



NOMINET

Nominet Stakeholder Committee Conference Call

4th May 2017

Dialling-in: Tim Barnes; Colin Griffiths; Carolyn Kimber; Dave Thomas

Apologies: Lorna Gradden; Chris Marsden; Simon Rice; Duraid Silarbi

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Call Agenda

1. Internet & Jurisdiction Domains & Jurisdiction Contact Group
2. Vibrant Digital Future Metrics
3. Nominet update
4. AOB

Internet & Jurisdiction Domains Contact Group

The Policy Team outlined the work of Internet & Jurisdiction forum¹ and noted that Nominet is participating in the Domains & Jurisdiction Contact Group, looking at issues around domain name suspension requests. Nominet's aim has been to share their experiences from the approaches that have been adopted in .UK and to learn more about how these challenges affect other industry members. The work plan for the contact group² includes a set of questions.

Committee members were asked for their views on these questions, particularly considering:

- their own experience and/or areas of expertise
- the potential impacts of any broad policy options on their stakeholder groups or networks

The committee noted that this is a complex set of problems. Content hosted overseas is often beyond the reach of local law enforcement in terms of take-down. ISP blocking is more often an achievable solution and can be applied at a local level. Age verification when implemented will also play a role in ensuring children are not exposed to harmful content.

In the brand protection area, it was noted that tackling infringing content is a constant battle. It can only be tackled if the brand owner is aware and so the first challenge is having sufficient reporting channels. Developing good cross-industry relationships often helps in this respect.

In terms of actions, it was noted that commercial platforms such as eBay have their own abuse mechanisms. They, along with social media platforms, recognise that there can be brand damage associated with a perceived lack of action meaning there are drivers for industry led solutions.

One cautionary note is that industry players sometimes take use of their platforms as an indicator of user satisfaction. This can be a false assumption. Users often question whether any of these issues are truly governable and are perhaps more resigned to the status quo than happy with it. In general, there is a commonly held feeling that the pace of technology has out-stripped the pace of regulation.

Specific to Nominet, the committee noted that Nominet does not host content and is not a content regulator. This is an important distinction to maintain. With respect to systems abuses, however, there may be calls for Nominet to do more. The Policy Team noted that the terms & conditions of registration for .UK domain names give Nominet discretion to act in such circumstances.

With respect to terminology, it was noted that there are some forms of abuse, such as child abuse images, that are universally considered illegal. Beyond this, issues of subjective judgement or varying regional norms quickly occur. In these latter areas interventions based on geolocation may be more appropriate. Drawing such distinctions, however, does mean that common and agreed terminology will be important.

Regarding applicable law, one principle would be that if a company, wherever based, is making content available to a country, that content should comply with the local laws of that country. Companies have the option of restricting their sites based on geolocation. That said, it's easy to see how such an approach could quickly become controversial.

Countries should not be able to force their local laws on other countries. Before action at the domain name level, which will have global reach, other options should be exhausted such as using geolocation to enable locally applied safeguards.

The Policy Team thanked the committee for their thoughts and noted that they'll keep the committee updated as the work of the contact group continues.

Vibrant Digital Future Metrics

The Policy Team confirmed that Nominet is developing a barometer index to assess the UK's progress towards a 'Vibrant Digital Future'. The index will be made up of a basket of quantitative measures from existing data sources and sentiment measures from polling data.

Metrics under consideration aim to assess advances in six broad areas:

Education & Skills	Online behaviours & their impacts
Entrepreneurism & Business	Security, Safety, Rights
Inclusion & Diversity	Technology & Connectivity

Committee members were asked for views on useful metrics, particularly considering:

- what a truly digitally engaged and enabled UK will look like.
- what indicators will signal progress towards that vision?
- are there any gaps in the six broad areas noted above?
- what data sources will be available to provide a measure?

In the discussion that followed it was noted that metrics around numbers of patent applications can be poor indicators of entrepreneurial activity as there is always a big lead-in time on patents. The useful metric is the quality of patents, rather than just the quantity. It was agreed, however,

that it is difficult to capture meaningful measures of quality. Perhaps the limited value of quantity measures can be factored in when weighting metrics within the final index.

A useful metric will be something that assessed the gap between the skills required in the economy and the skills available. This could be sourced from specialist recruiters in the digital sector by looking at the number of vacancies in the tech sector and how quickly they are filled. Such metrics can be used to drill down beyond basic level tech skills such as basic programming languages and web-design into more cutting-edge areas like AI and data analytics. One example of a possible data source is the stackoverflow jobs forum³.

It was noted that international comparisons will be useful. Surveys about connectivity, for example, will always highlight the desire for more. Internationally, however, the UK measures up quite well (certainly with respect to other European nations). Some international comparators will add this useful context.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor⁴ and Ofcom's research and data collection programme⁵ were noted as other useful sources.

For qualitative sentiment analysis, the value of focus groups was discussed. It was noted that they allow for some scene setting and context building, which can lead to more insightful responses. Perhaps this could be added into the planned methodologies.

Finally, it was suggested that some meta-analysis of all available data for any individual metric could well give some better insights. This would require thought as to which data sets could be combined and how.

The Policy Team thanked the committee for their thoughts.

Action: Policy Team to feed the above points into the current planning discussions.

Nominet update

The Policy Team provided an update on recent company announcements including that Mark Wood took over as Chair of Nominet following the AGM in April, Kelly Salter of Namesco Limited has been elected to the board as a non-executive Director, and that Nominet is part of the DRIVEN consortium who have received a £8.6m grant from Innovate UK for a three-year project exploring the infrastructure required to support the use of autonomous vehicles.

AOB

None

Notes:

1 - <http://www.internetjurisdiction.net/>

2 - <http://www.internetjurisdiction.net/uploads/pdfs/Papers/Domains-Jurisdiction-Program-Paper.pdf>

3 - <http://stackoverflow.com/jobs>

4- <http://www.gemconsortium.org>

5 - <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/about-ofcoms-research>