

CAN COORDINATION STILL HOLD?

From Participation to Performance
in Global Internet Governance

A Trust Scorecard for ICANN's Naming Layer



Daniel Ahlers · Seville · June 2026

When is someone truly connected to the Internet?

X *Signal and a device are not enough.*

→ **They need to trust the system.**



Field Research: Social Impact of
Energy & Internet Access
@ Jharkhand, India



WSIS+20 & AI for Good
Summit
@ ITU, Geneva, Switzerland

WHO AM I

B.Sc. Psychology/Social Science
@ Research University of Groningen

M.Sc. Consumer Behavior/Management /Technology
@ Technical University of Munich (TUM)

Areas of research & experiences:
Social impact / Human Centered Innovations /
Global Governance & Technologies

WHY THIS QUESTION?

PARTICIPATION IS NO LONGER ENOUGH

Governments, users, and businesses are all asking the same thing:

GOVERNMENTS

Does global coordination still work — or should we regulate this ourselves?

USERS

Can I trust these domain names, or will the next one I click be a scam?

BUSINESSES

Will the Internet remain predictable and interoperable for global commerce?

= Shift from participation to performance.

Trust at the Naming Layer

LEGITIMACY

1

Do stakeholders still accept the coordination process?

SAFETY

2

Can users rely on domain names without constant abuse?

USABILITY

3

Do valid names actually work across languages and systems?

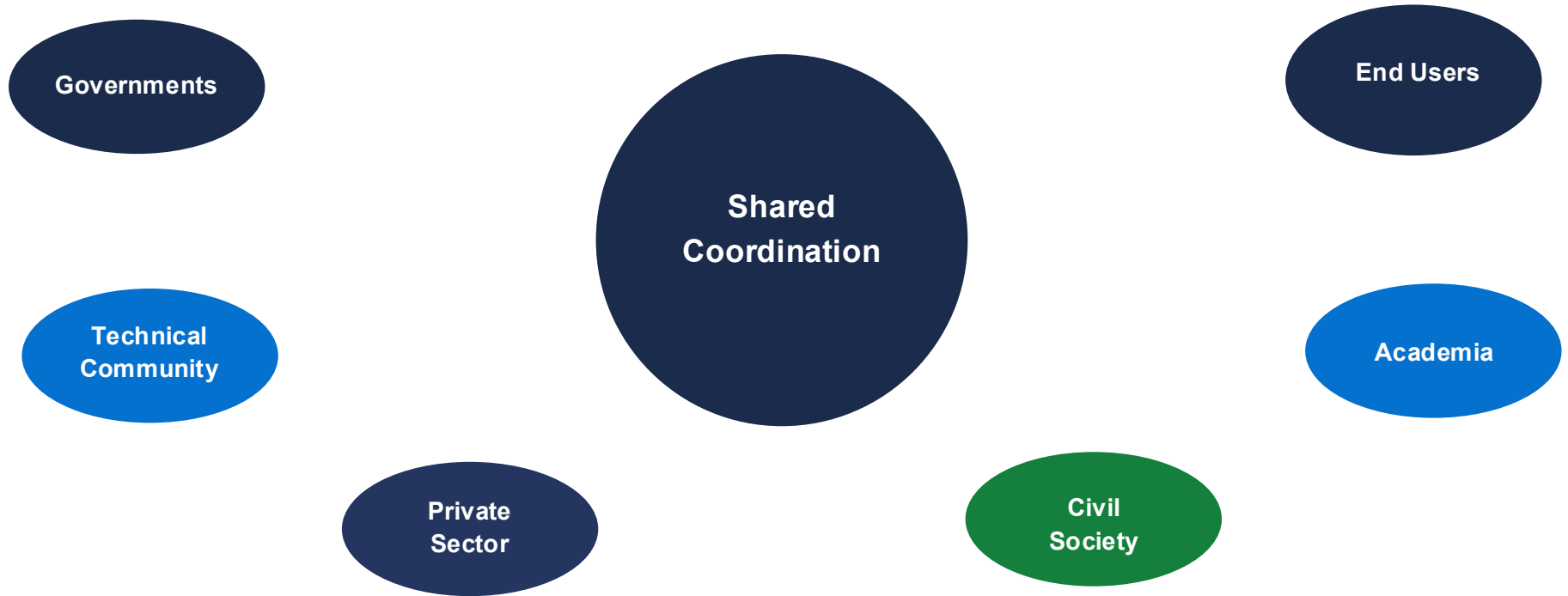
TRUST

EXPLAINABILITY

4

Can non-insiders understand how decisions are made?

Legitimacy = Accepted Process



WSIS+20 (2025): ICANN warns that moving toward single-stakeholder control risks fragmentation, reduced innovation, and weaker interoperability.

Safety = Names Users Can Trust

Can I click this link? Is this domain real or fake?

1,003,924

phishing attacks
observed in
Q1 2025

Why this matters for governance:

1 DNS Abuse
at Scale

2 Users & institutions
lose confidence

3 Political pressure
for state control

ICANN response:

DNS Abuse Mitigation (since 5 Apr 2024) · Domain Metrica public dashboard (Sept 2025) · Contractual obligations for registrars

Usability = Valid Names Actually Work

A name is not inclusive if the system rejects it

Universal Acceptance:

“All valid domain names and email addresses should work in all software applications.”

This includes:

- New TLDs (.app, .shop, .africa...)
- IDNs (Arabic, Chinese, Hindi...)
- Email in non-ASCII scripts

Email address:

user@مثال.السعودية

✘ Invalid email format

Valid.

But unusable.

That is a trust failure.

Explainability = People Understand Why

Legitimacy depends on whether people can follow how decisions are made

INSIDE THE COMMUNITY

PDP

GAC Advice

RAA / RA

DAAR → Domain Metrica

UA / EAI

ccNSO / GNSO / ALAC



PLAIN LANGUAGE

- Who decides this?
- What changed and why?
- How can I get involved?
- Is this domain name safe?
- Why does my email fail?
- What does ICANN actually do?

Explainability is not public relations. It is governance infrastructure.

A Naming-Layer Trust Scorecard

Making trust visible, not just claimed. Built on existing ICANN data.

LEGITIMACY

- Stakeholder diversity
- Public comment engagement
- GAC / SOs participation rate

SAFETY

- Active abuse reports / TLD
- Mitigation response time
- Phishing takedown rate

USABILITY

- UA readiness: top software
- EAI-capable mail systems %
- IDN adoption trends

EXPLAINABILITY

- Plain-language summaries
- Newcomer participation rate
- Decision traceability

Four Actions for ICANN and Partners

1

MEASURE

Make trust indicators public and comparable. Build on Domain Metrica, ITHI, and Compliance Reports.

ICANN, registries, registrars

2

EXPLAIN

Translate governance outputs into plain-language summaries for policymakers, students, and newcomers.

ICANN communications, NGOs, academia

3

PARTNER

Cybersecurity firms, universities, and civil society each hold part of the solution. Build joint programs.

Private sector, academia, civil society

4

DELIVER

Defend the model not only as a principle — but through evidence of performance and measurable outcomes.

All stakeholders

Coordination can still hold.

Legitimate

Safe

Usable

Explainable

But only if trust becomes visible.

The future of coordination will not be defended only by saying the model is open.

It will be defended by showing that the model works.



Thank you!

Daniel Ahlers · ICANN86 NextGen



Let's connect!

ICANN's Existing Data Infrastructure

Four separate data streams — no unified public trust view

Domain Metrica

Tracks DNS abuse per TLD. Replaced DAAR in September 2025.

URL: icann.org/resources/pages/domain-metrica · PUBLIC — open dashboard, updated regularly

UA Readiness Evaluations

Measures how well software, email clients, and platforms handle non-ASCII names and IDNs.

URL: icann.org/ua · PUBLIC — run periodically, results published

Compliance Reports

Tracks whether registrars and registries meet contractual obligations on DNS abuse.

URL: compliance-reports.icann.org/compliance.html · PUBLIC — quarterly publication

ITHI

Identifier Technology Health Indicators. Tracks DNS resolver behaviour and protocol adoption.

URL: ithi.research.icann.org · PUBLIC — monthly data, downloadable

The gap: no single public view connects these four streams into a coherent measure of whether the naming layer is gaining or losing trust. That is what the scorecard fills.

VERIFY: ICANN Domain Metrica — icann.org/resources/pages/domain-metrica
ICANN Compliance Reports — compliance-reports.icann.org/compliance.html · ICANN ITHI — ithi.research.icann.org

Safety: DNS Abuse Data – Verified Sources

Q1 2025 phishing data and ICANN enforcement timeline

1,003,924

phishing attacks

observed in Q1 2025

30.9% targeted financial & payment services — largest single category

ICANN's enforcement response:

Sept 2025

Domain Metrica launched — replaces DAAR as public DNS abuse tracking dashboard.

5 Apr 2024

New contractual obligations in force: registrars and registries now legally required to act on credible abuse reports.

Ongoing

ICANN Contractual Compliance publishes monthly enforcement reports at compliance-reports.icann.org/dnsabuse.html

VERIFY:

APWG Q1 2025 full PDF — docs.apwg.org/reports/apwg_trends_report_q1_2025.pdf

ICANN DNS Abuse Enforcement Reports — compliance-reports.icann.org/dnsabuse.html

Universal Acceptance: Programme Status and Adoption Gap

UA is an active ICANN programme — the presentation uses it as a usability example only



UA is a real ICANN programme — not a new idea

ICANN coordinates Universal Acceptance work. The UA Steering Group (UASG) was archived November 2025 — not because work ended, but because it was absorbed directly into ICANN at icann.org/ua.



UA Curriculum Programme launched February 2026

Curriculum integration announced at institutions in Bahrain, India, Mexico, and the Association of African Universities. Active global rollout underway.



Adoption gap remains in major software platforms

UA readiness evaluations confirm that many widely-used platforms, mail servers, and public-service forms still reject valid non-ASCII names. The programme exists — universal deployment does not yet.



Progress is not surfaced as a public trust indicator

UA readiness data is published by ICANN but is not connected to a broader 'is the naming layer usable?' narrative. The scorecard would surface this data as one public indicator.

VERIFY:

ICANN Universal Acceptance — icann.org/ua

ICANN UA Curriculum Programme Feb 2026 — search 'UA Curriculum 2026' at icann.org/resources

Legitimacy: WSIS+20 Timeline and Political Context

The most significant political test of the multistakeholder model in 20 years

2003

WSIS Geneva: First World Summit on the Information Society. Internet governance principles established. ICANN's technical coordination role recognised.

2005

WSIS Tunis Agenda: Multistakeholder model formalised. Internet Governance Forum (IGF) created. Framework remains in place today.

2006-24

IGF meets annually. Multistakeholder model implemented globally across DNS, IP, and naming coordination.

2025

WSIS+20 Review: UN reassesses all WSIS outcomes after 20 years. Central question: should the multistakeholder model continue, or should states take direct control?

Dec 2025

UN General Assembly adopts WSIS+20 outcome. Collaborative multistakeholder approach reaffirmed — but political pressure on the model continues.

2026

ICANN86, Seville: governance landscape shaped by WSIS+20 results. Critical moment for demonstrating model performance.

VERIFY:

ICANN WSIS+20 blog (Apr 2025) — icann.org/en/blogs/details/wsis20-a-critical-juncture-for-the-internets-future-25-04-2025-en

ICANN on UN GA WSIS+20 (Dec 2025) — icann.org/en/blogs/details/un-general-assembly-adopts-wsis20-icann-highlights-the-role-of-collaboration-17-12-2025-en

Trust Scorecard: Proposed Indicators and Data Sources

All indicators are proposed — not existing official ICANN KPIs. Data sources already exist.

NOTE: I am not proposing a broader ICANN mandate. I am proposing a clearer way to communicate and evaluate work ICANN already performs.

LEGITIMACY

Source: ICANN Compliance Reports, public comment data, Board decision summaries

- Stakeholder representation: geographic/functional diversity
- GAC advice publication and follow-up rate

SAFETY

Source: ICANN Domain Metrica, DNS Abuse Enforcement Reports

- Active abuse reports per TLD per month
- Mitigation outcome rate: % of reports resolved within SLA

USABILITY

Source: ICANN UA Readiness Evaluations, ITHI

- Share of tested mail servers supporting EAI
- IDN resolution success rate across major resolvers

EXPLAINABILITY

Source: ICANN Learn platform data, newcomer programme metrics

- % of Board decisions with published plain-language summary
- New participant rate in key policy processes (PDPs)

VERIFY: ICANN Compliance Reports — [compliance-reports.icann.org/compliance.html](https://www.icann.org/compliance-reports) · Domain Metrica — [icann.org/resources/pages/domain-metrica](https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/domain-metrica)
ICANN Strategic Plan FY2026–2030 — [icann.org/resources/pages/strategic-plan-fy2026-2030-2023-11-22-en](https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/strategic-plan-fy2026-2030-2023-11-22-en) · ITHI — ithi.research.icann.org

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