

**IE Domain Registry CLG**

**Policy Advisory Committee – PAC #25**

**Minutes from the 3 September Meeting**



**IE Domain Registry**

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# Minutes of the PAC #25 Meeting held on 3 September 2020

**Meeting Location:** Virtual meeting.

**Meeting Time:** Called to order at 11:00am by the PAC Chair.

**Members and representatives present:**

Chair
CyberSafe Ireland
Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI)
Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE)
HEAnet
.ie Accredited Registrar (Blacknight)
.ie Accredited Registrar (Register Group)
.ie Accredited Registrar (MarkMonitor)
Irish Computer Society (ICS)
Irish Reporting & Information Security Service (IRISS)
Small Firms Association
IE Domain Registry
PAC Secretariat

## 1. Memberships Matters

**Apologies – Members not present:**

- Association of Patent and Trade Mark Attorneys (APTMA) – pre-arranged
- Enterprise Ireland – pre-arranged
- Law Society of Ireland – pre-arranged
- .ie Accredited Registrar (FCR Media) – pre-arranged
- Internet Service Providers Association Ireland (ISPAI) – pre-arranged
- Representative of the IE Domain Registry Board of Directors – pre-arranged

## 2. Minutes from the 11 June 2020 PAC #24 meeting

The Chair confirmed that the Minutes from the PAC #24 meeting were published online at <http://www.iedr.ie/policy-development-process/> following the 10-day comment period.

It was noted that no requests for edits were made during the PAC member comment period. Accordingly, the minutes will be digitally signed by the Chair.

The Secretariat reminded the PAC that the draft Minutes will be circulated to the membership within one week of PAC meetings.

### 3. Update on handling of reserved/blocked .ie domain names

#### Background:

The Secretariat reminded the PAC that this policy change request related to the need to introduce enhanced consistency and clarity regarding the handling of reserved and blocked names, i.e. names that are not permitted for registration.

The Secretariat summarised the actions taken to date, which include the following steps:

- A Discovery Group was established to review how other ccTLDs handle such names
- The Discovery Group determined that an appropriate policy response would involve mirroring the approach adopted by EURid, which manages the .eu extension
- This approach requires that:
  - minor edits be made to the Registration and Naming Policy, to clarify that reserved and blocked names are not available for registration
  - a non-exhaustive list of reserved/blocked names be published (with the proviso that a list of those names blocked on security grounds would not be made publicly available)
  - user-friendly materials, such as leaflets, with guidance on why/how such names are handled, also be made available
  - a defined, transparent procedure for facilitating requests to “apply” for reserved names (available to those with a legitimate, overriding interest in the name) should be introduced
  - “blocked” and “reserved” labels, similar to those used by EURid (.eu) to distinguish the applicable grounds for blocking / reserving names, be introduced for WHOIS lookup responses

#### Updates:

1. Minor edits required to the Registration & Naming Policy to accommodate this policy change request have been drafted and circulated to the Registrar channel representatives on the PAC for input. Feedback is welcome before 18 September 2020.
2. User-friendly guidance materials, including helpful on-site content, are in draft form.
3. Domains intended for potential future commercial use by IEDR have been re-classified as normal registrations. Furthermore, reserved and blocked .ie domains will no longer appear as registered to IEDR after the Registry transitions to its new technical systems in November 2020.
4. A transparent procedure for facilitating requests to “apply” for reserved names was drafted in November 2019. This was previously circulated to the Working Group for review, and no objections were raised.
5. WHOIS response messages for lookup requests for blocked/reserved names:
  - are being designed as part of the new .ie technical platform development
  - will be introduced with the launch of that new platform in November 2020

It was noted that the implementation of this policy change request is scheduled to happen in mid-November 2020, aligning with the launch of the new .ie registry and domain management platform. Therefore, this policy change is expected to be submitted to the PAC for formal conclusion at the PAC #26 meeting.

### 4. Update on handling of online abuse in the .ie namespace

#### Background:

The PAC was reminded that the topic had been raised for discussion in a bid to establish whether a policy response was needed to tackle potential online abuse in the .ie namespace, and if so, what that appropriate policy response would entail.

Discussions on the topic to date were summarised. It was noted that the Committee had distinguished its discussion on this topic under two work streams. These work streams relate to the handling of technical abuse and criminal abuse.

#### 4.1. Technical Abuse

Discussions to date were summarised for the PAC. It was noted that previous discussions had focused on:-

- the accredited .ie Registrar channel being more appropriately placed than the Registry to address technical abuse on .ie domains, as it has a direct relationship with the Registrant, and/or the party managing the domain. In some instances, it may also provide hosting services for such domains
- evaluating how other ccTLD operators handle technical abuse
- the abuse-handling approach adopted by Nominet (.uk)

Following broad-consensus for the adoption of an approach that mirrored the .uk initiatives, the IEDR had sought the PAC's recommendation to progress this work stream at the last PAC meeting, and for IEDR to proceed with:-

- the implementation of an informational service, to be provided by a third party service provider, NetCraft, to notify Registrars if .ie domains under their management are engaging in technical abuse,
- drafting and publishing helpful guidelines, detailing what appropriate action should be taken by Registrars and hosting service providers in response to such abuse (working with the PAC Registrar representatives on word-crafting these guidelines).

#### Updates:

IEDR confirmed that it had been engaging with the intended service provider, NetCraft, regarding contracting and costs to IEDR for operating the informational, alert service. Furthermore, the Registry noted that the related helpful guidelines for Registrars had been drafted, and circulated to the PAC Registrar representatives for input.

It was reported that initial feedback from the PAC Registrar representatives indicated that further, significant revisions were required, particularly in relation to domain hijacking and refinements of guidelines where Registrars do not offer hosting services to registrants. The Registry advised that it would continue to work with the PAC Registrar representatives to appropriately re-draft these guidelines.

#### 4.2. Criminal Abuse

It was noted that previous discussions had focused on the potential introduction of a cooperative arrangement between IEDR and local law enforcement agencies. This would facilitate the suspension of .ie domains in response to requests from local law enforcement agencies when they confirmed that a .ie domain was being used in connection with alleged criminal activity.

#### Updates:

It was confirmed that due to a number of significant, resource-demanding projects on-going within the Registry, the revised proposed template had not yet been shared with the GNCCB representatives. The Secretariat confirmed that the revised draft would be circulated to the GNCCB in Q4 2020, with a view to receiving feedback from the GNCCB before the next PAC meeting, when next steps can be discussed with PAC members.

### 5. Fast-Track Policy Change Request relating to edits to the WHOIS Policy

The IEDR reminded the PAC of its major investment in a new registry and domain management platform, and that it was intending to retire its existing technical systems later this year. The new platform will be known as TITAN, and it will support the industry standard EPP technical protocol. It was noted that, as part of this system migration, there are a number of changes required to the .ie WHOIS Policy (which will now be known as the .ie WHOIS Services Policy), particularly relating to updating terminology within the Policy to reflect that used within the new system (e.g. "Registrant" is used place of "Domain Holder").

Additional changes proposed to the .ie WHOIS Services Policy relate to:

- Accommodating the operation of the Registration Data Access Protocol (RDAP) functionality
- Providing clarification on new field names, including those containing personal data, published via the WHOIS Services
- Providing clarification on the data formats for the Registrar abuse contact role (now a defined contact role, requiring the provision and publication of an email address and telephone number for the Registrar to which reports of abuse can be directed)

It was confirmed that the guiding principles within the Policy will remain unchanged, for example:

- The Registrant name will be published on the WHOIS Services, where the domain is registered to a legal entity (e.g. company/charity)
  - These Registrants cannot opt-out of the publication of their legal name (as the publication is required within Registrant Terms and Conditions)
- Other Registrant names (non-legal entities, such as individuals or sole traders) will not be published by default
  - These Registrants will retain the right to publish their name, if desired (based on their explicit consent, which can be revoked at any time).

The IEDR confirmed that the proposed policy text edits have been circulated to PAC Registrar representatives for input, and that feedback is welcome before 18 September 2020.

Following discussion, the Registry requested that the PAC give its recommendation to the IEDR Board of Directors for the implementation of this fast-track policy change request. There was consensus for this, and the PAC issued its recommendation for the policy change request. The IEDR confirmed that it would continue to work with the PAC Registrar representatives on building consensus for the proposed text edits to the Policy.

## 6. Any Other Business

### 6.1. Updates on the fast-track policy change requests submitted at the PAC#24 meeting

It was noted that the PAC issued recommendations to the IEDR Board of Directors at the last PAC meeting for the implementation of the fast-track policy change requests relating to edits to the:

- Data and Document Retention Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Registration and Naming Policy

These policy change requests related to important changes to .ie Policies to accommodate the operation of the new registry and domain management platform, which will launch in November 2020.

The Secretariat reminded the PAC of the necessary changes to each of these Policies, and noted that changes substantially related to adopting appropriate terminology used within the new system.

With respect to the Registration and Naming Policy, it was noted that the proposed changes also accommodate changes to the .ie lifecycle and renewal procedures, which will transition to an auto-renewal mechanism. The Registry noted that the move to an auto-renew mechanism was selected following analysis of .ie renewal rates which identified that some 88% of .ie domains are renewed.

An accredited Registrar representative highlighted that this transition to an auto-renewal mechanism reflects a significant operational shift for accredited .ie Registrars, which the channel will need to be prepared for. The Registry acknowledged this, and confirmed that it has issued a number of communications to the channel, commencing with presentations at Registrar Day in November 2019, followed by communications since the beginning of 2020 outlining the planned transition to the auto-renew model. The Registry further noted that it will

continue to ensure Registrars are reminded of and prepared for these changes via upcoming communications with the channel.

It was also noted that significant changes to the Registration and Naming Policy relate to changing the process to transfer the right to use a .ie domain from one Registrant to another (a process formerly referred to as the Secondary Market). The Registry acknowledged that the existing procedure was originally designed out of an abundance of caution, with a number of consumer-protection mechanisms in-built, including the ability to accommodate the potential for multiple buyers to validate their compliance with the .ie registration requirements, prior to bidding for, or otherwise purchasing, a .ie domain on the secondary market.

During analysis of the experience with the process since 2016, it was noted that this multiple-buyer authentication functionality was rarely used, and that the existing administrative procedure could be speeded up for all parties involved. Furthermore, it was noted that the existing requirement for the parties to provide an "Acknowledgement and Disclaimer<sup>1</sup>" to the Registry would also be removed as part of this simplification effort. This measure was originally included to protect a buyer who might spend a significant sum buying a .ie domain at an auction, without realising that it couldn't meet the registration requirements, necessary to complete its purchase. (The Registry acknowledged that this potential risk was low, with the passage of time, and experience with the process).

Importantly, it was noted that the other related policy principles would not be impacted. For example, future Registrants will continue to be required to provide evidence that they meet the .ie registration criteria before being granted the right to use a .ie domain.

It was noted that an outstanding action item relating to these policy change requests was for the IEDR to work with the PAC Registrar representatives to build consensus for the proposed text changes to each of the impacted Policies. It was confirmed that the proposed texts had been circulated to the Registrar representatives, and that the review process was on going. A Registrar representative requested that the review period be extended by one week, to which no objections were raised. Feedback on these changes is now welcome before 18 September 2020. Further updates will be provided at the next PAC meeting.

## **6.2. Update on industry related developments/legislative changes to be outlined by PAC members**

The Registry briefly outlined:-

- its recent engagement with the Council of European National Top-level Domain Registries (CENTR) regarding the on-going consultation relating to the EU Digital Services Act
- the upcoming revisions to the EU NIS Directive which are expected to be proposed later in 2020

Brief discussion also followed on the European Commission's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic with regard to the .eu ccTLD extension (which is operated by EURid).

## **6.3. Industry's actions in response to Covid-19 pandemic**

Members were invited to set out their experience, and the challenges they have faced, in recent months due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic.

The increase in micro and small businesses trading online was discussed. Members emphasised the important need for cybersecurity considerations to be highlighted amongst these entities. It was noted that a Cybersecurity Awareness Month initiative is due to be held in October 2020. Some PAC members commented on the potential

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<sup>1</sup> The "Acknowledgement and Disclaimer" requirement relates to a declaration from the Parties, acknowledging and accepting the risks associated with buying a .ie domain on the secondary market where the new Registrant fails to satisfy the .ie registration criteria, and is refused the right to use the .ie domain by IEDR. As part of this declaration, the Parties indemnify the Registry from any refusal to change the Registrant of the .ie domain in question, where the new Registrant fails to meet the registration criteria.

opportunity to work collaboratively to circulate related information to micro and small businesses in order to demystify the topic of cybersecurity for these businesses.

## 7. Next Steps

PAC Secretariat will continue to work:

1. On the revised cooperative arrangement template, and engage with the GNCCB in due course
2. With the Registrar channel regarding refinements to the texts and draft edits to the following Policies:
  - ✓ Registration and Naming Policy\*
  - ✓ Privacy Policy
  - ✓ Data and Document Retention Policy
  - ✓ WHOIS Policy (now known as WHOIS Services Policy)

## 8. Next Meeting

The provisional date for the next PAC #26 meeting has been set for 3 December 2020.