



The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

Language Services Policy and Procedures

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OVERVIEW

The provision of language services is intended to facilitate access to ICANN and participation in its work for those who do not speak or are not fluent in English.

Multilingualism is essential for a global multistakeholder organization. Meetings, documents and information must be accessible in a variety of languages. To address this need, ICANN submitted the previous version of this document (then called "[Translation Programme](#)") for public comment in March 2008, and in December 2008 contracted with a localization and language industry expert (a full-time translation coordinator). This complied with the Accountability and Transparency Framework and Principles, and laid the path toward more effective engagement with stakeholders.

The cost-effective provision of high quality multilingual services has two main **objectives**:

- Make information about ICANN and its work accessible to those who speak languages other than English in ways that enhance participation in and the effectiveness of the multistakeholder model.
- Make ICANN more effective as a global organization.

ICANN's language **services** include:

- Translation
- Simultaneous interpretation
- Teleconference interpretation
- Transcription (of recorded sessions)
- Scribing (Real Time Transcription - RTT)

ICANN'S LANGUAGE POLICY

ICANN's working language is English. Its policy is to provide translation and interpretation in the six United Nations languages – currently Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), English, French, Russian and Spanish – where appropriate and taking account of budget constraints.

If the UN amends its official languages, ICANN will consider whether to adopt the change.

Quality is the top priority. ICANN's goal is continuous improvement of its language services in order to ensure its effectiveness as a global organization. Fulfilling its vision to professionalize and equalize the provision of language services requires a careful balance of outreach, quality and cost control.

LANGUAGE POLICY VISION

The goal of the Language Services Policy is to ensure that ICANN operates as a highly effective global organization, providing high quality, consistent, timely and cost-effective services, reflecting current usage of technical terms by native speakers.

The long-term vision for provision of language services is that by the end of calendar year 2015, ICANN will offer translation and interpretation, either automatically or on request:

- in the six official United Nations languages. Criteria for granting exceptions (either to provide additional or fewer translations) will be explicitly spelled out.¹
- for all core documentation, main public meeting sessions, and select Supporting Organization and Advisory Committee conference calls.
- in five abridged versions of the English website, focusing on the core elements.

It is anticipated that the language services staff will increase to provide more of these services and more effective overall coordination in-house.

In all aspects of implementing this policy, a balance must be achieved between the benefits gained from including more people in ICANN's work and the potential cost in time, money and possible delay to the policy development process.

This document is not a detailed plan to achieve this vision. This concept will require substantial community input and its fulfillment is subject to Board approval. The provision of sufficient permanent in-house staff and budget resources is under consideration for FY2013 in the context of a new initiative to "enhance multilingual strategy." Should that proposal be adopted, it is possible that implementation of this concept could begin in FY2013.

¹ Documents aimed at a national audience or containing only country-specific information will be translated into the relevant language for that country. For information relevant to an entire region, translation into several languages may be required.

It is expected that, in the context of that initiative, a revision of this policy may be developed in FY2014.

LANGUAGE SERVICES PRACTICES

ICANN currently provides the following types of services:

- Interpretation during public meetings in all six UN languages. Other languages are considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Translation of key print and online materials and publications.
- Conference call interpretation services English, French and Spanish.
- Transcription of audio recordings at public meetings, conference calls and supported meetings, on request. (This applies to sessions without scribing services).
- Scribing during public meeting sessions and at other approved meetings.

Community comment on the provision of language services is taken into account and is always welcome.

Moving forward, a comprehensive **quality control process** and adoption, where appropriate, of best practices of other organizations will help ensure that ICANN's language services are on a par with other international organizations, professionally conducted and cost-effective.

ICANN uses many **acronyms and terms** specific to its work. Accurately capturing these terms in multiple languages and reflecting common native usage will increase the quality and consistency of translation and interpretation. A terminology database will allow consistent usage across the six UN languages. It will include the existing Internationalized Domain Name, translation and online English definitions glossaries (<http://www.icann.org/general/glossary.htm>) in one central database available on the ICANN website, and will be updated monthly.

A **classification system** suitable for a multilingual and multistakeholder organization will help determine how documents will be produced, translated, posted online and archived. This will include electronic tools to make documents more accessible via internal and external search engines.

HISTORY OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY AND PROCEDURES PAPER

The Language Services Policy and Procedures paper is being developed in six phases:

1. A draft report was presented for initial consultation and feedback from the Translations Committee and ICANN senior executives on 30 January 2008 and a public comment period was held in March 2008.
2. A full-time translation coordinator was hired on 15 December 2008.
3. Guidelines for language services providers and standard approaches to technical terms and acronyms were developed in March 2009.
4. An initial language services budget was created in FY2011; the first comprehensive language services budget was implemented in FY2012.
5. A second public comment period will be held in May 2012.
6. The Board Committee on Public Participation will submit the policy to the ICANN Board with its recommendation in October 2012.

This policy proposal took into account:

- Findings of the meeting on translation held at the November 2007 ICANN Meeting in Los Angeles
- Interviews held in 2007 with²: Sébastien Bachollet (At-Large); Bart Boswinkel (Account Manager, ICANN); Mandy Carver (Global Partnerships, ICANN); Carole Cornell (Senior Director, Project Office, ICANN); Anthony Harris (CABASE); Pablo Hinojosa (Regional Liaison for Latin America, ICANN); Anne-Rachel Inné (Regional Liaison for Africa, ICANN); Janis Karklins (Chair of the Governmental Advisory Committee); Khaled Koubaa (Internet Society of Tunisia); Yu-Min Lin (www.nii.org.tw); Denise Michel (Vice President of Policy Development, ICANN); Dave Piscitello (Security and Stability Advisory Committee, ICANN); Glen de Saint Géry (GNSO Secretariat, ICANN); Marc Salvatierra (Web Content Developer, ICANN); and Patrick Sharry (PS2)
- Independent consultation in 2008 with Omar Abou-Zahr, former chief of Interpretation Services at the United Nations

² Positions are those held at the time of the interviews.

- Translation policies of other international organizations

The past two years have seen improved **quality**, greater **efficiency** and cost **savings**:

- Upgrade of the translation management system has laid the groundwork for reduced translation turnaround time, enhanced the quality assurance and validation processes, and improved translation consistency.
- Five linguists, each covering one of the five non-English UN languages, have been retained on a fixed contract to update and maintain the TMs (translation memories), and to translate articles published on the ICANN blog. This has improved the quality and consistency of translated documents, and has reduced costs.
- A fixed contract with interpreters who travel as a team to provide simultaneous interpretation during ICANN Meeting has proven to be the right model for delivering high quality interpretation services.
- Renegotiation of conference call services with respect to interpretation and transcription has also decreased costs. ICANN's interpreters now provide conference call interpretation, increasing quality and reducing costs.
- Interpretation support was provided, in all cases, in English, French and Spanish. Starting FY13 interpretation support for plenary sessions and GAC sessions is provided in all six UN languages.

DEFINITIONS

Translation, interpretation, subtitling, scribing and transcription can be clearly distinguished.

- **Translation** is the conversion of written text from a source language into a target language, sometimes a locale. A locale is a country- or region-specific variant of a language, for example French as spoken in Canada or Spanish as spoken in Mexico. It can include human, machine and computer-assisted translations:
 - *Human translations* are produced by a human translator.
 - *Machine translations* are automated translations from one source language into a target language using a system such as Systran or Google Translate.

- *Computer-assisted translations* are created through machine translation or translation memory technology and then edited and finalized by human translators.
- **Interpretation** is the conversion of the spoken word from a source language into a target language.
 - *Simultaneous interpretation* is delivered in real time.
 - In *consecutive interpretation*, the target language version is provided after the source version.
 - *Teleconference interpretation* is provided to enhance communication during teleconferences.
- **Subtitling** is the provision of written interpretation from a source language into a target language in video media.
- **Scribing (RTT – Real-Time Transcription)** may be performed either on-site or from a remote location. Real-time transcription occurs as words are spoken; text captions can be displayed for one person, an entire room, or streamed live over the Internet.
- **Transcription** converts spoken material into written form, for instance when court proceedings are recorded. This includes the transcription of audio recordings.

Translation, interpretation, subtitling, scribing and transcription require different skills, technologies, pricing models and processes.

TRANSLATION

Translations should be accurate and natural. A reader who is unfamiliar with the source text should easily understand the translation. The ideal translation should be **accurate**, reproducing as closely as possible the meaning of the source text; **natural**, using nuances of the target language appropriate to the source; and **comprehensive**, expressing all aspects of the meaning in a way that is easily understandable in the target language.

The use of regular language service providers improves consistency and, by increasing their familiarity with ICANN and its terminology, maximizes their ability to work quickly.

To ensure quality control, Language Services will create a **multilingualism awareness program** for current and new staff. Board members, staff and community members will sometimes be

asked to help monitor the quality of translations. A **translation management system** allows language service providers to access previous translations, improving quality and streamlining the process.

Although a variety of electronic tools exists to produce translations quickly and cheaply, these technologies are not yet advanced enough to produce consistently accurate, high quality translations; in most cases it takes more time to correct machine translations than to directly translate the material. Therefore, ICANN does not use these tools, though if the technology improves significantly, this may be reconsidered.

Principles

Translation focuses on holistic processes and not specific documents. For example, in the case of a public comment period the main document, announcement and background information will all be translated.

To ensure consistency, only ICANN-retained language service providers are authorized to translate materials produced by ICANN. Generally, community members should not commission the translation of ICANN documents. However, if such a need does arise, community members may be asked to collaborate on this activity with ICANN Language Services.

ICANN recognizes that significant language expertise exists within the ICANN community, and may call upon individuals and organizations to assist as appropriate.

Community members can play an important role in translations but it is unrealistic to expect them regularly to produce professional translations. At the same time, their subject matter expertise is important to support quality translation. The ICANN community should assess a **monitored crowd-sourcing system** that would permit community members to translate material not produced by ICANN, such as the comments of a fellow community member.

All translated documents are non-authoritative and must contain a statement to that effect.

Proactive Translation

In keeping with the language policy, ICANN will regularly translate certain English documents into Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish, and certain documents in those languages into English.

The translation of a document into any language other than the six UN languages will be considered an on-demand translation request and will require a compelling rationale.

For public meetings in countries where the official language is not one of the six UN languages, documents may be translated into the country's official language at the request of a stakeholder group and with appropriate consideration.

Typically, when posted on the ICANN.org website, the following types of documents will be proactively translated into the six UN languages:

- **Outreach Information** (informational materials intended to raise awareness of ICANN and its work) including:
 - Announcements, the ICANN blog, public comment period documents
 - Certain factsheets, press releases, FAQs, brochures, speeches and public meetings documentation
- **Strategic Documents:**
 - Including the Strategic Plan, Operating Plan, budget, Annual Report, Affirmation of Commitments and Bylaw Review Team recommendations
- **Policy Documents:**
 - Including executive summaries of policy briefings; final reports and other similar documentation produced by supporting organizations and advisory committees; preliminary and final Issue Reports commissioned by the GNSO Council; and executive summaries of public forum comments produced by constituencies or communities related to policy development activities
 - The full text of At-Large Advisory Committee statements; ALAC and RALOs governance documents; each issue of the monthly *Policy Update* produced by ICANN staff; Supporting Organization and Advisory Committee Charters; GNSO Stakeholder and Constituency Charter documents; working group charters and mandates; and public announcements related to policy development activities
- **Board Material** – approved resolutions, meeting minutes, briefing materials and bylaws
- **Governmental Advisory Committee Material** – communiqués and supporting documents
- **Specific Project Documents** – including the New gTLD *Applicant Guidebook* and related materials; internationalized domain name materials; certain registrar and registry materials

On-Demand Translation

Other documents, which may include letters, non-English public comments, forms, contracts and other legal documents, and older materials on the website, may be submitted for translation by a stakeholder group or ICANN staff. Translation of these documents will be considered on request, and may be done after appropriate evaluation.

Translations of some documents, including governance documents, agreements, policies and specifications, reports, correspondence, implementation plans and other similar documents, must contain the following disclaimer, translated into the relevant language: "This document has been translated into this language for information only. The original and authoritative text (in English) may be found at: <link to original English text>."

If a document produced in a non-English language requires translation, the authoritative language of such document will be the original source language.

Documents aimed at a national audience or containing only country-specific information will be translated into the relevant language for that country. For information relevant to an entire region, translation into several languages may be required.

Documents intended for an organization that expects or requires a translation, such as a national government, may be translated on request.

Other factors that will be taken into account in translation decisions include:

- How will the translation make ICANN more effective as a global organization?
- Is a full translation necessary? Would a translated summary be sufficient?
- Can the translation be completed in a timely enough fashion to ensure full public discussion of the topic?
- What is the document's life span? How long will it be relevant?
- Will the content be updated soon? If so, when should the translation be done?

INTERPRETATION

Many community members prefer to communicate in their primary language. While many are able to follow a discussion or presentation in English, a lack of fluency may prevent them from speaking up during public meetings. Interpretation supports the global ICANN community and dramatically lowers the barrier for those who are not proficient in English.

Interpretation is provided in accordance with the international standards for interpretation of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (www.aiic.net).

ICANN Public Meetings

Interpretation at ICANN Public Meeting plenary sessions will typically be provided in all six UN languages. Some meetings may require additional languages. Because the meeting location influences attendance, the addition and selection of other languages will be subject to review and will depend on the location, budget and number of attendees.

ICANN will ask the host to publicize the meeting locally and to provide information in the local language; including the fact that interpretation will be provided.

GAC sessions will be supported in all six UN languages and, in recognition of its importance to the GAC, Portuguese.

Interpretation in English, French and Spanish will be provided for:

- Sessions to support outreach and communication, and sessions organized by ALAC and At-Large, such as:
 - Press conferences
 - Regional At-Large Organization sessions
 - Working group sessions
- Open ICANN Board events, such as:
 - Board meetings
- Specific projects sessions of significant importance, such as:
 - Supporting Organization and Advisory Committee Chair Reports

English will always be supported. If the official language of the host country is not English, interpretation will typically be provided in an official or customary language. Interpretation might also be offered in languages relevant to the country and region, as appropriate:

- *Africa*: All six UN languages (Portuguese optional)
- *Asia/Australia/Pacific*: All six UN languages (Japanese and Korean optional)
- *Europe*: All six UN languages
- *Latin America/Caribbean*: All six UN languages (Portuguese optional)
- *North America*: All six UN languages

Meeting session organizers can request interpretation of additional languages for their sessions. Requests will be evaluated on the basis of expected attendance, subject and budget.

Interpretation of open sessions is streamed live to allow remote participation in any supported language.

TELECONFERENCE INTERPRETATION

ICANN provides English, French and Spanish interpretation for ALAC, RALOs and GAC teleconferences.

Teleconference interpretation support will also be provided to other ACs and SOs, on a case-by-case basis, and subject to schedule availability.

TRANSCRIPTION

Typically, open sessions and some closed sessions of public meetings are recorded. The audio files are posted on the meeting website with the exception of closed sessions, where the audio and transcript are delivered to the relevant secretariat.

In addition, teleconferences, whether they have interpretation or not, are supported with the provision of the corresponding transcript.

All transcriptions, regardless of language, use a template for consistency. The template must include the following disclosure on the first page: ***The following is the result of transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases it may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is provided as an aid to the original audio file, but is not an authoritative record.***

Transcripts will be published in the applicable languages and edited based on the audio file.

SCRIBING (RTT – Real-Time Transcription)

Many ICANN meeting sessions require real-time transcription (scribing), including:

- Opening session
- Public Forum
- Board meetings
- GAC meetings
- Select Supporting Organization and Advisory Committee meetings

When scribing is provided at open sessions, the scribes produce a transcript that can be posted on the meeting website.

For sessions with real-time transcription, the transcription will be verbatim and not corrected for grammar or clarity. No editing is done. The template will also include the following disclosure on the first page: *The following is the result of transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases it may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is provided as an aid to the original audio file, but is not an authoritative record.*

VIDEO SUBTITLING

Video transcription and subtitling add caption to videos produced by ICANN and posted on the ICANN website and other online platforms. The technology can also create translated subtitles.

QUALITY CONTROL

ICANN is committed to providing high quality language services. Regardless of the service – translation, interpretation, subtitling, scribing or transcription – quality matters.

It is essential that documents be written in a way that facilitates accurate translation, and that each linguist working on translation of a document understands and accurately conveys the content of the source information. Linguists should therefore have a full understanding of ICANN's history, goals, organizational structure, processes and terminology.

Tools such as “language assets” are fundamental to that process. Examples are databases that store multilingual terminology (**terminology database**) and sentences that have previously been translated (**translation memory database**). They are updated monthly to ensure that linguists have ready access to the most current technical terms in native usage.

Quality may be monitored at specific milestones of a project. There are four steps to maintain and enhance quality:

- Maintaining terminology databases and other language assets prior to the provision of service
- Managing queries during the process
- Performing validation reviews
- Conducting annual assessments of suppliers.

Based on the Localization Industry Standards Association quality assurance model, language quality assessment consists of a partial review carried out on sample files by independent

reviewers to check and record the quality level at various stages and to define subsequent steps. Factors such as vendor experience and recent performance, content and project complexity, schedule and budget constraints will determine the frequency and level of the language quality assessment.

ICANN's Language Services Quality Assurance System includes two phases for all language services: preventive and corrective.

Preventive quality control requires careful document composition, and selection and training of linguists with the necessary background and language skills, translating or interpreting exclusively into their native language.

Careful document composition means writing in simple and easily understandable language, avoiding jargon, technical or legal terms and acronyms whenever possible. ICANN will adopt a writing standard and offer staff training that emphasizes clarity and brevity in composition.

Training of linguists includes:

- Continuous exposure to new information technologies, such as translation and desktop publishing software
- Collection of reference files and accessibility for language service providers
- Terminology management and automated terminology usage
- Checking of incoming materials and, if required, taking corrective measures on the source data
- Careful advance preparation of translation projects
- Protecting and formatting information
- Reviewing source files to validate document design and file integrity.

Corrective quality control involves:

- Systematic procedures to check quality before delivering a final document to the requestor, including proofreading
- Verifying formatting information to ensure file integrity after translation
- Ensuring consistent use of terminology

Supplementing preventive and corrective quality control, **metrics** track the performance of language service providers and translation teams. Criteria are:

- Accuracy
 - Additions
 - Completeness
- Terminology
 - Consistent adherence to glossary and translation databases

- Abbreviations
- Context
- Language
 - Grammatical correctness
 - Use of the correct word
 - Punctuation
 - Spelling
- Style
 - General style
 - Register and tone
 - Language variants and slang
- Audience
 - Use of the appropriate language variation for the country
 - Adherence to ICANN's usage of terminology

Validation Review Cycle

The **validation review cycle** is used by most global organizations. Although it adds a step to the translation process, it substantially reduces the chance of errors.

There are two ways to undertake a validation review cycle: outsourcing and in-house. Most multilingual organizations use a combination of these methods.

Outsourcing involves linguistic reviewers in the target language country, bringing a third party into each project. The reviewers can be the same linguists who produce translations, although the person who translates the source document will never be the one who reviews the translated document.

In-house validation review engages native language staff members with the necessary subject matter knowledge to review translated documents.

Determining which option will be used depends on:

- The existence and availability of required language native speakers on the staff
- Document size
- Technical or industry-specific knowledge required
- The deadline

The most important part of a validation review cycle is to ensure that the linguist or subject matter expert is a **neutral** third-party reviewer. The selected individual must:

- Thoroughly and impartially review the translation
- Report on its quality in an unbiased fashion
- Make any necessary changes to the translation.

In addition, the reviewer should complete a detailed report, including categorization and classification of errors.

A **web-based platform** to manage the validation review cycle is under consideration. This would provide:

- A single point of contact for all validators
- Reports on the time a validator spent on a document
- Online access to project schedules for workflow coordination and tracking
- Quick exchange of files
- Access for validators to online linguistic assets such as glossaries, reference materials and style guides, to increase consistency
- Exchange of queries and comments
- A platform for dispute resolution
- Significant improvement in production time
- Greater efficiency through translation memories and glossaries

LANGUAGE SERVICES POLICY REVIEW

To ensure that the revised Language Services Policy is delivering the desired results – making information more accessible and increasing participation in the multistakeholder model – ICANN will develop the analytical tools necessary on ICANN.org to track the use of:

- Documents
- ICANN meeting session transcriptions
- Conference call transcriptions
- Audio streams from ICANN meeting sessions

In FY2014, an analysis will be completed to determine if changes to the Language Services Policy are required.