

Standing Committee on Continuous Improvement (SCCI) - Policy & Implementation PSR Final Report

Status of This Document

This is the Final Report of the GNSO's Standing Committee on Continuous Improvement (SCCI), providing recommendations following the review of the [Policy & Implementation \(P&I\) Policy Status Report \(PSR\)](#).

Preamble

The objective of this Final Report is to document the SCCI's deliberations on the P&I PSR and communicate the SCCI's final recommendations to the GNSO Council. By adopting this report, the GNSO Council would confirm the final recommendations and implement (or assign the SCCI as its designee) the specific recommendations as outlined in this report.

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1 Executive Summary

The Policy & Implementation (P&I) Working Group (WG) was established as a result of implementation-related issues of the Next Generic Top-Level (gTLD) Program. This WG proposed three new processes, as well as implementation recommendations and principles. In June 2015, the GNSO Council (hereafter “Council”) adopted the [Policy and Implementation Working Group Final Report](#), followed by ICANN Board approval in September 2015. The recommendations resulted in the creation of the following processes:

- The [GNSO Expedited Policy Development Process \(EPDP\)](#)
- The [GNSO Guidance Process \(GGP\)](#)
- The [GNSO Input Process \(GIP\)](#)

The recommendations also resulted in implementation related outputs that are out of scope for this report.

When the Council adopted the Final Report, it committed to reviewing the effectiveness of the new processes no later than five years after their successful implementation. The [Policy & Implementation \(P&I\) Policy Status Report \(PSR\)](#), prepared by ICANN’s Global Domains and Strategy (GDS) function, serves as the review envisioned by the Council. The Standing Committee on Continuous Improvement (SCCI), where its objective is to allow for execution of continuous improvement related projects that are focused on the GNSO’s structural, procedural, and process improvements to the Policy Development Process (PDP), was assigned to review the PSR and consider both the analysis conducted, as well as the potential changes suggested. The SCCI systematically reviewed the analysis and suggested changes for each of the processes - EPDP, GGP, and GIP.

In short, the SCCI determined that the EPDP and GGP are working as intended. The SCCI noted that since the GIP has never been used, it cannot draw conclusions about its effectiveness. For all three mechanisms, the SCCI agreed that they would benefit from educational materials that provide additional clarity on the purpose, differences between them (including the PDP), and guidance to help determine which would be the most appropriate for different use cases.¹

¹ During the deliberations, the SCCI referred to the GNSO Processes Comparison diagram—developed by the GNSO Support Staff—for a better understanding of the processes, which may eventually serve as the basis for the educational materials. The diagram can be found as the last bullet in the “List of Key Documents for Policy & Implementation (P&I) Policy Status Report (PSR) Review” section at this link: <https://icann-community.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/GNSOSCCI/pages/106641096/3.+Background+Documents>

2 Expedited Policy Development Process (EPDP)

The SCCI considered pages 6-12 of the [PSR](#); this section includes an examination of EPDP use to date, observations on effectiveness, and potential issues for further consideration. The EPDP has seen usage several times since its inception, providing for a number of real world instances to consider.

The analysis contained in the PSR indicates that the EPDP does indeed shorten the timeline, though not dramatically. The SCCI agreed that the light impact on the timeline made sense, given that the only procedural difference is removing the need to develop an Issue Report. The SCCI therefore agreed that the EPDP was functioning as anticipated, serving its intended purpose of allowing for policy development where an existing basis for policy work is already available. However, there is potentially a mismatch in expectations, likely stemming from the “Expedited” terminology contained in the EPDP name. The SCCI determined that clarifying expectations around the EPDP, including describing the differences between the various mechanisms (i.e., PDP, GGP, GIP) may help address the disconnect.

Preliminary Recommendation 1: The GNSO Council should develop educational materials to illustrate the differences between the GNSO processes—PDP, EPDP, GGP, and GIP. The materials should concentrate on clarifying the circumstances under which each of the mechanisms is most appropriate. The materials should also provide clarity around the procedural differences among all of the mechanisms, which will help set expectations for the duration of the work when selecting each mechanism.

In implementing Preliminary Recommendation 1, the included **Annex: GNSO Processes Comparison** should be taken into consideration as it may serve as a helpful starting basis.

The SCCI also considered a suggestion to eliminate the requirement to solicit statements from Supporting Organizations (SOs), Advisory Committees (ACs), GNSO Stakeholder Groups (SGs), and Constituencies (Cs) in the early stage of an EPDP. While the SCCI understood the rationale for the suggestion to remove this requirement (e.g., if an EPDP is representative, the SO/AC/SG/Cs already have an avenue to provide input), the SCCI believes that it may be more appropriate to make the solicitation of early input optional, rather than eliminating it entirely, since there may be instances where an EPDP is operating under an open model or it lacks broad representation from the various stakeholders.

Preliminary Recommendation 2: The Council should modify the EPDP Manual to allow for the solicitation of Early Input from the various stakeholder groups to be optional rather than mandatory for all EPDPs.

The SCCI also considered a number of other suggested methods to allow for an EPDP to be more efficient, such as more frequent meetings, extended calls, more frequent face-to-face calls, etc. While the SCCI understands the merits of these working methods, it understands that they exist for any WG where the need is identified; therefore, the SCCI did not see a need to formally address or capture these working methods.

Lastly, the SCCI acknowledged a number of suggestions that are already commonly in practice by the GNSO. These suggestions included ensuring charters are drafted effectively, that impacts to existing Consensus Policies are considered, and that PDP Chairs are made aware of different work practices available. The SCCI believes that these potential elements are already integrated into GNSO activities and that no further actions are required.

3 GNSO Guidance Process (GGP)

The SCCI considered pages 13-16 of the [PSR](#), which is structured in much the same way as the section on the EPDP. In contrast to the EPDP, the GGP has only been utilized once by the Council.

The GGP is more limited in its remit than the PDP or EPDP. The GGP is intended to allow for the Council to provide clarifications or guidance in respect of existing gTLD policy recommendations. In the one instance of usage, the GGP was determined to be effective in providing additional guidance related to the Applicant Support Program.

The issues identified were generally focused on communications issues and misaligned expectations. The SCCI believes that **Preliminary Recommendation 1** will help address these issues and that no separate recommendation is needed to address these communications and expectations issues.

The SCCI considered issues related to the initialization of the GGP, which included misaligned expectations about the scope of work and the timelines necessary to deliver the Final Report. The SCCI agreed that the relatively informal process to initiate a GGP could be made more robust, to better ensure that there is mutual agreement on what a particular GGP is supposed to consider and how long that effort should take.

Preliminary Recommendation 3: The GGP Manual should be modified to require the development and approval of a Charter for the GGP. The structure of the Charter for the GGP may be similar to the Charter for a PDP or EPDP.

4 GNSO Input Process (GIP)

The SCCI considered pages 17-18 of the [PSR](#), which is also structured like the EPDP and GGP sections. However, the GIP has never been used before, making it difficult to analyze its effectiveness. It is unclear why the GIP has never been used before. The SCCI believes that it may be a combination of factors, including a lack of awareness of when a GIP might be appropriate to use, along with the proliferation of Council small teams, which seemingly achieve the same objectives as intended for the GIP. Once again, the SCCI agreed that **Preliminary Recommendation 1** would be helpful in enhancing awareness and understanding of the GIP.

The SCCI did consider whether the GIP may no longer be necessary and could therefore be eliminated. The SCCI agreed that it will be easier to eliminate an already existing mechanism than to bring it back; therefore, as the presence of the mechanism (i.e., GIP) is seemingly causing no harm, it is better to maintain the mechanism and revisit at a later date.

5 Next Steps

The SCCI will present its findings to the GNSO Council for its consideration. If adopted by the Council, the Council may direct the implementation of the recommendations by the SCCI and its GNSO support staff.

6 Annex: GNSO Process Comparison

The SCCI agreed to develop educational materials that provide additional clarity on the purpose, differences, and guidance related to the GNSO processes—PDP, EPDP, GGP, and GIP—to help determine which would be the most appropriate for different use cases.

The comparison diagram below (developed during the deliberations in May 2025) offers a visual overview of the procedural steps per mechanism and highlights the differences among them. The diagram can also be found as the last bullet in the “List of Key Documents for Policy & Implementation (P&I) Policy Status Report (PSR) Review” section at this link:

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