

EURALO input to the on-going ICANN consultation process on the Interim Report of the Geographic Regions Review WG

EURALO was following the discussion on ICANN's geographic regions on the ALAC and cross-community level with interest and created its own thematic Working Group recently to discuss the Interim Report of the Review WG and its significance from a European regional perspective.

First of all, we would like to appreciate the excellent work done by the geographic regions Review WG and the key questions raised during this exercise. There was agreement from the European WG members to reaffirm the existing ICANN regional model and not to argue for any extension for more regions.

1. However, when we were looking at the key references for the definition of the existing ICANN regions we found out that most of them are UN-based and applied by the UN system. The UN references are predominant and make sense for many parts of the world but they do not necessarily reflect the extraordinary diversity of (ICANN) regions like Asia-Pacific and Europe. From a European point of view and perspective, the standards and definitions set by the Council of Europe (CoE) are broadly relevant, accepted and important. And many countries are part of Europe and its regional definition – according to CoE standards – which are situated in the East – see: http://www.ena.lu/member_states_european_organisations_2008-021000009.html Some of these countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan or Georgia are members of the CoE but considered in other classification models (incl. ICANN) as part of the Asian region. We therefore suggest that the definitions and classifications by the Council of Europe are taken into consideration as well in the ICANN context.

2. In recent years, EURALO had some discussions with people from Eastern countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan who expresses strong interest in joining and participating in our RALO, arguing that they have a stronger affinity to Europe than to the Asian region (for historical, cultural etc. reasons). We always had to reassure them that they “formally” and, according to ICANN definitions, are part of APRALO. When we were arguing before to maintain the existing regional model at ICANN as a *general rule*, we would like to suggest some considerations on *exceptional* or *border cases* and to introduce a new “principle of self-determination” for such particular border cases. We are conscious that exceptions always need to be well justified to avoid abuses. And such a “principle of self-determination” needs to be further discussed and specified on particular circumstances, procedures of consultations, mutual approval and decision-making. In the given example of Armenia or Azerbaijan, a consultation process with the regions concerned (APRALO and EURALO) would be indispensable. And a decision on any exceptional application could be taken with the approval by both RALOs concerned only (sort of mutual recognition procedure – MRP). We are aware that there is always a justified fear of undesired precedence involved, but such a “principle of self-determination” is recognised in international law as well.

3. To further discuss our suggestions, EURALO proposes to convene and organise a joint ALAC meeting at the next ICANN conference in San Francisco (March 11) to find some common grounds with our colleagues from APRALO (and other RALO members interested) and to develop further specifications in this direction.

We are convinced, if we want to encourage a broader bottom-up participation and inclusion of more Internet users at ICANN, we need to create conditions for participation reflecting the cultural particularities and sensitivities of motivated people and potential ALSes.

Neuchâtel/Switzerland, January 11
Wolf Ludwig -- on behalf of EURALO