

## **Overview policies, related guidance, and practices relevant for ccTLDs**

Version 3 - October 2025

Approved PGA WG - January 2025

Adopted ccNSO Council - May 2025

Update 1: Adoption Review Mechanism by the Board in June 2025

Update 2: Adoption 2025 Guideline ccNSO Voluntary Financial Contribution ccTLDs to ICANN - October 2025

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	<a href="#">RFC 1591 - March 1994</a> & ICANN Bylaws - Annex C	N/A	June 2003	<a href="#">Guidance ccTLD-ICANN Accountability Framework</a>

## 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	<a href="#">RFC 1591 - March 1994</a>	N/A		<a href="#">Qualifying top-level domain strings</a>
Use of some Exceptionally reserved codes as ccTLD (.eu)	Board resolution	N/A	<a href="#">Board decision 2000 Re EU</a>	<a href="#">Qualifying top-level domain strings</a>
Definition of IDN country codes TLD	<a href="#">IDN Working Group Board Proposal</a>	June 2008	<a href="#">June 2008</a>	<a href="#">Fast Track Implementation Plan (2009), latest version 2019</a>

### *Pending (under development/to be adopted)*

Process	Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
Definition of IDN country codes TLD and their variants	<a href="#">Part A of Board Report ccPDP4</a>	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 of a 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	<a href="#">RFC 1591 - March 1994</a> , FoI 2015		<a href="#">June 2015</a>	<a href="#">Delegating or transferring a country-code top-level domain (ccTLD)</a>
	Transfer	<a href="#">RFC 1591 - March 1994</a> , FoI 2015			<a href="#">Delegating or transferring a country-code top-level domain (ccTLD)</a>
	Caretaker				<a href="#">Caretaker operations for a top-level domain</a>
	Revocation	<a href="#">RFC 1591 - March 1994</a> , FoI 2015			No public facing documentation at this time.

Framework of Interpretation RFC1591	<a href="https://ccnso.icann.org/workinggroups/foi-final-07oct14-en.pdf">https://ccnso.icann.org/workinggroups/foi-final-07oct14-en.pdf</a>	October 2014, <a href="https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_46795/foi-final-resolutions-11feb15-en.pdf">https://ccnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_46795/foi-final-resolutions-11feb15-en.pdf</a>	<a href="#">June 2015</a>	<a href="#">Delegating or transferring a country-code top-level domain (ccTLD)</a>
Retirement Policy	<a href="#">Board Report</a>	September 2021	<a href="#">September 2022</a>	<a href="#">Retirement of a Country-code Top-level Domain (ccTLD)</a>
Clarification Section 3 of the Retirement Policy	<a href="#">Letter Chair of the ccNSO Council to President PTI</a>	ccNSO Council April 9, 2025		

**Pending (under development/to be adopted)**

Process	Document	Adoption ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
Deselection IDNccTLD strings	<a href="#">Board Report ccPDP4, Part A section 12</a>	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	<a href="#">IANA Naming Services Contract section 8.1 (a)</a> This procedure includes escalation to the management team of the PTI and to the Ombudsman.	N/A	October 2016	<a href="https://www.iana.org/help/complaint-procedure">https://www.iana.org/help/complaint-procedure</a>
Mediation procedure direct customer - PTI	<a href="#">IANA Naming Services Contract section 8.1 (c)</a>	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.)	<a href="#">ICANN Bylaw Article 4. 3</a>		October 2016	

ICANN's Reconsideration Process Note: Disputes pertaining to the delegation and redelegation of ccTLDs are excluded ( Section 4. 2 ( d ) i.)	<a href="#">ICANN Bylaw Article 4. 2</a>		October 2016	
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**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.	<a href="#">ICANN Bylaw Article 5</a>		October 2016	<a href="#">Ombudsman Website</a>

***Pending (under development/to be adopted)***

Process	Document	ccNSO	ICANN Board	Implementation
ccNSO Policy Review Mechanism	<a href="#">Board Report ccPDP3 Review Mechanism</a>	June 2023	<a href="#">June 2025</a>	Pending
	<a href="#">Clarification and Interpretation of Policy Review Mechanism</a>	September 2024		
Applicability review mechanism IDNccTLDs	<a href="#">ccPDP4 Board Report, part A section 13</a>	September 2024	Pending	

## 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	<a href="#">Final Report Wildcarding Study Group</a>		N/A	N/A
Advice not to use Emoji's	<a href="#">Final Report Study Group</a>	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	<a href="#">Guideline ccTLD – ICANN Accountability Framework</a>	19 January 2005	Letter ICANN CEO 2005	Overview Agreements ccTLDs- ICANN: <a href="https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/cctlds/cctlds-en">https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/cctlds/cctlds-en</a> <a href="#">Templates: EoL</a> and <a href="#">Template letter ccTLD- to ICANN</a> <a href="#">Template letter ICANN to ccTLD</a> <a href="#">Template Accountability Framework</a>
Guidance ccTLD financial contribution to ICANN	<a href="#">2025 Guideline Voluntary Financial Contribution</a>	20 November 2013	<a href="#">Letter ICANN CEO October 2025</a>	<a href="#">Annual Overview Financial Contributions</a>

**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	<a href="#">ccPDP4 Final Report Report Part B, C1</a>	Adopted by ccNSO Council 07 March 2024	N/A	<a href="https://www.iana.org/help/idn-repository-procedure">https://www.iana.org/help/idn-repository-procedure</a> & <a href="https://www.iana.org/domains/idn-tables">https://www.iana.org/domains/idn-tables</a>
Advice with respect to registrations under the IDNccTLD (variants) under management	<a href="#">ccPDP4 Final Report Part B, C2</a>	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	<a href="#">GAC Principles 2005</a>	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)	<a href="#">Archived</a>		ICP-1 was adopted by the Board in May 1999 Was archived by Board resolution on adoption of Fol: <a href="#">June 2015</a>	Current practices of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) in administering <a href="#">RFC 1591</a>

- 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. Maybe useful to reference it as 'the next step up the chain'.
- See the inclusion of .test in various language/script combinations:  
<https://www.iana.org/reports/2007/testetal-report-01aug2007.html>