RIPE ncc

RIPE CENTR Proposal

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Status

This document is in draft from and is open to comments.

Scope

The intended audience for this document is the the RIPE area National (ISO 3166) Top Level Domain administrators and any other interested parties. Comments to the author are welcome.

1. Introduction

This document aims to propose goals of and a structure for the RIPE Council of European National Top level domain Registries (RIPE CENTR), if such an organisation should be started. The reasoning behind starting RIPE CENTR was outlined in the tld-wg task force proposal (http://www.ripe.net/wg/tld/task-force/ripe-centr-1.1.html) and is not the subject of this document.

This document will firstly explore the goals of RIPE CENTR and following this a proposed structure for the organisation will be detailed. Finally a transition path from the present situation to the final organisational structure will be described. This transition path will describe the initial setting up of RIPE

CENTR as a project, with the full step to a seperate independant organisation taking place after a period of approximately eighteen months.

2. Goals of RIPE CENTR

The goals of an organisation although being its guiding light are not fixed in stone. The future membership of RIPE CENTR would follow, amend or discard and initial goals set. The initial goals of the organisation will be taken from the discusssions of the tld-wg. The individual goals are listed below but they all fit into the general framework of acting as a link between IANA and the individual RIPE area n-tlds in the bottom-up structure of top level domain hierarchy, and improving coordination and cooperation between individual RIPE area n-tlds.

The proposed goals are:

- Fund and be involved in IANA goverence as part of the global Internet hierarchy
- Act as a channel for nTLD liaison with other external parties
- Give regular reports to members of developments in TLD area
- Carry out activities as approved by the members. It is proposed that the initial activities are those defined by the tld-wg. These activities are listed and prioritised in the tld-wg Workplan (http://www.ripe.net/wg/tld/workplan.html). At present the workplan item with the highest priority is the documentation of individual nTLD policies and pricing models. Once documented this data, in addition to being a useful public information source, could be used to recommend best practices and pricing models.

3. Proposed organisational structure

Two guiding principles determine the organisational structure of RIPE CENTR. One principle is that the structure should support bottom-up governence, i.e. that the members are the ones who govern the organisation and determine the policies. The second principle is the scope of the membership. All national (ISO 3166) top level domain registires that fall within the RIPE area should be members of the RIPE CENTR.

The principles behind RIPE CENTR and its role are very similar to those of the RIPE NCC, the only main difference being that the members of the RIPE NCC have a common interest in IP numbers, whereas the members of RIPE CENTR have a common interest in domain names. Since its inception in 1992 the RIPE NCC has evolved into a structure that successfully supports a bottom-up hierarchy. Thus due to the similarities and to avoid reinventing a well working wheel it would seem sensible to base the structure of RIPE CENTR on that of RIPE NCC. Following this course of action would mean that RIPE CENTR would have the following key organisational elements:

- It should be a not for profit association with three organisational bodies; the general assembly; and the executive board; and the management.
- All members are in the general assembly and it is this body that has the final say in all matters.
- The executive board is chosen by the general assembly. It is responsible for day-to-day governence of RIPE CENTR.
- The management reports directly to the executive board and ultimately to the general assembly. It is responsible for all day-to-day operational matters.
- Policy of RIPE CENTR is ultimately decided by the general assembly, who meet at least once a year, and continuously discuss via e-mail.
- All funding for RIPE CENTR comes from the members, and not from other external parties.

4. Transition path

It is essential that the final RIPE CENTR structure be stable and have overwhelming consensus. This process will not happen overnight and many areas are still open. There may even be individual n-tld registries who do not yet see then need for RIPE CENTR. However this does not mean that a voluntary interim activity cannot be set up. There are many potential activities of RIPE CENTR that would be better served if work started on them in the short term as opposed to waiting until full consensus and preparation work is completed.

With the above in mind, it is proposed that an interim RIPE CENTR project be started. This project could start on various identified activities. As well as the benefit of having these activites started earlier without rushing the formal set up of RIPE CENTR, an interim project would give more insight as to the needs of the future formal organisation, and may well convince the undecided people of the benefit gained from such an organisation.

Various aspects of starting such a project need attention. The most critical aspects are detailed below with a proposal of how they should be tackled.

4.1. Contributors

In the same way as the formal organisation, the RIPE CENTR project needs to be bottom-up in structure. Therefore it needs contributors to guide and fund it. The scope of contributors for the project should be same as that of members for the final organisation, i.e. all RIPE area national (ISO 3166) top level domain registries. Contribution should be on a voluntary basis. Contribution would involve the signing of a contrct with RIPE NCC for the support of RIPE CENTR. By signing such a contract the contributor would not become a member of RIPE NCC.

If RIPE CENTR shoudl terminate being a RIPE NCC project then any remaining funds would be proportionately returned to the contributors or could be given to any follow-up organisation.

4.2. Funding

Funding for the project will be exclusively found from the members. The level of funding will depend upon the scope of the project and the number of members. In general though the funding will have to meet two costs; the partial funding of IANA; and the covering of costs incurred in the execution of the activities defined by the members.

A draft budget can be found at Appendix A.

4.3. Location

The choosing of a location to house the RIPE CENTR project is not necessarily the same as the choosing of a location for the future RIPE CENTR organisation. This proposal only discusses the location of the RIPE CENTR project.

It is proposed that the RIPE NCC host the RIPE CENTR project. The reasons for choosing the RIPE NCC as opposed to another location are varied, but the most important ones are:

- For this project to succeed it has to be seen as totally impartial and be able to immediately have credibility. By being hosted by RIPE NCC, which has built up a well known and respected position of impartiality within the Internet governence hierarchy over the last six years, and using certain RIPE NCC resources, the RIPE CENTR project will immediately have a headstart.
- The RIPE NCC has also gained a lot of experience in the managing of a bottom-up structure accross an identicel geographical area which will be of benefit to the RIPE CENTR project.
- If hosted by the RIPE NCC initial communication with IANA will be easier since communication channels and contacts are already in use.
- The RIPE NCC administration is already handling an similar membership fee budgeting and charging system, thus the addition of the RIPE CENTR activities would not be disruptive and could be easily accomodated.
- The RIPE NCC has experience of successfully nuturing projects e.g. the PRIDE project, which once mature enough become independant.

4.4. Staff

It is proposed that the staffing of the RIPE CENTR project be kept to a minimum until the future of the project is guaranteed. The initial staffing would be one full-time RIPE NCC employee (RIPE CENTR Manager) for project management, liasion, and activity coordination, and various other RIPE NCC employees or consultants on an ad-hoc basis as their skills were needed.

Please note that this is the initial staffing level. If then workload increases or new activities are taken on then of course the staffing levels can, after approval of the project contributors and RIPE NCC, be raised.

4.5. Operations

The activities of RIPE CENTR will be carried out by the RIPE NCC, in the form of those staff members allocated to this project. The RIPE CENTR Manager will, after consultation with the project contributors and the tld-wg, propose an activity plan to the contributors for their approval. Only once approved by the contributors and by RIPE NCC (as the legally responsible body) will an activity plan be executed.

Communication between the contributors and the staff would take place via a RIPE NCC maintained mailing list (seperate from the tld-wg list). The RIPE CENTR project would publish all documents and project results on the RIPE NCC web site.

4.6. Time Frame

The following time frame is proposed for the creation of the RIPE CENTR project and the future RIPE CENTR organisation.

28 Jan 98 (RIPE 29, Amsterdam)

- RIPE CENTR project proposal presented to the tld-wg for discussion.
- The Proposal is simultaneously sent to all potential members.

Feb 98

- Principle consensus is reached that the project will be hosted by the RIPE NCC, and the what structure the project will take.

Mar 98

- Based upon consensus reached in February operational plans and budgets and funding requirements for the RIPE CENTR project are published.

Mar-Apr 98

- RIPE area ISO 3166 top level domain registries volunteer to be contributors of the RIPE CENTR project and fund the project.

20 May 98 (RIPE 30, Stockholm)

- The final structure of the RIPE CENTR project is presented along with the initial list of contributors.
- The initial group of contributors have the first meeting to decide on activity priorities.

Jun 98

- The RIPE CENTR project becomes operational.

Jun 99

- The RIPE CENTR project is assessed by its contributors as to whether it should continue. If it is seen to be successful plans should be made to create the independant RIPE CENTR organisation.

2000

- The independant RIPE CENTR organisation is established.

Appendix A - Draft budget for RIPE CENTR

This draft budget is based upon the staffing and activity levels as detailed in this proposal. If extra activities are added then this budget will also be subject to change. The budget is activity based.

This budget is prudently forecast using the most up to date information available. The period budgetted for is June 1998 to June 1999.

Activity	Cost (ECU)
Workplan (Documentation and analysis of polices and charging)	124500
Liaison	29000
IANA support	81500
TOTAL	235000

The budget shown above will be funded solely by the RIPE CENTR contributors. Within the RIPE area there are 100 seperate ISO 3166 top level domains, some of which have a lot of business and some of which do not yet have a registry running them. The table below shows the contributions that would be needed if various numbers of tld contributed to RIPE CENTR and all of them paid an equal contribution.

Number of contributors	Annual contribution (ECU)
100	2350
50	4700
40	5875
30	7835
20	11750
10	23500

It is not known have many nTLDs will fund RIPE CENTR and thus no fixed contribution rate can be set. Therefore it will be left up to individual nTLD registries to determine what they wish to contribute to RIPE CENTR. The only limit set is that the contribution must be at least ECU 2350. It would be appreciated if some pioneer nTLD registries volunteered to contribute a sizeable amount so as to ensure the initial stability of RIPE CENTR.