

Middle East Space

Online Virtual Meeting on Monday 8 June 2020

Universal Acceptance & Email Address Internationalization using Arabic Script

Final Draft Statement

We, the Middle East (ME) community members, participating in the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Middle East Space, addressed the concerns of the Universal Acceptance (UA) & Email Addresses Internationalization (EAI) using Arabic Script that have been raised in previous discussions by different working groups, and came up with this statement.

UA is a foundational requirement for a truly multilingual Internet, in which users around the world can navigate (via Domain Name System) entirely in their own local languages. It is also the key to unlocking the potential of new generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) that have more than three ASCII characters to foster competition, consumer choice, accessibility, and innovation in the domain name industry.

The ME Space community already made general recommendations about Universal Acceptance in its [statement](#) at ICANN 64 in Kobe, Japan.

The 2019 IDN world report¹ shows that among the major challenges to the uptake of the IDNs is the poor usage of email, so through this statement, we will focus on **email addresses** specially the ones which will use **Arabic script**.

According to the results² of the a study done by the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) on the evaluation of 1000 websites, an average of only 10% of them accepted email addresses comprising non-Latin characters. It is therefore necessary to promote UA readiness.

The future of EAI readiness falls into two main phases²,

- ❖ **Phase 1:** EAI Ready software where the software is capable of sending to and receiving from EAI addresses, while
- ❖ **Phase 2:** EAI Ready software is capable of hosting an EAI address.

In Phase 1 we are looking for email servers (ESMTP, IMAP*, POP*) that are able to accept EAI addresses from email clients, which are also able to compile EAI addresses. In Phase 2 we are looking for having mailboxes in local languages like Arabic.

¹ "The 2019 IDN world report shows that IDNs make 2.5% of the world's domains and that it has grown 0.5% over the figures reported in 2018. Despite this increase, the report indicates that among the major challenges to the uptake of the IDNs is the poor usage of email."

Source : <https://idnworldreport.eu/>

² Universal Acceptance Steering Group

Source : <https://uasg.tech/information/>

³ Deployment issues for Internationalized Email By Harish Chowdhary on 23 Jan 2017

Source : <https://blog.apnic.net/2017/01/23/deployment-issues-internationalized-email/>

The ME Space community supports the APNIC³ blog remarks stipulating that the deployment and use of EAI are still restricted to a handful of languages and there is very limited or no support for it offered by email servers (SMTP, IMAP, POP), email providers (Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail) and email clients (Thunderbird, Mail, etc.,). Often, it is not even possible to create an email ID for end-users in a non-ASCII based language.

To help making good progress and use of Email Address Internationalization using Arabic Script, we recommend that ICANN:

- ❖ Gets proposals from GAC members on how to promote EAI in their countries that include :
 - Recommendations on required national policies and industry led measures to drive the wheel for EAI adoption and usage
 - Best practices for the usage of EAI in their respective countries
 - National standard operating procedures for adopting UA readiness for the old applications which do not support IDNs or EAI to the ones which are UA ready and keep the applications interoperable through the internet
 - Strategies to include UA readiness and EAI support adopted within the digital inclusion projects
 - Getting Ideas from GAC members on how to promote the usage of EAI and IDNs especially people who only know their native language or only know their writing system.
- ❖ Encourages delegates to join groups from other bodies working on internationalization and UA to exchange experiences.
- ❖ Promotes the consistency of the online ecosystem like using local languages domain names (IDN) to access local content and use local languages email addresses (EAI) to exchange data, through fostering the use of IDNs and EAI.
- ❖ Develops a study about the roles of different stakeholders groups such as Internet end users, software providers, (IDN) ccTLD operators, Email service operators, technical and academic communities, governments, private sector, etc., to further promote IDNs, EAI and UA.
- ❖ Studies the current working EAI system models in the countries that deployed it and discuss what constraints they have to reach to the full EAI implementation.
- ❖ Helps through
 - Training local initiatives trainers “UA Technologies, Internationalized Domain Names, Email Address Internationalization”
 - Improving ICANN Learn environment with local languages starting with working languages of the United Nations

- Increasing the number of UA ambassadors who have good skills to move the wheel ahead, and providing the current ones with in-depth knowledge.
- ❖ Considers IDN ccTLD managers to be part of ccNSO so that they could open the channel for further EAI deployment on the top of their IDN TLDs
- ❖ Develops a UA issues inventory for Arabic script languages affecting the progress of the project.
- ❖ Encourages UA local and regional initiatives and more cooperation with ICANN GSE team to support the progress of IDN, EAI and UA technologies.
- ❖ Supports the establishment of a free EAI service that supports Arabic Script and can be used by the community in the ME region for ICANN meetings and regional events registration.

Strengthens the communications between UASG and Task Force on Arabic Internationalized Domain Names (TF-AIDN)⁴ for the issues related to Label Generation Rules (LGR), technical and security issues related to Arabic domain names or Arabic email addresses, and to engage TF-AIDN experts in the implementations of Arabic email servers and give support.

- ❖ Encourages all stakeholder, like Arabic ccTLD managers, involved in the implementation of policies and systems related to Arabic AIDN to join and engage with the TF-AIDN.
- ❖ Encourages and supports projects for the adoption of Arabic EAI with Arabic global organizations (working on the promotion of Arabic script languages, ALESCO is an example), governments, public entities, academic research community, private sector and civil society organizations. These projects will show the benefits made possible by having Internet domains and Email Address in local language scripts.

We want to thank all those who are working hard to push the Universal Acceptance project forward including the Email Address Internationalization (UASG, community members who are helping especially on the linguistic aspects, etc.). We hope that these recommendations will be taken into account to make significant progress.

⁴ TF-AIDN was the first generation panel that completed its proposal for the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGR) for top-level domain names. They also completed the LGR for second-level domain names for the Arabic, Urdu Farsi and Pashto languages as a reference for the community to use. Furthermore, TF-AIDN is in contact with Jawi, Swahili, Sindhi and Turkmen language communities for LGR2. They are also done with the use-case report on issues encountered by languages using the Arabic script.