

Variable Registration Periods

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1. Introduction

The PAB last considered the topic of variable registration periods in 2004, culminating in a series of working group recommendations presented to the PAB at their March 2005 meeting. In summary the working group recommendations, which were approved by both the PAB and the Board were that:

- Single year registration periods be introduced (due to be introduced later this year)
- Registration period synchronisation be permitted (again, due to be introduced later this year)
- The PAB seek further input from the executive in due course (and after positive renewals had been introduced and running for a period of time) on the issue of 10 year registrations due to their concerns regarding:
 - data integrity
 - financial implications (e.g. the requirement to defer income over a 10 year period)
 - domain names held by defunct registrants for prolonged periods

Based on the feedback to the working group, demand for an extended registration period appears to have been limited, and outweighed by the concerns listed above. However, in the intervening period the executive has become aware of growing demand for longer registration periods, particularly in light of the level of choice offered by other registries. We therefore propose to revisit extended registration periods and investigate the PAB working group's concerns.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the feedback we have received, the offerings of other registries and how we propose to take this discussion forward.

2. Other registries

We have carried out an initial investigation into the registration periods offered by other registries.

1. One to Ten Years

This category has a variable initial registration period of between one and 10 years. The renewal period can be extended up to the maximum 10 year term. Examples of registries that offer registration periods of between one and 10 years include .com, .net, .us, .tv, .org, .biz, .info and .mobi.

2. Fixed Term – 2 years

Along with .uk we have identified one other TLD that operates on a fixed period of two years for initial registration and renewal, .au.

3. Fixed Term – 1 year

A number of TLDs operate a fixed annual term. The initial registration period being one year with renewal required every year, examples include .eu and .fr.

4. Variable – Monthly

Just one registry offers registration periods between one and 120 months, .nz.

3. Customer demand

We are currently carrying out a programme of service reviews with a cross section of registrars. While this does not yet entail a statistically valid sample, to date 90% of registrars contacted have requested registration periods in excess of two years.

This issue is also frequently raised in member lunches and 1:1 registrar meetings with the CEO.

Given that 97%¹ of .uk registrars also register domain names in the gTLDs, matching the offering in the gTLDs may be of benefit to these registrars and their customers.

4. Next steps

We propose to investigate the original concerns expressed by the working group regarding data integrity, the financial implications of deferring income over periods longer than two years and domain names held by defunct registrants.

We will bring further information and appropriate recommendations to the July 2007 PAB.

In the meantime we would welcome any initial thoughts or guidance the PAB wish to give.

¹ Registrar research 2004, see http://www.nominet.org.uk/digitalAssets/16851_MemberAndTagSurvey.pdf