

Work Track 5 and the Non-capital City Names

By Bruna Santos

ICANN 62 was the latest Policy Forum edition and took place in Panamá City, Panamá, from June 24th to 27th. On the meeting program one could find subjects such as sessions regarding the impact from the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on WHOIS, the conclusion of the CCWG accountability and also discussions around the use of geographical names as future gTLDs. The present report will focus on the latter by highlighting some of the discussions that took place at the cross-community sessions organized by Work Track 5 of the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Working Group.

The New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Working Group (whose initial report is under a public comment [here](#)) is the PDP that is developing the policy for any future gTLDs and the Work Track 5, implemented in 2017 as a cross-community WT, is responsible for reviewing the existing policy and implementation related to the topic of geographic names at the top level. So far, WT5 has been discussing themes such as 2-character ASCII letter-letter combinations, Country and Territory Names, any other Geographic Names listed and not listed in the 2012 AGB.

During ICANN62 WT5 organized two cross-community sessions focused on questions related to non-capital city names. The first one of the sessions was looking to hearing feedback from the community on the following discussion points: (a) Should there be universal protections for non-capital city names? (b) what are relevant governmental/public authorities (c) does intended usage of the string matter ? (d) also, the non-capital city names process from 2012.

According to the rules adopted in the Applicant Guidebook - AGB (a document that provides step-by-step information on the application process for new applicants issued at the first round of applications of the New gTLD Programme) **applications for city names** required documentation of support or non-objection from the relevant governments or public authorities plus the applicant's declaration regarding the intend to use the gTLD for purposes associated with the city name. Based on what the AGB says, this first cross-community session divided the audience into four large input collection groups on the level of protection and operational modalities that could ensure a balanced solution to the issue.

The second cross-community session beared some principles attached to the non-capital city names for contemplating potential proposed solutions for the issue and help the group focus on high-level goals. The principles were the following:

- (a) we should allow new gTLDs, including non-capital city names;
- (b) Increase predictability for all parties; and
- (c) effort to minimize the chances of conflicts during and after the process.

Feedbacks provided by the sessions are the following, divided by session:

- Some of the community input received in the first session included (a) resistance against universal protections or definitions of what is a city, (b) support for a definitive list of protected terms, based on UN lists or even airport locations, (c) relevant governmental/public authorities reached by the applicant could change based on the city, (d) considerations regarding the importance of the intended use, the need for approval by

relevant governmental/public authorities could eventually add some infeasibility to the process due to uncertainties around the adequate entity for granting the approval.

- Cross-community Session 2 received a lot of support on the proposed principles and attendance added a new one, on the grounds of simplicity. Attendees also highlighted the need for creating incentives for parties to work together and also that the community should focus on improving the parts of the existing process that did not work as well as they could have.

As to the next steps, Work Track 5 is now working on the input provided at both cross-community session and will issue its initial report before the Barcelona meeting and after the comment period for Work Tracks 1-4 is due. So far, the community is leading towards maintaining the existing rules around two-letter ASCII strings, full and abbreviated country names and capital city names, but I am looking forward to the next outcomes brought by the discussions around the subject.