



ICANN Blog

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

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Who is ICANN and where does it fit with Internet governance?

You'd be surprised how many people are asking that question at the moment, but you won't be surprised to know that the only thing they agree on is that they either don't know, or that they disagree with the people that believe they do.

I am not going to attempt to provide my own answer, but I will point to a paper just released by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST).

POST, among other things, produces regular, concise briefings for the UK Parliament on whatever are the important topics of the time. And they have now done one on Internet Governance, which you can download from them [here](#), and which we are also hosting [here](#) (at the same time, they have also produced briefings on "Electricity in the UK" and "Alzheimer's and Dementia").

This POST summary finds itself in the pigeon holes of every UK Member of Parliament and often represents the foundation level of information and understanding for UK politicians on a wide range of technical subjects.

As you would expect therefore, the paper is pretty good. Concise, accurate, fair, informative — in fact an ideal primer. It inevitably deals with ICANN a few times, noting that "ICANN's role generates much debate".

It gives a brief history of ICANN, goes through the gTLDs introduced over time and is mildly critical of ICANN over IDNs ("some have criticised ICANN for being too slow in implementing IDNs") - to which it is of course my duty to point to the [new IDN roadmap](#) and the [dedicated ICANN webpage](#) dealing with internationalised domain names.

It then tries to peek into ICANN's future, stating: "There are two options for ICANN's future. The first is to place some of its functions under the authority of an intergovernmental body like the UN or the ITU, an idea originally proposed at the WSIS.

"The second is to give it independent private sector status, with internationalmultistakeholder input. The DTI [Department of Trade and Industry] favours an industry-led solution, arguing that the Internet's success largely is due to private sector involvement, and that intergovernmentalcontrol may stifle innovation and investment."

There is much more besides so for anyone interested in Internet Governance, we recommend giving it a read. It is written in clear, approachable English.

It is certainly up there with the primer that Panos did solely on ICANN in time for the World Summit on the Information Society back in November 2005. Some elements of that publication (which you can [download here](#) from this site, or [here](#) from Panos directly) are now out of date but even so it is an extremely useful first step for people hoping to understand ICANN and its role.

Those links again:

[POST publication on Internet governance](#)

[Panos primer on ICANN](#)

This entry was posted on Wednesday, February 28th, 2007 at 6:15 pm and is filed under [ICANN](#), [IDNs](#), [Participation](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

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 *Comment by [Veni Markovski](#)*

2007-03-01 07:31:14

Kieren,

The debate around ICANN is an ongoing process, and I don't see it ending any time soon. Majority of the "usual" people (those who come regularly to meetings around the IGF/WSIS/ICANN) already have an opinion about it, and there is no way to change that. People who come to the IGF and other related

meetings, who ask questions, who try to understand what actually ICANN does, and how the Internet works, they are in the minority.

I've always been suggesting that before we deal with the global, big problems, we should try to see what solutions we have in our own houses - e.g. in each and every country.

Of course, it's easy for me to talk like that, as Bulgaria has been giving a very positive example since 1999. Example, which shows that when the government works in close coordination and cooperation with the private sector, the users' associations, and the civil society, only then the results achieved are positive. Bulgaria has solved that by law - in the last two Telecommunications Acts there are special provisions about DNS/IP addresses.

Basically this solution, suggested by the Internet Society of Bulgaria, plus actions of several Bulgarian governments in a row made it possible that we moved rapidly forward - from having only 76000 users in 1999 - 1 % of the population - to having today more than 2.5 mln - more than 30 % of all people above age 15. From having only analog dial-up access, today hundreds of Internet Service Providers offer high-speed (where high is 100 Mbps) Internet access.

When we talk about the successful ways to deal with the Internet problems (and they are not really the internet "governance" issue), the easiest thing to do is to take a look at the successful models. Only when we solved the problems, only then we started the discussions around the Internet governance. That allowed Bulgaria to be on the cutting edge of policy making, with lots of experience to share. And it's not by an accident, that we have been piloting projects in South Eastern Europe on policy making, and other countries follow our example.

Perhaps some of the statements of the government of Bulgaria during the WSIS PrepComs would be a good starting point for the readers. Here's one, but there are more on line: <http://www.wgig.org/docs/Bulgaria.doc>

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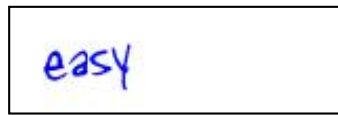
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