



What is an IDN?

An IDN or “internationalized domain name” is an Internet domain name that is in non-Latin characters such as those used in the Cyrillic, Arabic or Chinese languages.

What is the history of IDNs?

IDNs have been used since 2001 at the “second level” of an Internet name - the portion that is to the left of the dot. But once an internet user got to the final portion of a domain name - the top-level domain (TLD), which is to the right of the dot, like dot-com, dot-net or dot-org, they then had to switch over to Latin characters because of technical limitations. But now, after years of work by ICANN, a global system for the use of other scripts in domain names has been designed, tested and the first one, like Russia’s, are coming online.

Why are they important?

Using IDNs for the entire Internet domain is vital in making the Internet addressing system more user-friendly to as many global users as possible, regardless of where they live or what language they speak.

What will be the impact of IDNs?

The hope is that IDNs will increase the number of global Internet users – a core mission of ICANN. In Russia for example, there are an estimated 96 million people who are currently not online. The use of IDNs will hopefully help lower that number.

How is ICANN handling the rollout of IDNs?

In stages. Right now IDNs will only be allowed on a limited basis involving country code top-level domains, which are the designators at the end of an address name, such as dot-ru for Russia. Eventually, the use of IDNs will be vastly expanded to all types of Internet address names.

When will the Russian IDN extension pф be seen on the Internet?

Immediately.

What other countries, besides Russia, will be among the first IDNs on the Internet?

Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have joined the Russian Federation as the first countries to have their top level domain IDNs approved.

How many countries have applied for IDNs?

So far 21 countries representing 11 different languages have applied for country code top-level domains and that number is constantly growing. A complete list can be found on ICANN’s web site at <http://icann.org/en/topics/idn/fast-track/>.