

IANA Report on Delegation of the .AX Top-Level Domain

The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), as part of the administrative functions associated with management of the Domain Name System root, is responsible for receiving requests for delegation and redelegation of top-level domains, investigating the circumstances relevant to those requests, and reporting on the requests.

This report gives the findings and conclusions of the IANA on its investigation of a request for delegation of .AX, the country-code top-level domain (ccTLD) for Åland Islands – an autonomous province of Finland.

Factual and Procedural Background

On 3 February 2006 IANA received a request for the delegation of the .AX (Åland Islands) top-level domain. Åland Islands (pronounced “OH-land”) is an autonomous province of the country of Finland, representing a cluster of 6,500 islands located in the Baltic sea between the mainlands of Sweden and Finland. Its population of 26,200 inhabits 65 of the islands, and speak Swedish as their primary language.

As a sub-national entity of Finland, the Regional Government of Åland (*Ålands landskapsregering*) has to date maintained the domain ALAND.FI for provincial affairs since the Internet was first available in the province in approximately 1994. One of the services provided has been the operation of the domain registry supplying sub-domains of ALAND.FI. This registry service has allowed the province’s businesses, residents, and others with a legal connection to the province, to obtain these sub-domains.

In 2003, the domain name allocation policies for ALAND.FI registrations were aligned with the policies for the .FI domain. These policies are defined in the Finnish Domain Name Act of 2003.

On 13 January 2004, the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency, which maintains the ISO 3166-1 country code list used by IANA as the definitive list of ccTLD names, issued a revision to their list that added the two letter code “AX” to represent the Åland Islands.

In reaction to this development, the Government of Finland passed a revision of the Domain Name Act, approved on 14 February 2006 that formally extended the policies that governed .FI to also cover the domain .AX.

The Regional Government of Åland and the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications first approached IANA in late 2005 to enquire as to the procedures for delegation of the .AX domain name. After initial consultations with IANA Staff, a formal delegation template was submitted to IANA on 3 February 2006. Supplemental

materials relating to the application were delivered throughout February and March, 2006.

The application requests the sponsoring organisation and administrative contact be the Regional Government of Åland, with technical services provided by Ålands Datakommunikation Ab.

IANA successfully completed pre-approval checks on the submitted contact and technical data at the end of March, 2006.

On 9 June 2006 the ICANN Board of Directors authorized the President of ICANN to move forward with the delegation of the .AX top-level domain to the Regional Government of Åland.

Evaluation

This report is being provided under the contract for performance of the IANA function between the United States Government and ICANN. Under that contract, ICANN performs the IANA function, which includes receiving delegation and redelegation requests concerning ccTLDs, investigating the circumstances pertinent to those requests, and issuing a report documenting IANA's findings.

In its role as investigator of delegation requests, IANA is guided by the practices summarized in:

- “Domain Name System Structure and Delegation” (RFC 1591). This document describes the practices relating to delegations at its publication in 1994. See <http://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc1591.txt>
- “Internet Domain Name System Structure and Delegation.” (ICP-1). This document represents an ICANN-written update of the portions of RFC 1591 dealing with ccTLDs and reflects subsequent evolution of the policies followed by the IANA through May, 1999. See <http://www.icann.org/icp/icp1.htm>.
- The Governmental Advisory Committee Principles for Delegation and Administration of ccTLDs (GAC Principles). This document serve as “best practices” to guide governments in assuming proper roles with respect to the Internet's naming system. See <http://www.icann.org/committees/gac/gac-ccldprinciples-23feb00.htm>.

In considering the delegation of a ccTLD, IANA seeks input from both the requesting party as well as from persons and/or organizations that may be significantly affected by the change in the top-level DNS hierarchy, particularly those within the nation or territory the ccTLD designates. As noted in ICP-1, the parties affected include the relevant government or public authority: "The desires of the government of a country

with regard to delegation of a ccTLD are taken very seriously. The IANA will make them a major consideration in any TLD delegation/transfer discussions."

Taking these three documents into consideration, the evaluation of a delegation request involves determining facts that relate to the applicant's capacity to meet the following criteria:

1. Operational and technical skills

- a. The prospective manager has the requisite skills to operate the TLD appropriately. (ICP-1 §a, RFC 1591 §3.5)
- b. There must be reliable, full-time IP connectivity to the nameservers and electronic mail connectivity to the operators; (ICP-1 §a; RFC 1591 §3.1)
- c. The manager must perform its duties in assigning domains and operating nameservers with technical competence (ICP-1 §d; RFC 1591 §3.5)

2. Operator in country

- a. The prospective manager supervises and operates the domain name from within the country represented by the TLD; (ICP-1 §a; RFC 1591 §3.1)
- b. The prospective administrative contact must reside in the country represented by the TLD. (ICP-1 §a; RFC 1591 §3.1)

3. Equitable treatment

- a. The prospective manager must be equitable and fair to all groups encompassed by the TLD that may request domain names (ICP-1 §c; RFC 1591 §3.3)

4. Community/Governmental support

- a. The prospective manager has the requisite authority to operate the TLD appropriately, with the desire of the government taken very seriously. (ICP-1 §a, GAC Principles)
- b. Significantly interested parties in the domain should agree that the prospective manager is the appropriate party to receive the delegation (ICP-1 §a; RFC 1591 §3.4)

Pertaining to these obligations described, IANA believes that the applicant has reasonably demonstrated a delegation would be appropriate. In more detail, the applicant's credentials as they relate to the enumerated criteria are:

- Operational and technical skills.

The successful operation of the existing ALAND.FI domain registry demonstrates that the applicant has experience with domain registry related issues.

IANA furthermore sought information on the capabilities and history of Ålands Datakommunikation Ab, and is satisfied it is sufficiently competent for its role.

- Operator in country.

As the operator is the provincial government, IANA is reasonably satisfied the operator is locally based.

- Equitable treatment.

The regulations for the domain are spelled out in Finnish law, and require the operator to give access to all parties that meet local presence obligations.

- Community/Governmental support.

The ICANN Government Advisory Committee Principles observes that the Internet's naming system is "a public resource ... administered in the public or common interest." In general, ICANN's GAC recognizes that each government has the ultimate responsibility within its territory for its national public policy objectives. However, in the case of a delegations and redelegations, this may be tempered by ICANN's responsibility to ensure the Internet DNS continues to provide an effective and interoperable global naming system.

The relevant governmental authority for Åland Internet affairs is the Government of Finland. The relevant government agency is the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The Director-General of the Ministry supplied a letter of endorsement to IANA in support of the application.

IANA also sought feedback from representative groups in the community, which demonstrates local support.

Based upon its investigations and research, IANA believes the applicant has demonstrated sufficient support for the delegation.

Conclusion

According to RFC 1591 and ICP-1, IANA needs to respect the ability for a local Internet community as well as local law and local government to make decisions about the operation of a TLD. Based upon our investigation, we recommend the domain .AX be introduced into the DNS root zone, and assigned to the Regional Government of Åland as per the application.