situation. We finally had one meeting in Frankfurt. And it went well, considering the situation. Let's hope to have a big one next year so that we can get together.

The other thing that really didn't get traction was the marketing group. And we were hoping for members of the staff, for members, to get together and to try to advance some agenda within the kind of interest that we gathered from the group and marketing and finding solutions or tools that might be helpful for the group as a whole, was in that list of objectives.

Maybe—and this is something we can elaborate further through the mailing list to get the members the opportunity to look at it and to express what they think about it. Maybe we could try to find some external guidance that could help us with that or see how can we put that money to work so that we avoid the situation with the tax authorities, but not only for that reason. So that is one good reason. But

the main reason would be so that we finally get one way to make it better for us in marketing terms.

We can discuss this here, in the mailing list. We are always paying attention to see if there any feedback coming back from the members. But I guess that this situation has really affected us all because it's really hard to get outside of your daily duties to put some time into this. But we'll try to get this easier to do for you. So if you can go to the next slide. Previous one, point number four, yeah, the updates from members.

I guess we are kind of in the same situation here. We wanted members to know that suggestions would be incorporated into the agenda and that we would have a slot for updates from members. But we haven't received anything from anyone. We had a meeting not that long ago in Frankfurt and it went very well in this regard because kind of forced all attendees to provide an update, even if that update was just saying, "We are not yet back to the office. We are struggling. I'm fed up with my face mask and I want to go outside," whatever it was. And we had some good discussions that sprung from what members were sharing.

So I guess that this is not something that we are getting today. I don't see any hands raised. I don't know if anybody wants to share anything or to ask anything. We can get back to this later if you think about it again and you want to share something. But as we are not afraid to keep it short this time, we can move along to the next slide. Wait, there's a question from Rubens. "What's the overall trend in domains under management in GeoTLDs?" That's a good one.

What I see in the ones I have direct knowledge about is that the trend is good. Couldn't give you any average figures, because it depends on case to case. But overall, the domains under management has increased in some of the small ones, maybe by 7%. So that's not bad, considering that they were growing every year. But this this pandemic growth had a marginal effect to it. [.cats] as an example is at its highest figure of registrations since we began operations.

And there was a perceivable effect during the pandemic situation that that we didn't know how would behave at the end of the year, because we weren't sure if this was something that was going to go away and therefore we would have to face a wave of non-renewals. But so far, most of them stayed, so we are good. We are closing to close to 113,000 domain names. Any of you guys want to share something about your domains under management [inaudible] Rubens' question?

RONALD SCHWAERZLER:

Nacho, let me give you some information from the four GeoTLDs that we are managing, so that German speaking Tirol, Köln and Cologne and Wien. We did not see any effect in case of changing of the behavior of the TLDs due to the pandemic or whatever it was. We had a growth of 2-4% depending on the GeoTLD.

And for me, the most important thing was we didn't have any single reported abuse case in this period. We were very afraid that some of these COVID related domain names would get registered and some fake vaccinations or testing facilities or whatever. We had a very close look

at these registrations manually and we did not detect any and we were not reported any of these abuses.

I stress this because I know that DNS abuse is a topic anywhere and at least in the Geos that I have direct access to, the things have not become worse or not even a single occurrence of such things in the past one and a half year. And the same as for [.cat.] We expected some non-renewals this did not happen yet. So same situation as before, relatively quiet ongoing business and very little if ever, very little thing COVID related or pandemic related or general business related changes. Not observed at my side.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thank you, Ronald. Anyone else wants to give Rubens some answer?

JOSU WALIÑO:

Josu Waliño from .eus for the record. In our case, yes, to say something, but it's the same case I think. We felt that the pandemic was in fact positive for sales because everything was digital during the last year. Every business wanted to go online. So our growth last year was around 18%. This year also, the growth is going fine. We expect in the year around 10 11% of growth. So the growth of the TLD in the case of .eus, we're a small one, just located in the Basque Country and the growth is as usual. Last year, it was better than before. So nothing bad to say.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thank you, Josu. I see Maxim also saying that it might be better to say that it did not cause decline in numbers. Let me get to John McCormac's comment. "It might be a bit early for some gTLDs due to lockdown restrictions lifted in 2021." Yeah, that might still go on for a while or be back in some cases, because we are not now in lockdown, most of us. I would say that all of us are not in lockdown, the members, but we may be at some point in the future. Hopefully we won't. Maxim saying "Not yet." Exactly. We will see.

Okay, good. Thank you for the answers, the questions and the comments. Moving along to the next section, which is number five. We wanted to have some insights into the registration abuse prevention to have a discussion about protection of authorities through registration policy. And it comes specifically from something that .fr has introduced in the registration policy and that is the prohibition to register domain names that include the reference to the acronym of the government, gov. So they are forbidding anything ending with -gov so that it doesn't signify to the public at large that that concrete domain name might be affiliated or associated with governmental services.

One of the members, I think, was interested in this position and wanted to know more about it. Unfortunately, we have no AFNIC representatives in the room, they already told us that they would not be able to make it. But this is something I might—Yeah, Maxim is saying it might be safe to have such things on the reserved list.

And Normand saying it was .quebec. You're right. I didn't want to say it unless you did. So, so Norman was really interested on that. And we

don't know if this is something that more members are considering, what could be the correct approach? What could be the terms affected by this, if this is something that needs to be only referred to governmental bodies or to institutions of other kinds. We don't have any strong position about it, other than it might help us if this gets us noticed, in the media, by the authorities, and if this serves as something that can be used to promote us as a GeoTLD that is safe and is constantly paying attention to what goes on in the domain names register so that we keep an eye on things that may harm not only the government but the authorities that are relevant to our communities.

We can't have any more insight now as to how this came to be, what was the trigger or what are the outcomes that AFNIC expects. We will keep an eye on that and we will also include this in future reports if this is something that affects the members and the members are interested. Let me go to the comments.

“He will have to stand in the local court fighting the mayor’s office opinion.” “Mayor is another not so safe word.” Right. And John McCormac is saying, “Might be good to add bank names to that abuse prevention list. It would help with public perception of safety in the GeoTLDs” Thanks for the suggestion, John. This is the kind of entities that we think we have to not pay special attention but that we know are the targets in many cases where names are used for phishing and other scams and we don't want to have that in the GeoTLDs. We have avoided that by being fairly diligent on what we do with our registrants. And this is something that shouldn't start happening now.

Or acronyms for the Air Force, says Maxim, or Reuben says sometimes a bank name is also a geographic region like Santander. Right. And in those cases, it is very difficult to anticipate what could happen, but it's fairly easy to react according to our registration policies if we see that there is some unlawful behavior going on in a domain name.

At this point, I think we don't have much more to say about this point. We just wanted to let you know that one member has gone through these, another one was interested. We wanted this to be also part of what we are considering for the discussion in the following month. So we'll keep an eye on that. I see no hands raised, so we can go to the next section, please, Sue.

And that one is going to be for Wim. So over to you, Wim.

WIM DEGEZELLE:

Thank you. So the ICANN policy update will also be a very short, quick update given the late hour for most of us. Next slide, please. I just would like to remember that the idea for this policy update is mainly for GeoTLD group members who are usually not following the ICANN meetings and the ICANN lists to give a short feeling of what the ICANN community is working on and where different processes are at the moment.

However, looking at the room, I would say the room is well filled with experts. I think in another moment I call them diehard ICANN participants, people that follow. So what I would suggest is I really give the very short updates that I have prepared, but the people in the room,

just flag if there is any topic they wish to discuss or share more details about or just want to flag where this or that point or issue is something the GeoTLD group should really focus on or keep an eye on.

Okay, and Nacho is just putting me under pressure saying that I don't have the whole half an hour. I see. So as you see on the slides, what I did is I took the slide from the last meeting that gives an overview of the general topics, trying to give both the ICANN name and the let's say non-ICANN name of the processes. So to make it easier to understand and just flagging or just highlighted the latest update or where the topics are.

Let me start with the PDP on the SubPro, on the let's call it just a review of the existing policy on the introduction of new gTLDs in preparation of the next round. So after a very long work, this group or this process came to an end. The report was accepted by the GNSO Council, was sent to the ICANN Board for consideration.

The ICANN Board decided to have an operational design phase that starts really to look into some of the technical or practical issues that came out of that report before taking a decision. I know probably discussion is already going on in the chat on how long this will take. Well, let's say a couple of months to more than a year. So that's a big question mark on how long that phase will take before the ICANN Board then takes final decisions. And of course, it's all linked to the start of the next round. And maybe we should do a quiz at one moment asking participants when they think the next round will start.

Then the next topic or the policy topic is the EPDP. So as you remember, there was something called GDPR, and the ICANN policy, or better, the registry and registrar agreements had to be adapted so that they both can listen or follow the ICANN rules and not be in conflict with GDPR.

There was a phase 2 that was focused on SSAD, so the system for standardized access and disclosure. The final report is also with the ICANN Board for consideration. And also there, an operational design phase has been started to look into a set of specific recommendations related to SSAD.

So there in the meantime, there was also a phase 2A on some leftover issues that needed to be solved, amongst other, the differentiation between legal and natural persons and their registration data and the feasibility of unique contacts to have and the use of anonymized email addresses.

Later this week, I think in two days on Wednesday, the GNSO Council should or is expected to consider this final report before that also is forwarded to the Board.

Next is the ongoing review of the different tools and procedures that trademark holders can use for clients to protect and to look at domain names and to protect their names and trademarks. There was a phase one that has been looking to the mechanisms that were applicable to the 2012 round. Also, that report is with the ICANN Board at the moment, and there is a new phase, a phase two that should start later on which is focused on the UDRP, the uniform dispute resolution policy from 1999. So from before the new round.

I'm not looking at the chat, so if there is any issue or any comments that come up at this moment, just flag it. If not, Sue, you can go to the next slide. So we continue. There was or there is also the PDP on IGO/INGO access to curative rights protection mechanisms. In normal language, the protection of names of international governmental organizations and international nongovernmental organizations.

The ICANN Board is considering a report and a set of recommendations for protections, work that already has finished and in the meantime, a separate work track has been started or is going on on some related issues. An initial report was published in September of this year.

Then two new or relatively new policy processes. One is focused on the Transfer Policy Review. I think those both groups are or working at their topic, discussing the topic right now. So, the transfer policy is maybe less a topic for registries and more something registrars are facing, or more relevant for registrars. So looking at just reviewing the process, see if it has to be made easier, looking at some security issues and efficiencies. Like I said, the PDP is going on. And next step would be the publication of an initial report that then will also go to public comment.

Then the last policy process I wanted to mention is the one that recently started on IDNs, which has a long list of questions to answer. More than 48, I think, questions that are in the plan. It is looking at, amongst others, the definition of TLDs and the management of variant labels of IDNs, how they have to be addressed. Also looking into a process on how to update the IDN policy implementation guidelines, so the

guidelines on IDNs registries and registrars have to follow and have to comply with.

Like I said, the policy process just started. I think the initial—probably has been one or two meetings where this really started to dive into the work. So there is an initial report, but it will take some time.

Then I wanted to mention two other things in this overview. One is the ongoing community work, so the discussion on the implementation of RDAP, the negotiations that are going on to update the registry and registrar agreements. There is some small progress there. But I wouldn't go into too much detail because this topic was discussed at length with a presentation from Donna at our meeting a month ago. So that is still on the table and negotiations are moving forward.

And then as a last point, it's not really policy work, but I think it's a document relevant for GeoTLD registries. It is a document developed by the Contracted Parties House, both DNS abuse working groups. It's called a CPH trusted notifier framework. It is actually a document that looks at some aspects of how registries and registrars work or based on how they work with trusted notifiers and puts down some suggestions or some general guidelines. It's not a framework in the sense of policy or obligations or guidance, but it's really more informative best practice document that shares experiences and amongst others, looks into what is actually the role or what should be the role of trusted modifiers, what are their responsibilities, which processes to arrange the relationship between the registry, registrar and a trusted notifier. The link is on the

slides, but it's also available on the Registries Stakeholder Group website.

That's all for me if there are no immediately questions or comments, I also would just call on the experts in all this policy work that are in the room if there is any additional elements or topic that's worth to share with the GeoTLDs.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thank you very much, Wim. I see a hand. Maxim, go ahead.

MAXIM ALZOBA:

There is a things which is important for all European—and I think not only for European Geos and potential Geos. It's about Latin script root zone label generation rules, which if done properly will allow potential Geos to have proper IDN names for their cities, for example, accent and things like that. And also, another important thing which is there is about IDNs, because one of the IDNs is about variants.

For example, you have one English version of the city name and another which has accent and is the proper name for your city. So potentially it might lead to a situation where the variants could be arranged only to the same entity. I mean, if you have your city name in English, and later, only the same entity, your fund or your organization will be legible for the second.

It's too early to say that, but the process seems to move to that direction. But it doesn't look like a speedy process. And so far [it's

marked as '23] or something, the end of the process. And the group is trying to do things fast, but we will see. Thanks.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thank you, Maxim. That is especially relevant to .quebec. I saw a comment early earlier from Norman indicating that they want to have .quebec with the accent, or as Sebastian is saying, for Köln with a German writing and some adapted version. Yep.

WIM DEGEZELLE:

So if I just may so I'm correct, that the two issues, Maxim, you raised, one is the current policy process and discussions, but the other, the Latin script, is that related to the document that's now out for public comments?

MAXIM ALZOBA:

Yes. I'm not sure when it started. Maybe it's better to ask Rubens about the details, but I know that it's important for all the languages based on Latin, and it will potentially allow proper—dealing with the potential applications in the next round if the results are on time. Because if the next round comes in 2022, which is too optimistic to my liking, and this in 2023 ... So it has to be there before the start of the round. It's EPDP. The group is trying hard. We increased the meeting time from one hour to one hour and a half. More than that, it's just not working. So we're trying.

NACHO AMADOZ:

Thank you, Maxim, for that. Let me see if there are any other hands. There's a comment from Reubens. "All LGRs now make reference to cross scripts, so each registry should probably look at all LGRs. Latin one makes a lot of references to Cyrillic." Thanks, Rubens. I see no other hands or comments.

We can go to the next slide, which takes us to the end of the meeting. And this is reserved for any other business anybody may want to raise, or any updates that any member may want to share?

But I guess that in our case today, less is more and we've gone with half our time allocated. We're all tired. It's even later for people like Maxim than for most of us. Thank you very much for attending the meeting. We've done what we needed to do. We have the approval so we can go ahead with our housekeeping.

We'll see each other around during the ICANN sessions, and hopefully next year, we'll be able to meet face to face more often than we did this last time. See you around.

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