

BRG Comments on Charter Amendments of the GNSO gTLD Registries Stakeholder Group

Date: March 2016

Deadline: 4 April 2016

Executive Summary

The Brand Registry Group (BRG) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Charter amendments of the GNSO gTLD Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG).

The BRG, having been an active participant of the RySG Evolution Working Group, supports the proposed Charter amendments which will help to manage the RySG's growing membership and the diversity of views this may bring. In particular, the BRG welcomes the introduction of the Association Membership, which will support broader engagement but in an orderly and scalable form.

The proposed changes to voting are also viewed as a positive step forward but the BRG recommends this is reviewed in a reasonable time frame, to ensure that member vote allocations and voting process work effectively in practice and fairly for all RySG members.

The BRG encourages the ICANN Board to approve the proposed changes to the Charter and recommends a timely review of the revised voting allocation and process.

BRG Comments

The Brand Registry Group (BRG) is keen to be a part of ICANN's future policy-development framework with voting powers commensurate with its representative capacity. We seek to contribute manpower and thought-leadership on behalf of Brand TLD registries to the ICANN policy-development process. This contribution includes the ability to participate in the GNSO.

Following the high demand for new gTLD applications in the 2012 round, the RySG has witnessed an influx of new and diverse members. It is, therefore, important that the RySG is able to adapt to accommodate these new members and be able to represent the views of this broadening membership effectively.

The BRG was actively engaged with the RySG Evolution WG to help the RySG identify suitable changes to their Charter that would support broader engagement from the growing community of registries, but in an orderly, inclusive and scalable form.

For Brand TLD registries, which accounted for one third of new gTLD applicants, running a registry is not their primary business. Consequently, whilst they favour representation within the ICANN community to safeguard their interests, it is not always possible to maintain active and direct participation within stakeholder groups or constituencies. For these registry

operators, the option of an Association Membership model offers a more effective channel without the need to devote significant resources. This model already exists in other constituencies but up until now, was unavailable within the RySG.

The BRG has been an advocate for the Association Membership model and it is anticipated that other types of registries, such as GEO TLDs, will also support and benefit from this approach.

The BRG acknowledges that the introduction of new membership criteria has raised significant challenges for the RySG, particularly in relation to voting rights. With the RySG having relatively few members prior to the new gTLD 2012 round, decisions were frequently made through consensus or simple majority voting rather than calling upon the weighted voting mechanism. However, as new RySG members join with very different registry models and more diverse views, the weighted voting mechanism is far more likely to come into play and could disadvantage new entrants, especially where the business objective is not dependent upon significant volumes of second-level domains.

The aspects of voting have been debated at length within the RySG Evolution WG and the wider RySG membership. Based on these discussions, the BRG considers the proposed voting allocations and process to be a reasonable initial approach and supports these changes. However, in view of the increasing diversity introduced to the RySG membership, these new processes will need to be tested and reviewed to ensure that member vote allocations and voting processes work effectively in practice and fairly for all RySG members. For this reason, the BRG recommends a review is undertaken within a reasonable time frame.

About Us

The Brand Registry Group (BRG) is an independent membership organisation of owners of a toplevel domain name that matches their existing brand. The turnover of the respective groups behind these domain names is some \$1300 billion. The BRG is registered by Royal Decree as an international not-for-profit under Belgian law. The group represents the common interests of members and offers selected services paid for from fees