

Report to CoM on Feasibility Study

A report was made for the CoM meeting of 11 December 2001:

Highlights:

- Majority of members expressing views want Nominet to facilitate improvements in standards.
- Voluntary membership of CoP and Accreditation body not viable without heavy subsidy.
- Potential membership base of a CoP purely for domain name registration under .uk is too small to be financially viable.
- A more general CoP for all aspects of Internet service provision would be more efficient and give more comprehensive consumer protection.
- Attention drawn to recommendations on improving standards by better enforcement of the Tag Holder Agreement (THA), (drawn up at the request of the PAB in line with views expressed during the INCOP consultation period)

The CoM accepted the conclusions of the report and endorsed the view that the THA should be more rigorously enforced.

Next Steps

There are already a number of codes of practice in place covering various aspects of Internet Service Provision (UK Web Designers' Association, ISPA etc). Most suffer from lack of resources and funding to adequately promote and enforce their code. I believe that improving industry standards would be better achieved by pooling resources to create a one-stop standards body with a CoP covering a broad range of Internet services. This would be more likely to satisfy government/consumer body requirements and prevent statutory regulation. With this in mind I am currently trying to approach other bodies such as ISPA to investigate this possibility further. I would like to do this under the auspices of the DTI and will contact them to get initial reaction.

It has been suggested that this idea be taken even further and a broader organisation be established covering other aspects of 'governance/regulation' for Internet issues and providing services such as expertise and consultancy. I am in contact with Steve Dyer to investigate this further and look at how funding could be raised.

Given the views expressed by Nominet members, I have also been looking at how Nominet can improve standards. Recommendations in the report to this meeting on better enforcement of THA, an action given by the PAB at their last meeting, go some way to improving standards and cutting down workload at Nominet. I am also looking at ways in which Nominet could facilitate, in-house, a voluntary CoP for Tag Holders.

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