
ICANN82 | CF – GAC Capacity Development Session (1 of 3)
Saturday, March 08, 2025 – 9:00 to 10:00 PST

GULTEN TEPE

Hello and welcome to the ICANN82 GAC Capacity Development Session with the GACTLD group on Saturday, 8th of March, at 17:00 UTC. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and The ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. During this session, questions or comments submitted in the chat will be read aloud if put in the proper form.

Please remember to state your name and the language you will speak in case you will be speaking a language other than English. Please speak clearly and at a reasonable pace to allow for accurate interpretation and make sure to mute all other devices when you are speaking. You may access all available features for this session in the Zoom toolbar. With that, I will leave the floor to GAC Chair, Nicolas Caballero. Over to you, Nico.

NICOLAS CABALLERO

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here. Welcome to this first Capacity Building Session. As you will see in a little while, the idea is to make it engaging, to encourage participation, to make it an active session and to make it interesting mainly for you as participants. Unfortunately, I won't be able to stay here because,

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as you may know, the GAC Chair is also a Board member and I still don't understand these overlapping agendas and everything, but I have to be with the Board. I wish I could stay here for the whole morning with you, but I have to be there.

There are some innovations we're trying to apply here today, starting, we've been talking with a fantastic team. We have Karel, Tracy, and the whole Underserved Regions Working Group in order to make as I said before, these sessions more engaging, more active, and more meaningful to you mainly, because with the Next Round of New gTLDs and everything that comes with that package, I mean, there's a lot to unpack there. There are many nuances, many details, and many apparently complicated things, which in the end are not that complicated.

So, Karel and Tracy were going to be walking us through those nuances, as I said before, in a very engaging way. So, without further ado, let me welcome you again. We'll be kicking off, we'll get together again at 13:15 for the plenary, for the GAC plenary, and so I'll stay with you from that point on till the end of the sessions. So welcome, everyone, again, and without further ado, let me give the floor to my esteemed colleague, Karel Douglas from Trinidad and Tobago. Over to you.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Thank you. Thank you, Nico, and good morning, or good evening, or good afternoon, depending on if you're joining us online to today's session, and thank you, Nico, for those important words. Yes, the Underserved Regions Working Group is trying very hard to

make sure that we all understand the new issues that we are dealing with, and in this case, the New gTLD program. It's very important, and the Working Group decided that this program is going to be aimed at making sure that people are familiar with what is taking place currently.

So, without much further ado, and I know Tracy is here. I don't know if he's going to add a few words. He'll come on later. We do have two sessions this morning. One now and one at 10:30, in which case we will be discussing more about the New gTLD program, but at this point, I want to introduce the GeoTLD group, who will introduce themselves because I'm not good with their names, so I apologize for that, but they'll be taking us through the GeoTLD program, and of course, by all means, we'd love for you, if you could interact, ask questions, feel free to ask, ponder, and wonder. So, over to you. Thank you so much.

JOSU WALINO

Thank you. Thank you, Karel. Good morning, everyone, and thank you to the GAC for having us here. I will do the introductions. I know the names, so I will start saying that our chair, Nacho Amadoz, is not here. He couldn't make it for this time, so I'm here as vice chair of the GeoTLD group. My name is Josu Walino, representing .EUS, the TLD for the Basque community. On my left, Ronald. I can't even pronounce his name, but Ronald. He will say that.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

Schwärzler.

JOSU WALINO

Yeah. Treasurer of the group, and representing .Wien, the TLD from Wien, and Benjamin Louis from .Alsace as well. So, our agenda for today, the idea we have is just to do a quick introduction of the group to all of you to understand what the GeoTLD group does, what is our meaning, and where we are focused.

We will do it very quickly, and then we intend to have not a formal presentation. If we can try to have a talk between us and chat about what is GeoTLD, the different models we have. We want to present you some interesting events that are going to happen during the year, and have, of course, open questions and answers from your side that we will want to have during the session. Please jump in at any moment with any question, any comment. Whatever you have, so we can have an open session and talk among all of us.

So, that said, please, next slide. I will start with the introduction. Next one, please. You can see the GeoTLD group, we are a not-for-profit association where we are working together, different registries, different companies that are working in the management of our geographic, community TLDs around the world. We represent cities, regions, communities with defending local identities, digital identities on the internet.

Our members are private companies, not-for-profit associations, institutions, public administration, you can find different kinds of members among our membership. Our goal is to foster the representation of the regions of the cities of the world on the internet and have an internet more focused on the presence of our local digital identities. We will show you a short video presenting what the GeoTLD group is. Please, if you can play the video.

Okay, this was very short, nothing to worry about, but it's a very quick view to understand what a GeoTLD is. There are some key elements there, there's identity, there is visibility, security, there are key elements that we think that are part of our core values for the GeoTLDs.

Next slide, please. So, as we said in the video, we are right now, we are like 69, not this one. Back to the presentation. Yeah, we are 69 GeoTLDs right now online.

Out of these 69, most of them are part of the GeoTLD group. We have cities like .Paris, .London, .Berlin, or .Amsterdam, we have regions, .Alsace represents one of the regions, or .Africa, or we have communities, communities like .EUS itself, it's a community, or .CAT, which is the Catalan speaking community. We have members and we have observers as well that are entities related with the GeoTLDs that have a relationship with us. But next slide, you can see in the map here that at the end of the day you have GeoTLDs all around the world.

As it was said at the beginning, now we are facing a new round for New TLDs. We expect that the Next Round coming in a couple of

years will foster the presence of New GeoTLDs. We think that probably in a couple of years we will have new applications presenting new GeoTLD projects impacting in this map. So, our main goal here today is to give you a message that the GeoTLD group is here to help you in any case if you need any support with all the new projects, the new applications for New GeoTLDs in the future.

So, just to finish my introduction and then give the room to my colleagues to present more precisely what GeoTLDs are and the meaning we have. Yes, why is this important to the GAC? Well, as I said before, the GeoTLDs are very, very related with public administration, with government, regional governments, municipalities. We have a very close relationship. Many of the GeoTLDs in fact are managed by public administration.

We manage an asset, a digital asset that represents our city, our community, our region, so this is important to take care of it. We have a strong tie with the ICANN community, as you can see, and as said before, what is important for us related to you is that we see that any of you can be consulted in the future related to the New Round relating to GeoTLDs, so we are here to help if you need our help at any moment. That said, let's go for the next slide, please, and start talking about GeoTLDs more precisely.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

So, this is Ronald Schwärzler. Next slide, please. So, in principle, there is a very clear definition made by ICANN in the 2012 Application Guidebook what a GeoTLD is supposed to be. If you

clicked the question number, I think it was 21, said I'm a GeoTLD, you would be considered a GeoTLD. It turned out later that this definition is, I would say, too narrow. .London, it's obvious. .Hamburg, .Berlin, obvious. These are well-known names all over the world, but what about NYC? NYC is not in the official list of city names hosted by the ISO. I think it's 3166 document that exactly defines which names are protected and therefore can be somehow applied for as a GeoTLD.

The geographic names panel decided that NYC is a term that is known all over the world and allowed them to be somehow be a GeoTLD. What about .Swiss, for example? .Swiss officially is not a GeoTLD. Everyone would say Swiss is Switzerland. It's clear that no one else should be allowed to run a TLD under .Swiss. I think you all know Airline Swiss. They really applied in the last round, so it was, I don't know how hard the fight was for the Swiss government, but at least if they had not been in the application round in 2012, probably .Swiss would have gone to the brand belonging to the Lufthansa Group and Swiss would be the airline and not the GeoTLD representation of a TLD.

So, it's very important to be in the next application round and now think of a region, of a city, of a federal state in your country. I'm coming from Vienna. I manage the TLD of the Austrian capital. So, I'm more familiar with cities in Europe than anywhere else, but suppose .Frankfurt would like to apply for, or .Munich would like to apply for a TLD. It could happen that they would ask their GAC representative, how do we apply for and what are the protections about to be somehow safe against some other brand names,

because city names are often also taken as brands. So, there is a probability that the city does not automatically get its desired domain name and you could, you as a GAC member, GAC representative of your country, could be asked.

In case you know everything, please feel free to answer the questions to the region, to the city, to the federal state. If you feel somehow there are experts out there, please redirect them to us, to the GeoTLD Group. We are a not-for-profit organization. We know how to help, how to address a consultant within the region that could probably best fit the needs of your city, of your region, and in very rare cases the entities coming to you and want to apply for a TLD, a GeoTLD, will be the state authorities. It will be the cities, it will be the regions, the federal states or whatever.

Next slide, please. This is the naming out of the 2012 round, giving some hint. City names are not universally protected, so if you want to be sure about, or you cannot be sure, but if you want to be somehow on the safe side, you have to prepare very carefully. There is, I think, at least no possibility for the GAC to block a name despite the capital city of a country. This is a very clear thing. The capital city is protected. Any other could be problematic. So now it is what I gave you before, the 3166-2 is the standard defining which names are at least on the list and are capable of being applied for as a GeoTLD.

Next slide, we've already talked about that. So, the applicants, your cities, your regions out of your country are encouraged to begin as soon as possible with discussing possible applications. We

are at about 12 months, 13 months before the next application. This is a very, very short time, even for a brand, even for a private company, and I think public administrations probably really suffer, or it's a very short time for them, for 12 or 13 months to come to a decision, to spend the money on an application, to go for an application, to find the correct consultants that help them to get to know what they need to do to prepare application papers, etcetera. So yeah, encouraged to be as soon as possible, but it's already relatively late, to be honest, but not too late. You can do it within half a year also.

Next slide, please. So, then we as the GeoTLD group, we were founded back in 2016 and we very, very soon discovered that this exact definition by ICANN, either you are on this list, 3166 GEO, or you're not on this list and you're not a GEO, is too narrow, is too sharp, and so the GeoTLD group had its own, I think it's a better definition, and it covers the ICANN thing for sure, geographic names Berlin, Barcelona, Africa.

It covers geographic identifiers like NYC, New York City, FRL, Friesland, BZH for the Brittany, or names of graphical region like .Irish, .EUS for the Basque country, .Swiss. I think no one in here would deny that Irish or Scot or Swiss is a valid member of a GeoTLD group, despite the fact that under ICANN premises it would not be. So, I think this is the more inclusive definition of GeoTLD, and this is what we especially envision or treat as GeoTLDs, and whatever is coming, if it should be necessary to enhance that, we

are happily willing to do this, but I think we cover quite the needs for GeoTLD definitions.

JOSU WALINO

Okay, yeah, okay. Just to show you different examples of GeoTLDs, we were already giving ideas, but the three of us are representing three different GeoTLDs and very different models. For example, in my case, I'm managing, as I said before, .EUS, which is a community TLD, and representing a linguistic and cultural community online. If you go looking for the geographical region of the Basque country, representing the local community, the linguistic community, in an administrative way, it's represented by three different administrations and two different countries, two administrations in Spain, the autonomous community and Navarre, the second one, and then you have the Basque country in France.

So from a geographic perspective, we are wider than the administrative point of view. Anyway, 90% of their domain name is in the Basque country, and 90% of their registrations are done within the same exact region, so we are obviously quite geographic, even if we are represented by a wider community. In our case, for example, we are managed by a non-for-profit foundation. We have a relationship with the administration, we have a very good relationship, but we are not managed by the government. It's a non-for-profit focused community. Do you want to present yours?

BENJAMIN LOUIS

Good morning. My name is Benjamin Louis, and I am CEO of a small company based in Strasbourg, Alsace, called Sparkling. So, I manage the TLD .Alsace, and the story of .Alsace is quite complicated, because when we launched in 2015, the French government decided to merge the region Alsace with two other French regions, the famous Champagne-Ardenne and Lorraine, to build a big one called Grand Est. So, the launch has been quite difficult, but we launched it and we are still managing .Alsace.

It works well, and we have a different model. We first decided to manage the TLD across the region, but three or four years after, I decided to create a company, and the region launched a public market, and my company got the market. So, now it's still the region Grand Est who is the registry, the owner of .Alsace. And my company, and I'm a really small company, I'm not a large company that, as you can see most of the time in this industry, I'm a single guy company, and I manage .Alsace.

What you have to understand is that I don't manage everything on the TLD, okay? I cannot manage all the technical side of the TLD. This part is managed by AFNIC. AFNIC is the .FR association, and with the back-end registry for all the four French GeoTLDs, .Corsica, .BZH, .Paris, and .Alsace.

So, I am a small company. It's not always easy to manage everything because we have lots, lots of topics, but it works, and the other models in France are different. In Brittany, it's an association launched by the public authority, who is the owner of .BZH. In Paris, it's the city of Paris who is the owner of .Paris, but

the TLD is managed by AFNIC, and in Corsica, it's fully managed by the public authority. So, you can find lots of different models across Europe and the world, and just one last point about what Josu said earlier.

You could be contacted by local public authorities in your country. Another point is that you could be contacted by local geographical indications, because for us, what we think is that for those kind of IGs, the Next Round will be a real key point to protect them, and to have a tool, a very good tool, a TLD is a good tool to protect and to manage and to explain to customers all over the world, for example, I don't know, .Prosecco in Italy, that if you come on a .Prosecco domain name, URL, you can buy a bottle, or it will be a Prosecco producer, okay, because you can manage, if you're the registry, you can sell or give domain name to who you want, so to your members, if you're an IG. So that was, I think, a key point for all GeoTLD groups.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

So, if I can give you an example that is quite unique within our group, it's .Stockholm. You all know the Swedish capital. They are not selling domain names. They use the .Stockholm for the public administration, for doing communication, to do reliable communication to the inhabitants of Stockholm. Other than, for example, in Vienna, I run a private-owned company. I'm selling domain names and have some domain names reserved for the city, but in principle, anyone can have a domain name ending in .Wien.

In .Stockholm, if you receive an email ending in .Stockholm, you can be absolutely sure that it is coming from the public administration. If you go to a website showing .Stockholm at the end, it is for sure a website hosted by the city of Stockholm. This is an expensive thing. It costs the city of Stockholm quite a bit of money, but obviously, it is worse to them being in a secure, stable, trusted space.

The city of Vienna is not paying a single euro for the .Wien top-level domain. It's the risk of the privately-owned company to run .Wien in a way that the city of Vienna is somehow happy with. So, there are flavors within our group. Publicly, privately-owned or run publicly, .Stockholm is the most unique example that we have. Like a .Brand, like .Microsoft, .Google, .whatever, they have the control of the domain names of any domain names, but the downside is no input, no money coming in to finance that.

We are talking about, I'm sure you've heard it for the Next Round, about a quarter million of US dollars only for the application, \$227, and the yearly costs, depending if you have personal available or not, is up to \$80-\$100,000 a year. So, it is not just a hobby, at least cost-wise. Okay, next slide, please.

Again, the message, in case you have public administrations, touristically indicators, whatever you have, contacting you for the Next Round or existing TLDs, asking you something about a TLD, not the ccTLD of your country, but the geoTLDs of your country, we are here to help you. Don't hesitate to contact one of our group or

the group under office @geotld.group. We are here to help. Next slide, please.

JOSU WALINO

So that said, we already talked about the geoTLD models, but we're going a bit, this slide is a bit of a short presentation of everything that was already said. You have two different options talking about the GeoTLD models. One is the open model, as Ronald was saying, any of our TLDs, Berlin, Wien, .EUS, .Alsace, are freely available domain names in the market. There are some that are more restricted, that some criteria must be fulfilled to be part of the community.

So, for example, if you want to register a TLD, that's, as I said wrongly before, .EUS is a semi-restricted domain name, for example, a TLD, sorry. In our case, to register a .EUS domain name, you must be part of the community, because it's a community TLD, so what we are asking in our case, for example, is that the website has some content in Basque or it's related to the Basque community.

So these are semi-restricted TLD. And looking into the different kind of business models we have, one, the most common, the usual model is the one selling domain names. That's what most of us do. At the end of the day, this is not a cheap market. We need to have some revenue, so we sell domains openly in the market. But there is another option, the model that Ronald was referring to,

Stockholm, for example, the city of Stockholm, they say that they are not going to sell the domain names, they will be only available for the city use, and this is a way to create a digital administration, reliable, secure, and that it's of trust of their users. So, there are two different ways to do that.

Organizational-wise, looking to organizations, we already talked about three different ways to do that. Private business, there can be a private company, .Wien or .Alsace, they are private companies running a TLD, managing a TLD, and selling the domains in the market. There is another one, the public-private partnership, .Paris, .London, or .Amsterdam, some of them are directly managed by the city administration, some of them are under controlled management, but there is an implication of the city administration as well.

There are others, usually related to digital communities, this is our case, for example, .EUS or .CAT, that are not-for-profit companies, our aim is to foster the presence of the languages of the community, so this is another aim behind the management of the TLD. So, you can see that you have different models, you have different business models as well, and I expect that for the new round, it will happen again.

We will have different kinds of new TLDs, we will have new applications, some of them coming from the public administration, some of them coming from private companies working together with administration, so we are open to all of them.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

So, if you read this, say you can refinance your costs by selling domain names, please be aware, GeoTLDs are not the very small, but the small part of the internet TLDs. Most of our members are somehow around 10,000 to 15,000 domain names. It's not the ccTLD again. Germany, for example, has up to 16-17 million domain names ending in .De. .Cologne has 19,000 domain names ending in .Cologne or .Colgne.

So, if you want to refinance that, you have to multiply it with the amount of you charge per domain name, so you end up in the low hundred thousands of revenue that you get in. And if you have a smaller city within your probably underserved region, don't take the message that you can refund your TLD by just selling domain names. It could be not the case.

There are ways to run it very efficiently at low cost, but it's not a no-brainer to run the TLD. So, if you get contacted by regions, by city, etcetera, tell them to very, very clearly investigate the potential of how many domain names could be sold, at what price to the inhabitants, because .vn, .Cologne, .berlin, .london domain names are not bought worldwide, they are bought locally. And most of the domain name owners already have a .at in the case of Austria, have a .de in the case of Germany, have a .es in the case of Spain.

So, somehow the new TLDs for city regions are competitors to the ccTLD of their country. Competitor, not idea-wise or not strategy-

wise, but money-wise of the customers. Just to let you know that.
Next slide, please.

JOSU WALINO

Okay. That said, some upcoming events that may be helpful for all of you. Our idea is to continue trying to do some outreach through the ICANN meetings. We expect in Prague to have a round table with different GeoTLD operators of your interest. In Oman, we intend to present a new project that we are developing within the ICANN Grant Programme related to SEO of the GeoTLDs. We want to focus on the SEO of the GeoTLDs and look at it. And something interesting related to the cities, the smart city expo event will be in Barcelona this November, and we are planning together with ICANN to do a side event about the Next Round on GeoTLDs. So, you are all invited to come.

KAREL DOUGLAS

We are open to any questions if you have. Sure. I mean, that was amazing. I just want to thank some of the presentations. To me, hit the nail on the head when it comes to issues for the GAC where members may want to take this information back to their respective countries or observers and say, well, listen, this is an option. We could do something that is a little different or countries or the members and communities could do something different. So, it's not a ccTLD, but some sort of an option. But we may have questions.

So, let me just open the floor. If there's anybody who has a question, please, by all means. Is that Marco from Netherlands? Marco from the Netherlands. Thank you.

MARCO HOGEWONING

You have a really good task, Karel. I was still looking to find my flag. Apologies for not being in the Zoom room at the moment. Yes. Thank you. This was a really good presentation with an overview. Many questions come to mind, but I would like to highlight one particular one, and that's the example of Stockholm, you guys, who have taken a very exclusive attitude.

Now, I can understand, and then you already just mentioned sort of the viability of business cases and the costs. So, I wonder what is your feeling in terms of scalability? Stockholm, obviously, is a large city, can probably afford it. But I mean, what for other, like smaller Swedish cities, Malmö, for instance, would it be a real consideration to take a same approach or?

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

Ronald Schwärzler. I gave the information about Stockholm. I'm not absolutely familiar with the numbers that Stockholm has, but I also run a consulting company, like many or some of our members do. And let me give you an example of .spa. You know .spa, Belgium city, but the term spa is also well known for wellness, etc. And there were two applications for .spa in the 2012 round, and the two applicants agreed that one part is for the city, and the other part is for the wellness environment, let me call it that way.

And I'm sure that the agreement, I have no proof for that, but I assume that the agreement covers somehow .spa, the city of Spa did not try to somehow hinder .spa, the beauty and health industry, and they got somehow covered the costs. So, Malmö, I don't know whether there is a brand or an industry called Malmö, but let me give you just a rough number. It's about €100,000 a year. If you think of marketing costs for incoming tourism, let me take Kitzbühel. You all probably know the Austrian city famous for tourism, winter tourism, skiing, etcetera.

If they would have to spend €100,000 out of their marketing budget to attract North European or Dutch or Germans to come for skiing and summer tourism, it is very little costs compared to what they spend for incoming tourism. If you have a very little city that is just having no tourism, no other spendings, you probably must approach this from the security and IT strategy point of view.

With a top-level domain that you own, you can, for example, force that DNSSEC is used on any domain name that is issued. It adds additional security. So, is €100,000 for additional security for a city council, city administration, is this a lot of money or is it worth it because you have somehow more control over the domain names? Less likely you get an attack or something like this. I can't judge.

This is up to the city administration, to the treasurer of the city administration probably. I think it's at least worth considering. The usual model is to try to refinance at least part of the costs by selling domain names to four-star hotels, to somehow promote the best enterprises in your city, in your region, to get sponsored by the

larger entities in your region to refund costs because just spending 100,000 at about per year for a top-level domain is, in times like these, it's very hard to justify for the public administrations, I think.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Thank you, Ronald. We have Argentina, then Colombia, Thiago, and I did see Nigel Hickson, UK, so we can do that order. Argentina?

MARINA FLEGO EIRAS

Thank you very much. Well, my name is Marina Flego Eiras. I'm the alternate representative of Argentina at the GAC and I would like to thank you for this informative and interesting session. I have two questions as regards one of the points that was brought up.

The first one is that you mentioned that, as of this date, there are 69 GeoTLDs. So, is there any list that is available for GAC members and for the public in general to see which ones are the ones that are registered? And the other question, it's related to this point that was mentioned about that GAC members should be aware of the GeoTLDs that are registered, related to their public administrations, but thinking more generally and thinking about the Next Round of GeoTLDs.

I was wondering if there is an application for a region whose legal status is disputed because there are more than one national administration, like a sovereignty dispute, to put it simply. Is there a GAC call or something, I mean the applicant has to notify or do any legal process to put all the national administrations in notice of that application or the GAC representative should be proactive

and be always on the lookout for any new possible application. I don't know if that was understood. Thank you.

JOSU WALINO

Okay, we are sharing questions. Answering your first question, is there any list? Okay, there are more than one list. As we said before, there is the official GeoTLD definition by ICANN. So, in the ICANN website you can find which applications or which New TLDs in the last round were defined as geos or as communities. If you go to our website, GeoTLD. group, you have a full list of GeoTLDs based on our definition, including a broader community and geographical identities there. So, you have both options there.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

Concerning the dispute resolution, as you have Chris Mondini here from ICANN, we have others from ICANN also, but especially Argentina was one of the examples that caused, let me say, discussions in the last round, the Patagonia case, the .Amazon case, etc. In case it's an official territory name or a federal state name that is on the list, this 3166, you need the support letter or the letter of no objection from the government. If there are two governments or probably others, it is very unclear whether you have to have all or just one support letter.

We had the same situation, for example, in Salzburg, federal state and city of Salzburg, or South Tyrol belonging to Italy, North Tyrol to Austria, or the .EUS belonging partly to Spain, partly to France. We solved it the easy way. We just talked to one government to

make it not very complicated, but this could cause problems in case the other side of the border would also like to be in the game or in the discussions. So, if you have the knowledge that there is another application coming and it could cause problems, keep them informed as much as possible and direct them to ICANN, to us. We would like to help that before disputes arise. Chris, I saw your hand.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Chris has to make it fast, though.

CHRIS MONDINI

Hi, I'm sorry to jump in. I'm Chris Mondini from ICANN Org, and as you described, the Applicant Guidebook for which there's currently language on this issue also has the current guidance, and I would take you up on the offer to be proactive and monitor, but all of the protections and the rules regarding territories, even those that may have more than one claim to them, are in the Applicant Guidebook.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Thank you, Chris. We do have Columbia, then UK, and then the Swiss government, and I did see a hand in the back, so very quickly.

THIAGO DAL TOE

Thank you so much. Thiago Dal Toe for Columbia for the Record. Great presentation, really interesting, and two-part question as well. So, you mentioned about a letter from a government official, and first of all, on the map that you presented, we clearly can see

that Latin America is not represented in there, so hopefully there may be a space for this new round.

But when you talk about communication from government officials, who could be these government officials? Is it the GAC rep? Is it the institution where the GAC reps come from? And understanding that maybe in our countries, there may be constant changes into authorities, so when we do have this sort of communication, how does it stand throughout the time, right? That's one part of the question.

The second is, I think the delegations for this gTLDs, these are for 10 years, right? Are they coming into a renewal, and have you been seeing any issues related to it? And apologies, but a third-part question is, how does it work in search engine optimization on your day-to-day work? Is it easily show up in queries and searches? Because truthfully, I haven't seen much of the gTLDs online, and would like to know a little bit more. Thank you so much.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

Okay, the first question is quite easy. These are the points, are the members of the group. There is one application from South America, which is .Rio, which is not a member of the group, so there should be at least a yellow or something, a point. But it is underserved, for clear. South America is a close-to-empty spot. .Rio, I don't know whether they are some hundred domain names at the most.

The second thing, who is eligible for giving the support letter? For our case in Vienna, we had to go to the city administration. The city administration decided who has to deal with the top-level domain. It was the section 53 public communication, etcetera, and they were signing a letter of support that they are fine with our private company running. It's not the national level. It's not the GAC representative, unless you're also a city representative. It's the regional. In the case of Tyrell, the federal chancellor of the federal state had to sign this thing. If it's a city, the mayor or some of his deputies or organization has to sign.

CEO is a very good example. You saw it, that we will be presenting in Oman, Muscat, to you, at least we plan to, the results or the ongoing studies that are funded under ICANN's Grant Program that should prove and will hopefully prove that search engine optimization is really working for GeoTLDs. We did a small study already for .CAT, Catalonia in Spain, and someone asking, within the Catalonian region for a website that was in Catalonia, it was better ranked on global Google than the equal domain name in .com or DS. And it's a very, very high-class study. It will just start the next days, funded under the ICANN Grant Program.

It will last for one or two years, and I hope it will for sure prove that it's not performing worse. We have these indications from .Stockholm also. .Stockholm is ranking better than Stockholm.se, is what the person in charge told us. But we will have a general, hopefully general proof that it is not performing worse, at least. So,

it's no risk or it's not absolute risk to, say, leave your city's name and change to a new one.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Thank you. That's important, yeah.

JOSU WALINO

Just about search engines. At the beginning in 2012, Google said that they will treat all the new TLDs as .com is treated. Okay. So, Google can say that. Usually in the SEO industry, lots of guys have to check if it's real. And what we saw is that clearly it was the same geos and other generic TLDs from 2012 were treated at the same level as .com. And in 2016 or 17, Matt Cutts, who was the leader of the search engine, the public leader of search engine at Google, in a webmaster blog said that maybe Google could treat differently the geos because we can see that the string is the name of a city or a region.

And in Alsace, we made two studies in 2016 and 2017, and we saw that when you search whatever keywords with the name Alsace, the results were not the same. Okay. .Alsace websites were best ranked, but we have to be clear. The domain name is a very small part of the performance of a website. If your website got very good content and is very well optimized, it can work very well with a geoTLD. If the website is not good, whatever the domain names, it won't work.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Thank you. Thank you. I know we have a few minutes left, and I don't want to miss any important questions, and certainly this conversation could go on for a while. So, Nigel Hickson from UK government, Jorge Cancio from the Swiss government, and there was another question, a gentleman in the back. So, Nigel?

NIGEL HICKSON

Yes, thank you very much. Good morning, Nigel Hickson from the UK government, and it's nice to hear you, and I've been dealing on and off with Geo names for quite a while, and I get quite excited by them in the sense that I think they really do identify a city or a town. I think it's great to see a bus go past with an advert on the side of it that says .Vienna or .Berlin or .London. It's really inspiring, and seeing local shops, local establishments with that domain name and the city I think is a really cohesive and positive move.

The question more is the difficulty of contention here, and I just wondered, I mean obviously I assume that your group has been following the policy development process for the Next Round and the IRT process, the implementation phase, and so if a name is applied for which is on the ICANN list, then the letter has to be triggered and all the rest of it, as you carefully explained.

Now, if the same name is applied for by someone else, but sorry, if a name is applied for, that's not on the ICANN list, that's a Geoname, but it doesn't appear, well it's a Geoname in your view, but it doesn't appear on the list, then obviously others could apply

for it as well because you don't need the letter, and there could be contention. How do you advise your members on that?

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

So, I'm not ICANN policy, but I'm confronted with these questions by cities and regions. Let's say it's the third question. The first is how much, the second is when, and the third is what if someone else is applying for my domain name. If it's a capital city, it's a no-brainer, you have to have the support of the city administration.

If it's a name on the list and the applicant says that it is treating or planning to use it in connection with the city name or the regionalist, also has to be a support letter. But for example, take the name Munich, city in Germany, officially called München, not Munich, it's the English name, and there is a brand, Sport Shoes in Spain, under the brand.

Our boss colleague is wearing them. If they also apply for Munich as a brand TLD, there will be a normal, as far as I know, a normal contention set then, which in the end could lead up to an auction, which the public administration, in my point of view, will lose, because a public administration must not use tax money for winning an auction. So, it's my feeling. I'm sure there is some ICANN deeper knowledge on that, but this is the latest info that I got.

No protection for a city name or for a brand name that is equal to a city name and is not being defined as intentionally to be used in the

connection with the city. So, that's a problem for the cities or the, let me say, governmental representations.

KAREL DOUGLAS Yeah, thank you.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER I don't know whether a GAC representative could issue a veto or no. I'm not familiar with these processes.

KAREL DOUGLAS Well, we have very little time.

DIRK KRISCHENOWSKI I know it's a short addition to this, by .Berlin. We had in the last round, we had over 12 names for geographic indications, which should have a support letter that applied as a brand. Examples are Java, Lancaster, Norton, and others. They applied for a brand, and they got their brand, although they are geographic names. And there was no decision by the geographic names panel or so to ask for a support letter or something like this.

KAREL DOUGLAS Thank you. Swiss Government?

JORGE CANCIO Thank you, Karel. Jorge Cancio, Swiss Government, for the record. Very quickly, because we are finishing. First, I wanted to thank you

for the presentation. I think it's a very important topic to the GAC. It's important for fellow GAC members to be cognizant that the policy rules are already set. So, there are some details being discussed still in the IRT, but the policy was discussed many years ago during the SubPro process. So, that's important to keep in mind.

There are many details to the rules. I think it's worthwhile looking into them. And it's also a very important subject because it has a strong connection with the identity of our communities, be it local, national, regional, or even transnational. So, just wanted to mention that, and also mention that, at the same time, many of these GeoTLDs, our success stories, are very important.

We are running the .Swiss, and it was an agreement. It was a conversation with the company. We didn't have to fight. It's a very Swiss tradition. You get together, you talk it out, and you find the best solution. And I just wanted to ask you, if there's time, what can you offer or how can your group be of help to GAC members who might enter, be in such a situation where they may need to find a solution? Maybe they can learn also from your experiences, right? Thank you.

KAREL DOUGLAS

I think that's one minute or less.

JOSU WALINO

Okay, very quickly. I can imagine that there might be different situations. We can help in the different situations, giving advice,

giving contacts in case you need a consulting service, you need different companies, or counting on us from our experience, from our knowledge about the management of the GeoTLDs, or our knowledge based on our previous experience in the previous application round, so we can give advice, we can help you solving that. I can't imagine the different situations that we can have there, but just come to us and let's talk.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

Just very briefly. It's relatively unique to the GeoTLD group. The members are not competitors to each other, so someone who buys a .London domain name is very unlikely to buy a .Wien domain name. This is why our group is working together. We are sharing experience, marketing experience. This did work, this did not work. I can't imagine that .com working together with .shop or .online because they are competitors. Just examples, I don't say that, but we as the GeoTLD group, we are really working together. We have yearly, quarterly, quarter yearly meetings, exchanging our experiences, giving advice to each other, and if needed, very, very, very likely to help GAC members also.

KAREL DOUGLAS

I want to bear; do you have another question or are you okay? Yes, you're okay. So, you have a question. Very briefly, I know it's very important at this point in time, these issues, so I suspect we will benefit from the question, so let's see what you have to ask.

TORSTEN KRAUSE

Thank you very much. My name is Torsten Krause. I'm working for the Digital Opportunities Foundation in Germany and would like to ask a question and raise the awareness of the GAC regarding the abuse of such GeoTLDs when it comes to child sexual abuse. I'm aware that CSA is not a part of terms of DNS Abuse of ICANN yet, but it will have negative impact of the GeoTLDs. For example, someone's running the domain name, nakedteens.seattle. Maybe this impact will not touch on the company behind it, but on the authority of Seattle. So, are there measures in place to protect such cases?

JOSU WALINO

Okay, we don't have time for that, I know, but I will be very quick on this. I will try to be very quick. GeoTLDs are among the safest TLDs. Yeah, I can assure that. We are in close relationship with the NetBeacon Institute, with the Global Cyber Alliance, with different authorities. I will talk from ourselves. .EUS, for example, you were related to child abuse. For example, in our case, we have an agreement with the Internet Watch Foundation. With this agreement, we are taking care of any case of child or sexual exploitation, these kinds of things. We have a monitoring system running daily through all our .EUS, all our zone, so we are checking if there is malware, spam, whatever, but this monitoring system is also connected to the Internet Watch Foundation tool, so we are also checking if there is any kind of sexual harassment or these kinds of situations.

Also, brand protection tools and so on, so on. I will for sure say, I can give you later on, I have a leaflet on that. We have DNS Abuse and we are very, very concerned about that because, as said before, we are representing public administrations, public entities, and we are very, very concerned about the quality and the security and the safety of our TLDs and our communities, so this is a very important part of our work. Thank you.

RONALD SCHWÄRZLER

It's, on my case, it's on the guideline of the public authority. When we built .Alsace, they asked me to build, in a way, an Internet of Trust with the lowest rate of abuses, so I never had such a topic with a sexual problem on my TLDs because I have a very, very, very low rate of abuses. It's zero percent, but if I have a case like this, I will shut the domain immediately, immediately, because that's what the public authority asked me, to build something trustful and without abuses because they want to build something that looks like Alsace in reality, so we are working on this way.

KAREL DOUGLAS

Thank you, thank you, thank you, and the questions are brilliant questions, and thank you for your questions. Thank you, participants, for bearing with us. I think we all agree that this was a fantastic presentation, so please put your hands together for the GeoTLD group, and you can now have your tea break, and please come back at 10:30, where we do continue with the new gTLD program. Thank you so much.

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