
ICANN69 | Community Days Sessions – ccNSO Members Meeting: Impact of Covid-19 (1 of 2)
Wednesday, October 14, 2020 – 14:00 to 15:30 CEST

KIMBERLY CARLSON: Hello, and welcome to the ccNSO Members Meeting session on COVID-19 impact. My name is Kimberly Carlson. Kathy and I will be your remote participation managers today.

As a reminder to all, this call is being recorded. Recordings will be posted on the ICANN69 website shortly after the call. If at any point you have a question or a comment for one of our presenters, please type those in the chat pod with the brackets around it as shown on the screen. We will get to as many questions as time will allow. Additionally, you can verbally ask questions using the raised hand icon found at the bottom of your screen. You will then be automatically placed in the speaker queue. We will take the questions in the order that your hand was raised. Finally, the session, like all other ICANN activities, is governed under the ICANN expected standards of behavior.

With that, I would like to hand the floor over to Yuri Takamatsu, our session chair. Thank you.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Thank you, Kim. Hello. Good evening, good morning, everyone. Welcome, and thank you for joining today's ccNSO Members meeting.

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

I'm Yuri Takamatsu from .jp (Japan) and the Chair of this session regarding the impact of COVID-19.

This session will focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the business side of ccTLDs. This session consists of two parts, and I'm Chair of the whole session. Irina Danelia from .ru will be the moderator of Part 2. Patrick Myles from CENTR, Alex Corenthin from .sn, David Curtin from .ie,, Ai-Chin Lu from .tw, and Alejandra Reynoso from .gt are the presenters of Part 1 and also the panelists for Part 2.

Part 1 has 90 minutes and mainly focuses on the ccTLD domain registration trends. As I mentioned, today we have wonderful five presenters. Patrick Myles from CENTR will talk about the global and European trends. After that, four presenters from each region will share their experiences. Then we will have a 30-minute break and move on to Part 2 to discuss further the COVID-19 pandemic, moderated by Irina from .ru. The whole session's goal for Part 1 and Part 2 is to become a platform to share stories, focusing on registration trends. As different registries are surrounded by different situations, some trends may be similar but some may not. There are many differences between each other [inaudible]. So, for Part 1, we have a 13-minute presentation and a three-minute Q&A for each presenter. If you have any questions, yes, you can post it to the chat box, but I also encourage you to raise your hand. Then I will pick you up from the queue.

So the first presenter is Patrick Myles from CENTR. He will introduce the global and European trends. Patrick, the floor is yours.

PATRICK MYLES: Thank you very much, Yuri. Can you all hear me okay? And you can perhaps even see me?

Yuri?

YURI TAKAMATSU: Yes.

PATRICK MYLES: Okay, great. So here we go. Thanks for having me. As Yuri said, I'm Patrick Myles. I'm with CENTR, the European ccTLD association that is based in Brussels, although I am actually based in London at the moment. Today I'm going to be talking about the trends that we're seeing in the global TLD market, as well as predominantly on the European ccTLD market. CENTR is the association for European ccTLDs, so of course we have a big focus on that market, and we have a lot more data available to us.

Just going to the next slide—and then the next slide—we'll start on the global market. Now, as everybody knows, it's been a very interesting year for domain name registrations. This is the current situation. If you click once or twice here, you'll see this is the breakup of domain names by their TLD group globally. So it's a recap. We have around 375 million domains. So this is, if you like, the size of the market globally. It's broken up between ccTLDs at 34%—click again—.com at 46%—click again—the other gTLDs, which is mostly made up of around 1,100

or 1,200 new gTLDs, and then .net and .org—two large ones that we bring out here. Overall, if you click a couple of times—oh, no; back; sorry—the overall market over the last one year has grown 3.1%. Now, this is overall growth from April to April. This is when there’s a small lag on this data because we have to aggregate data from a lot of different regions on ccTLDs.

If we look at the actual growth trend—next slide—we see that this is median growth of the top 100 largest TLDs in the world. This is both gTLDs and ccTLDs. As you can see here in the very last parts of the line into 2020, we see that there is a strong uptick/uptrend in domain growth, and the median has finished at 3.6% in May 2020.

Next slide. You’ll see that the lockdowns started around there, and there is obviously a high correlation between high growth and lockdowns, which we’ll go into further now.

Next slide. Just on a regional capacity here, we see that the trend is relatively similar amongst a couple of groups. So you’ll see APTLD 25 and then CENTR 30 there. In recent months, they have aligned a little bit in their growth trajectory. More noticeably, you’ll see that .com is quite above the rest actually. So the .com growth has been significantly higher for quite some time. So there’s no changes there. I would say there’s probably slightly less of the new domain registrations than we’ve seen in other groups in .com, but we’ll get to that. Next slide.

Again, this is the status of things at the middle of the year. This CENTR 30 represents mostly European ccTLDs. APTLD is the

Asia Pacific. The gTLD 300 is the top 300 gTLDs. .com we always bring out separately, just given its large size. So those are the growth rates there. As you see, .com is almost double the rest of them in terms of those medians.

But what's describing this growth? If you click Next, what we often look at is creates and deletes. So we look at the number of new domains—this is creates—versus the number of domains being deleted—the deletes. If you click once, you'll see that, in the CENTR case—this is medians; now, this is a ratio used to describe the create ratio, which is the number of domains that were newly created over the last twelve-month period versus normalized to the domain size of a TLD; it gives an indication of the newness of domains coming into a registry, and then deletes is a similar ration based on a one-year annualized figure—the spread there is 17/13. What that describes is that, over the last year, on average, there's been about 17% new domains coming into the average European ccTLD versus 13. That difference basically describes the growth that we're seeing in domains.

If you click Next, you'll see the gTLD 300. The first thing that you'll notice there is that the actual figures are quite a lot higher. This is linked to the fact that, of course, many of those gTLDs are smaller in size and their overall domain count. So that describes that. But the spread is not too different. So there's a 4% in the CENTR environment, and 5% in the gTLDs.

If you click again, you'll get the .com spread, which is similar, again. It's somewhere in the middle: 25% versus 22. Now, as .com is the largest TLD in the world, these are still pretty large figures in terms of the new domains coming in. But the spread is a little bit less in .com, so there's a higher buy and churn ratio going on. Next slide.

Now, what does this actually tell us in terms of how domains are being used? The number of domains going into a registry and going out does infer a degree of risk to the registry. If you have a lot of domains that are being constantly created and deleted, this might give a different kind of risk profile to the registry. So we tried to analyze this by crawling hundreds of thousands of domains across different TLDs using a crawler that we have in CENTR. What we've found in recent months—this is September—is that, if you see the top line—it's a bit hard to see, perhaps; the high-content domains (everything that didn't fall into a parked-type of domain or some sort of error)—we have around 46% active or high-content domains that are domains that are having an active website on them, against the gTLD 100, which is around 24%.

Now, we should be cautious with these numbers, of course, because there's other aspects to it. There's characteristics like the number of domains that were redirected. This is withstanding the result of any redirections that take place. So, this is not part of this presentation. It's a bit too detailed. But this gives an indication of the usage of those domains being used. So we see, for ccTLDs, it's generally a fairly healthy situation. A lot of the domain names do actually have websites and [this] links to what's going on in the market in that the new

domains have been created for new businesses that we're seeing over the year. I'll get to this in a second. Next slide.

Just on gTLDs, very briefly, the concentration ratio represents the number of gTLDs that are concentrated to the largest gTLDs. We see that is very, very much stable in the last little while. So, many of the gTLDs in the market are restricted to the top ten largest ones, .com being the most. Next slide, please.

Overall, the global market has enjoyed a significant surge. Concentration still remains high to gTLDs inside the gTLD category. And high-content domains in new gTLDs are still relatively low.

I'll move on because I realize the time. European markets. This is the focus. Next slide. In terms of the European market, we have seen a big jump in growth. We've also seen that that growth has been driven largely by an increase in new domain creations, as well as the stability in deletes and even a slight decrease in deletes. In terms of pricing, it has been about the same over the last two or three quarters. Retail price averages are about the same, and promotions among registrars about the same. We collect this data quarterly.

Popular websites, based on Alexa ranks, have improved in terms of the proportion to ccTLDs. That has improved considerably in a few different countries. Those countries are listed there. Croatia, Estonia, Italy, Ireland, and Portugal have seen improvements in the number of domains getting high traffic that are using a ccTLD. As I said, the new registrations are up significantly. I'll come to that in a second. Next slide. So, next slide?

In terms of new registrations, this shows a group of 25 CENTR-member ccTLDs. You see there, in the last few bars, if you click the next slide, the lockdown started there. Next slide.

Those three months ... Click three times. You'll see that, in April, the new creates were up 17%, 21% in May—click again—and 23% in June. So significant rises year on year in the new domain creations. Next slide.

Another way of looking at this is—click again—looking at new domain creations directly against each other between 2019 and 2020. You'll see there that there's a massive difference between the new domain creations of last year and this year. So these are the numbers.

Next slide. Just because those are aggregated figures, it's worth putting the ratios. The medians are there as well. As we can see, across the ccTLD environment for CENTR members, the creations were, on average, up. So it's not just a few ccTLDs creating this, but the averages are up across most ccTLDs, and the deletions are stable and, if not, a little bit down. So it's a positive story that we're seeing, actually, from this unfortunate global pandemic.

Next slide. What has all of this produced? A very significant turnaround in growth. As you see there in the last few months particularly, growth has increased significantly.

Next slide. The observations overall is that the market size has increased. Pricing is a little bit down. Steady rate of promotions. Website popularity is up for ccTLDs. Domain usage is roughly about

the same across the last few months. Of course, domain usage has its own life cycle as well. When a person or a business buys a new domain, sometimes it takes a little while for them to get active on their website and so forth.

Next slide. We have actually scanned new domain creations that use the term “COVID,” “corona,” or “virus.” We scanned a set earlier in the year and we found that those domains were a very, very small proportion. In fact, 8.8% of all new domain creations were using one of those terms. So there’s no significant impact there from those domains.

Next slide. Even on that 0.8%, only 28% had high-content websites attached to them.

Next slide. This reflects a little bit the business cycle or the life cycle of a domain. These are those same COVID domains that were scanned and their evolution over the year. This would probably be very similar to any new domain, but, as you can see there, the low-content domains are roughly about the same in the last few months. High content is slightly down, and errors have started to increase. So that’s, again, those 6,000 COVID domains that we have identified. But, again, that probably reflects any domain lifecycle of a brand-new domain.

Next slide. Some other reported impacts from CENTR members are that they’ve been monitoring the situation. Of course, at the CENTR level, we see the numbers, but we don’t always go into the whys and the local market situation. So this is for the next presenters to share a bit about that. They’ve been asked to check registration details from

authorities. They're sharing lists with authorities and certs. They're doing a bit more manual content checks, and even some countries or some ccTLDs have been reporting freezes in domain deletes or releases.

Next slide. Now, I'd just like to finish with this. Hopefully, the time is okay. My perception of all this personally is that there is a positive story. As you can see, there's a lot of new domain creations coming. Businesses are coming online as a matter of survival. So this is having a very significant impact on our business. So there is an opportunity for the humble domain name or the humble ccTLD in this new global environment that we're seeing. There's a more localized nature in business, I would say, as well. High street business is suffering. People are moving online. So there's an opportunity here. Web builders are getting better. There's a backlash against certain types of social media platforms. Yeah, the indication is positive for ccTLDs. So it's a good opportunity to reinforce the ccTLD brand, I would say.

I'll finish on there because I realize I'm close to the end. Thank you very much for your time. And you're on mute, Yuri.

YURI TAKAMATSU:

Sorry. Thank you, Patrick, for your presentation. There was really a lot of information inside your presentation.

Are there any questions from the audience?

Okay. Oh, I have a question from Irina. Irina, please?

IRINA DANELIA: Thank you, Yuri. Patrick, you have mentioned that new domain creations grew significantly in April, May, and June of this year. Do you see these trends today?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Patrick, you're in mute.

PATRICK MYLES: Sorry, Irina. Yes, I was on mute. So, on the question of if we see it today, the numbers in September show that we actually might. July had started to come down a little bit. August was actually almost at normal rates compared to that time of year, normally. I guess that's the summer break in Europe. Then it actually in September has jumped up again. September ... I don't remember the number offhand, but it is, again, a little bit higher than last year—quite a bit higher, actually, for some. So we are actually still seeing [this trend]. The most recent data that we have is September. Of course, October is not finished. But the suggestion is that, yeah, it may not be over this uptick, this uptrend.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Thank you, Patrick. So, Irina, was it okay for you?

IRINA DANELIA: Yeah. Thank you so much.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Okay. Thank you. We only have one minute. Next is Pablo, please.

PABLO: Thank you, Yuri, and thank you, Patrick, for an excellent presentation. Do you have any data regarding e-commerce? Do you collect any data that could reflect how many of those domain names are renewed for e-commerce? Thank you.

PATRICK MYLES: We categorize domain names using an internal crawler that we have, but it's a technical classification. We don't go into the type of high-content domains and what industries are using [it] and so forth, but it is actually something that may come down the track. The crawler that we have in CENTR is roughly only in production over this year. So it's relatively new. We have a very robust description of domains that are being used, and we're getting about 15 ccTLDs that provide us data on their domain zones so we can scan. But how that crawler categorizes anything that's not a technical classification—so it's a different kind of error or it's a parking page—once it gets to that classification of high content, we don't classify it further, except to add flags such as that the domain had a social media link, it was redirected, or it has an MX record [attached]—various other parameters like that. But we don't have information on e-commerce, unfortunately. It might be down the track. We could look at if there's payment gateways on the site. At the moment, we just do slow and steady with the domain crawling.

PABLO: Thank you very much.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Thank you. We'd like to move on to the next presentation. The next one is Alex Corenthin from Senegal and the African region. So, Alex, please?

ALEX CORENTHIN: Thank you, Yuri. Thank you for giving me the floor. I'm happy to be here to discuss with you about this session about the [inaudible]. I'm talking to you from the west end of countries in Africa, which is Senegal. For the whole community, maybe attendees of this session, I want to just start with presenting our [inaudible].

Next slide, please. As you may know, .sn is the country-code level for Senegal. Senegal is a western country in Africa. The [sponsor] organization is a university: the University [Cheikh Anta Diop.] We are working under national level with the National [Advisory] Committee, which is chaired by the ministry in charge of the digital economy and the regulatory body. We give first- and second-level registration, and also we accept registration accreditation for the registrar. At this time, we have 24 local registrars and 23 at the international level. We are a member of AFTLD, the ccNSO, and also for the [College International] of AFNIC.

Next slide, please. It's important to me to talk about [compliance] of our registry because, as you may know, in Africa we have lots of issues dealing with automation and all the technical points. I am proud to say that, in .sn, we have signed our root zone in 2016. In 2018, we got a full automation of our first-level operation with a partnership with AFNIC, which is the .fr registry. We can talk about that maybe later. Last year, we started to open our EPP services for registrars.

Next slide, please. Just to show you some interesting trends about our registry, this is [inaudible] registration data from the .sn registry. We started our operation earlier in 1997. What is important is that, starting in 2010, we started to have an increasing number of domain name registrants. This is continuing. What is very impressive today is, since we automate our operation, we have an increasing number of [registration] under .sn. The yellow line shows the percentage of registration [there]. Just notice, in 2020, at the end of our data is from September. So we haven't had the full data for this year.

Next slide, please. Before talking about what the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in our ccTLD, it's very important to highlight what are main issues that emerged in our countries. To fight against this COVID-19 pandemic, we highlight three axes. The first one is [inaudible], which is very important. All the partners and the coalition inside the country need to use digital links/digital websites and so on to use for information awareness of COVID-19, management of treatment centers, to follow up the contact case[s], and so on and so forth. The second axis that emerged in our country is all the things dealing with the retailers, the e-commerce. This is follows

implementation of a national e-commerce strategy. This deals with intermediation and [safe] platform for local police mainly. The third axis is education. Education continuity following the closure of education establishments was one of the major issues with the closing of all the schools and universities for more than three months in Senegal. Now the [plan] continues to talk about the tele-school, distance-learning, teaching platform, and teacher training. There are other impacts to the platform also because we can also notice that land and air transport, tourism and full security also using these digital platforms.

Next slide, please. When can we talk about the national impacts of digital sectors? We have some positive findings that we can highlight, talking of what happens in this short time during the pandemic crisis. One is that the telecom sector offers an increase of [data] and connectivity in order to be able to handle the needs and the demand on networking. The second point I can also highlight is the financial services. As you may know, the program in Africa is mainly [linked] to use of e-transfer/money transfer. And this shift to e-money and mobile money and increases the level of use during this pandemic. E-commerce also has big issues and has—how to say?— [inaudible] was more used by the citizens and by the consumer during this pandemic. So we have some national platform. We give these kinds of services: the [e-com e-commerce] Senegal. This also impacts the logistic and the delivery of the items. Another thing to be noted is all the things happening in our country will use multi-stakeholder models. This is very, very important to notice because it was difficult

at the beginning to get the Civil Society, the private sector, and the government at the same seat, but COVID shows that communities' only solution is to discuss all together and to adopt this multi-stakeholder model. The last, which is very interesting also, is about the education and the [formation] because we noticed that we need to use some new strategy for the learning and to get the education [complete.]

Next slide, please. What is some [plans?] What negative findings did we find in our countries? We're also dealing with some events, some things, that made it difficult to get our objectives during this [inaudible]. The first one is [because of] [inaudible] because the [inaudible] Senegal, which is one of our main activities in the digital area. The second impact is all the social projects are paused because of the [inaudible] resources to other priorities— [inaudible], etc. Another major impact is the loss of revenue for most of the citizens because we have more than 60% of our [commercial] is informal. The informal sector has a big impact in our countries. The two others are very interesting, but I think most of the countries have the same issues, [is] the national debt increases and the digital economy [inaudible] because a lack of guarantees from the digital sector to benefit from state and [inaudible] to support the [inaudible] and businesses.

Next slide, please. What actions are made by the domain name industry? Because we can [inaudible] on this sector. So we asked the registries. We work with the registrar to give some opportunities to the citizens and to the region. The first one is to give free registrations for

all people who want to make a platform against COVID-19. Also, during Independence Day, we gave an opportunity for all registrants to get free domain names. So the second is to improve the resilience of the registry because this shows that we have very critical infrastructure at the national level. The third one is to promote the digital identity because this crisis highlights the importance of the digital sovereignty issues that [inaudible] telecom the data inside make the local contents delivery easiest. So this is very important, and this shows that this has impact on the registration in .sn.

Let me show now what is our direct [impact, what we can see] when we look at our registration model. We can see that it's a comparison between 2019 and 2020 during the—

YURI TAKAMATSU:

Alex, would you wrap up? You only have one minute left.

ALEX CORENTHIN:

Yeah. I'm just concluding. I think this is the last [inaudible]. What I want to show is only that, in this six months, in the first semester, we had an increase of 50% of registration, as you may see on this slide. I think that's mainly what I want to share with you about the impact of COVID-19. I'm pleased to answer the questions from the floor. Thank you, Yuri.

YURI TAKAMATSU:

Thank you, Alex. Are there any questions from the audience?

No? In the chat box?

Okay. May I ask one question to you?

ALEX CORENTHIN: Yeah.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Regarding the free registration, you said that you would give free registration to the domain name who has the platform on COVID-19. How do you check that the domain name is used for the platform?

ALEX CORENTHIN: When the people want to have this kind of free registration during the fight of COVID-19, we [have them] show us what they want to put on the web. So it's the content. We analyzed the contents—not the name of the platform but only the contents. If the content deals with the national strategy to fight COVID-19, it can be at the health sector, it can be at the logistics sector. It can be at the financial sector. It's fine for us. Local committee can say, "Okay, this is dealing with the fight of COVID-19, so we can give them for free the COVID name."

YURI TAKAMATSU: Thank you. Also, you have some kind of paper prior to the registration and ticket, and you will give the free registration.

ALEX CORENTHIN: Exactly. They come to us and at the registry level to ask for the free registration, and we send them to the registrar. The registrar approves the free registration after looking at some issues that they know about.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Okay. Thank you for the answer.

ALEX CORENTHIN: Thank you, Yuri.

YURI TAKAMATSU: So are there any questions in the audience?

No?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yuri, there's a question in chat from Nick Wood: "Any impact of COVID in terms of business continuity, such as availability of key staff ability to do critical tech updates?"

ALEX CORENTHIN: Not really because, about the availability I think there is no more issue because all the digital sector/telecom sector also are very, very involved with the [fight] in this period, and we have a lot of assistance for the telco operators for the delivery of the connectivity. In terms [case] staff, we use distance working, and we provide for each of our

case staff—what we say, accessibility, connectivity, and for free. So they'll be able to continue to work on that.

Other things about our ability of our tech update: mainly we work with AFNIC. AFNIC helps us to check the security and all the [items doing] DNS abuse and [all]. So we are able to continue to deliver our services without any problem.

YURI TAKAMATSU:

Thank you. Sorry that we have to move on to the next presenters. So thank you. We really have other questions, but please come back to the Part 2 session, and we can also talk about that during the [plenary] discussion.

Let's move on to the next presenters. The next presenter is David Curtin from Ireland/.ie. David, the floor is yours.

DAVID CURTIN:

Thank you very much, Yuri. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm really pleased to share the experience of .ie in Ireland during Phase 1 of the pandemic.

Next slide, please. For those of you who don't know, this is Ireland. We're a little rock on the western coast of Europe. It's a small, open economy. We have a population of five million people. One-third is under the age of 25. Reasonably well-educated. 43% of our workforce have a third-level education. The SME sector (small business sector) is a really big part of the workforce. Almost two-thirds of the workforce is

from the small business. That's interesting for us in .ie because that's our target market. So you will have heard about Brexit, and you'll see, in the north of our country, that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. And the United Kingdom has actually left the EU and is currently negotiating a trade agreement. So, even before all of the uncertainty from the COVID pandemic, we had huge uncertainty arising from Brexit. So we're dealing with that, and that's proving to be quite a challenge politically and economically, and for society as well.

Next slide, please. You may know that Ireland is the headquarters to many of the world's global brands. You can see there, in each of the sectors, that nine out of ten of the top global companies have their European headquarters based on Ireland. So that's excellent for our economy because it gives much stability in these times of huge uncertainty.

Next slide, please. When we look at the digital economy, there's some very good official statistics from the EC. They look at the digital economy and society index every year. You can see there that Ireland is actually #7 out of the Euro-27 countries. However, sometimes the official stats hide the position because that multi-national sector is really a huge part of our economy.

Next slide, please. What that has led to in Ireland is really a two-speed digital economy. As the European investment advisory hub points out, that two-speed economy really means that smaller SMEs are slower, really, to leverage digital solutions, which could help them to reduce their costs or improve innovation or expand their markets.

Next slide, please. So we're really interested in that, and we do research every year. Research shows that 72% of SMEs have a website, but, when we asked the question of what you do with your website, 34% responded—only 34%—that they can take online bookings or reservations. Only 30% can take a sales order across their website, and even fewer—26%—are able to take payments on their website.

Next slide, please. So what's the .ie experience during COVID? I should say that we operate unmanaged registries. That means we check out people's connection to Ireland before the domain is expected. That means we have, at the moment, 3,000 .ie domains. It may not seem like too many, but it's about 59 per 1,000 of population. So it's about the same as France or Italy.

So what is our experience during the first Phase of COVID-19? Next slide, please. You'll see on the right-hand side the number of new registrations during the last six months. Our shutdown in Ireland commenced on the 13th of March, so you can see almost immediately in April that there was an uptick in new registrations. By the time you get to May and June, we're up 60% in new reges compared to the same period in 2019. And even still, in September, we're up to 30%, compared to the same period last year. So some very significant increases. If you look at the year-to-date performance, new reges are up 27%, and the net increase on the [opening position] is up 44%. So we're not seeing up the same uptick in deletions, which is also good to see. So, you might ask the question, where did that demand come from? We don't give free registrations. We do to charities, but that's

all. So there's no free registrations in that number. Nor do we do, let's say, a two-for-one promotion or anything like that.

Next slide, please. What has helped growth, no doubt, is that we did offer a price discount on new registrations. That was in our budget anyway for the year, but, in the light of COVID, we brought that forward into Quarter 2. We did that to help improve registrar margins. We didn't touch the renewal phase, except that registrars wanted us to help them help their customers who were in financial trouble. So we did that and gave them full refunds. It was a gesture that was really appreciated by the channel at a very, very low cost to the registry. We continued with our co-funded marketing program. So, if a registrar will spend money to promote the .ie namespace, we will refund 50% of their marketing costs. So there was an uptake on that during COVID, particularly on radio. Another thing we did was to initiate a service failure protocol. Remember, at the beginning of the pandemic, we didn't know how financially strong and robust our registrars would be or if they had strong enough business continuity programs. So we were worried about that, so we initiated that protocol, which effectively said, if a registrar fails, then we have a very rapid process to help move the portfolio across to another registrar.

Next slide, please. What did we do for SMEs? Well, our role was really one of being an advisor. On our landing page on our website, we collated advice from government bodies and employer bodies that gave great advice on how to deal with the fact that the physical store was closed—so how to set up an online shop, where to go for web builders, where to go for grant aid, and so on. I think that was

something useful we could do for SMEs. We also activated a registrant protection fund. That's money that we have set aside so that, if a registrar doesn't pay—let's say, for financial difficulties—then effectively the registry will pay the fee and roll over the renewal date, thereby protecting the SME.

Next slide, please. It's very important to say that government incentives played a key role because we know that demand for domains, especially new names, is driven by GDP and the state of the economy, and our government stepped in, in a very significant way, to help industry. There was the [wave] subsidy for employees of companies that were forced to close. There was a deferral of rates, a deferral of sales taxes. Also, landlords were asked not to press for rent payments, and particularly not to do evictions. Our government did something else which was important. They already have a [trading] online voucher scheme that gives 5,000 euros to SMEs to work on their website. So, in this case, they increased the government piece to 90%, so an SME only had to pay 10%, and they could use it for digital marketing as well. You'll see in the figures on the slide there, in the second bullet point, that there was 1,200 applications in all of 2019, but, during the months of March and July of the pandemic, that increased fivefold to almost 6,000 applications. The other scheme they had was for bigger retails, where they give grants. The average grant is around 35,000 euros. There was a big uptake in that to the extent that the government increased that fund threefold. So very significant help for business.

Next slide, please. What was the business impact then? We have anecdotal evidence, because we keep in touch with industry and web developers and so on. We know what's happening. But even more important than that is hard facts.

New slide. So we carried out research among 1,000 consumers and 500 SMEs nationally—so it's a very representative sample—and published that in our tipping point report, which is available on our website. The URL is in the slides.

Next slide, please. What we were looking at there was behavior and attitudes of the consumer but also of the SMEs. We included them in our key findings and on the insights.

Next slide. So what are those insights? Well, first and foremost is the solidarity and support of consumers for local businesses, and that was reflected in how they directed their online purchases. Prior to COVID, a huge proportion of the online spend in Ireland went to international websites, but, during COVID, we saw a 5% swing back to local businesses. And consumers said that they wanted to show solidarity for local business. So we think that's important because it could be temporary because, obviously, SME websites are not as good as [inaudible] websites, like Amazon. That tells us that there's a timeframe really for SMEs to up their game, improve their website, to make sure that they keep their customers once the pandemic has passed.

The second point really is that what we call the tectonic plates are shifting because we really are moving from a face-to-face, person-to-

person economy to a delivery economy. COVID-19 has been the catalyst and it's accelerating changes that were already in motion.

The other thing is that COVID has definitely changed consumer habits and how they shop. Our research shows that those consumer behavior changes are certainly not temporary.

A third insight is that digital investment definitely pays off. For the brave SMEs that invested in their website, they responded to our researchers by saying that that improved their business. I think that's a message to other SMEs to do likewise.

The fourth point, as I said earlier, is that government finance can be an accelerant, and it can, if you like, improve or push those trends that are already there by providing financial incentives to small business.

A major finding for me is that consumers say that they're spending more online and that they're keen to get back in-store. Now, that's probably not surprising overall, but they give a very big condition there. They say that they're keen to get back in-store but only when the COVID restrictions and the queuing, etc., has passed. And the survey showed that businesses expected that to be very short-term. So, in other words, they were not investing in their digital assets, expecting that things would return to normal very, very quickly, and people would be back in store. As we know, that hasn't happened.

YURI TAKAMATSU:

David, you have one minute left.

DAVID CURTIN: Thanks, Yuri.

YURI TAKAMATSU: David, you have one minute left.

DAVID CURTIN: Yes. Thank you. So that means that businesses waiting it out and not investing in digital really do need to change their approach.

So the ongoing legacy of the pandemic—what do we say that is? If I were to pick out one, I would say services. Before this, a small business delivering services would say, “Listen, I don’t really mind about a website because our services are face-to-face,” but clearly that has changed, and changed dramatically. I think COVID has shown that, with tools like Zoom and Teams and other online platforms, services are being delivered, whether it’s medical solicitors, auctioneers, etc.

Last slide, please. So the digital evolution is speeding up. COVID is the catalyst. Government supports can act as an accelerant. Brave SMEs that pivot are now able to use tools that were previously, they would have thought, only available to corporates. That urgency has really overruled any reticence that the business owner might have had before. So, in Ireland, we’re seeing OMNI channel—so that combination of physical and online, whether that’s click-and-collect or collect-from-the curb—but also integration with social and actually

with platforms. And SMEs are rushing to adopt these, and therefore everything to do with digital evolution is speeding up.

Next slide. Thank you very much for your attention. If you want to know more about that, there's our website. There's a link to our published research and the initiatives that we have.

Next slide. Thanks for listening. If there's any questions, I look forward to answering them now or in the afternoon. Thank you.

YURI TAKAMATSU:

Thank you, David. There's two questions—one from the chat box and one from ... Oh, [inaudible]. But we have only [inaudible]. So first I'd like to take Abdullah's question: "Is there an upper limit on the marketing co-funding?"

DAVID CURTIN:

Yes, there is. The registrars can earn a fund. So we give them a certain amount based on every new registration, and a certain amount for renewal. So they build up a fund, and then they can draw down from that fund when they have a marketing campaign.

YURI TAKAMATSU:

Thank you. Sorry, but we'd like to move on to the next presenters. Pablo and Patrick, sorry for that, but please ask your question at the afternoon session.

Next I would like to introduce Ai-Chin Lu from Taiwan in the Asia-Pacific region. So, Ai-Chin Lu, the floor is yours.

AI-CHIN LU:

Hello, everyone. I'm Ai-Chin Lu from Taiwan. Today I want to talk about .tw ccTLD [DNS] situation in terms of COVID-19. Before we get down to business, I would like to recap a little about the global pandemic situation.

Next, please. According to the WHO report, globally, as of today, there have been over 30 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including over one million deaths, and the number is still on the rise. As we all know, every country has had to implement measures depending on the severity of the local outbreak. We have some countries over the world implement lockdowns, travel bans, school closures, and social distancing measures. But nobody can predict which nation will get the best result.

How about Taiwan's situation? Next, please. According to Johns Hopkins University's Coronavirus Resource Center's reporting, currently we have 530 confirmed and just seven dead. In comparison to other countries, so far the pandemic has little impact in Taiwan. Taiwan's government's early implementation of face coverings along with a travel ban, practicing of social distancing, and other related policy and regulations ... Regarding the personal protective measures, the government stepped up mask production and the delivering of mask rations to every citizen. As you can see on the bottom right-hand side of the slide, I put one example. It's a measure enforced by the

Taipei local mayor. It states that face masks must be worn the subway at all times. As we all know, the pandemic has affected many industries worldwide. In Taiwan, we can feel tourism, airline, hotel and catering industries have been strongly impacted by the current pandemic.

How does that impact Taiwan’s domain industry? Next, please. We cannot discuss Taiwan’s domain industry without a mention the .tw registry, TWNIC. TWNIC is a non-profit organization and was founded in 1999. We have two core businesses. One is domain name registration. The other is IP address locations. Currently, we have 50 registrars, including six overseas registrars. TWNIC is the .tw ccTLD, and the IDN.taiwan ccTLD, too. We are in charge of the domain name registration management, which includes the domain name registration service, registration and registrar operation, and domain dispute resolution. And we do a lot of promotion related to the domain name registration. We also are highly involved in the Internet International Organization’s activities.

Next, please. I would like to highlight TWNIC’s major measures. We practice flexible working hours, allowing employees to arrive at the company at different times to minimize the risk of transmission and clusters on public transportation. We also choose to experiment with work-from-home in order to make sure that the DNS would remain operational under the implementation of precautionary measures. In doing work from home, we adopt Teams as a platform to communicate and collaborate effectively with our colleagues. We have a cloud-based video conference service, [Webex], to provide webinars,

teleconferences, and the other training courses to the registrant and the registrar. We also set up a [VPN] during work from home to assess call assistance. In doing work from home, we will use [VOIP] to serve the customers if necessary.

Next, please. So, as a domain registry, we're are concerned about COVID-19 and its impact on domain registrations. Now let's assume a few different scenarios that might happen during the current pandemic, such as that some of the companies might choose to retreat from the physical store to an online store. So they need to register one domain name if they haven't. Also, some new companies might go straight to online in order to reduce overhead and mitigate the risk. So they need one domain name, too. Or some companies might even close down, so they need to delete the domain name if they have. If [at least some assumptions] are true, the type of domain name-- .com, .tw—might be directly impact since, in Taiwan, only companies have the eligibility to register .com.tw.

Now let's take a look at possible changed to .com.tw. Next/last slide, please. Here we see the number of domain names of .com.tw from 2000 through the end of August of 2020. Currently, the total number of domain names is 260,494. Compared to August of last year, it decreased 1%. Despite the recent decrease in domains during the past half of the year, according to this graph, as you can see, the trend has been quite stable.

Next slide, please. Here we have three graphs. Graph 1 shows the changes in new domain registration over the past three years. The

blue bar represents 2018. The yellow bar represents 2019. The dark blue line represents 2020. So you can see that, every month, the new domains range between 1,500 to 2,300, [showing like there] were no significant difference in the previous two years. Graph 2 shows the trend in renewed domain names, and the different colors represent a different year. So you can see, every month, the renewals range between 7,000 to 11,000. I'd like to mention that the renewal rate remains steady at 75% in the past few years. You will notice that it is consistent with previous years, resulting in no significant difference. You can see Graph 3 representing deleted domains. Judging by the 2020[-like] graph, from January to July, the number remains pretty steady, with the exception of August. However, it doesn't represent the most up-to-date figures. This is due to a one-month [inaudible] policy give users the opportunity to reconsider the deletion of the domain name. So we believe this number is likely to increase after adjustment. Even though the year is not over yet, we can forecast that the later trend on domain registration will not dramatically change until the end of this year.

Next, please. So I'll give some findings. In reference to the previous couple of slides, you can see they have no significant differences for the number of new domains, renewed domains, and deleted domains. We also, based on our registry database, can [find that] there are 6,198 companies that registered new domains this year, and 4,407 out of them registered for their first time ever. 785 out of them are new companies established this year. Given this data, there is no

conclusive evidence that COVID-19 has had any significant impact on our daily registrations.

Next slide, please. In the following slide, we will discuss newly registered domains related to COVID-19. Based on the data that we have collected, we found [inaudible] the beginning of the January, 66. And we found 66 out of nearly 480,000 new domains have been registered containing [inaudible]. You can see the [inaudible] in the next slide. The 66 domains accounted for 0.0135% of new domains. I think the percentage is pretty low.

Next slide, please. On this bar graph, we can find that the term “mask” was most frequently used, at 35 times. We think it reflects a basic [need] during this crisis. I suppose that manufacturers are willing to advertise efficiently and to sell more units using new domains. On the other hand, speculators can make a good profit by acquiring and selling those domains to manufacturers.

Next slide, please. This graph shows what has come up when you try to assess those newly registered domains. You can find that 30 of them appears as [successful] websites. 22 of them display a Cannot Reach Page. The other 14 domains spread between brand protection notification and the domain trading and advertisements and possible malicious websites according to [McAfee] safety screening. Here I want to point out [that those] focuses of possible malicious sites that could potentially represent DNS abuse. Of course, we will continue to monitor this site for malicious activity.

Next. Finally, I would like to say, based on all of this data, we can conclude once again that there was no significant impact on .com.tw domain registrations in terms of COVID-19. As we all know, 2020 has been an unprecedented year, and the [list of terms] have forced us to change every aspect of our lives from the way that we work, shop, and learn. Meanwhile, the pandemic also has given rise to many new industries that are here to stay. Could these new industries prove beneficial for the domain industry? Could it trigger a surge of new domain registrations? I think the future remains to be seen.

Thank you. That's all my presentation.

YURI TAKAMATSU:

Thank you, Ai-Chin. Are there any questions from the audience?

No questions? So now we are a little bit behind the schedule, so I would like to move on to the next presenters. The next presenter is Alejandra Reynoso from .gt from the LAC region. Alejandra, the floor is yours.

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO:

Thank you, Yuri. Hi, everyone. Nice to see you all online.

Can we go to the next slide, please? I would like to start to show you our team because the last time you saw a picture of all us was maybe in the ICANN meeting in Kobe, and some team members have changed. We have our general manager, Luis Furlan. We have two customer support people, who are wonderful and amazing in handling

our customers: [Diego Mahiman and Rahim De Leon]. We have [Carla Mendez], our executive assistant, and [inaudible], our social media manger, and also myself.

Next slide, please. Just to put you in a little bit of context, .gt is located in Guatemala at the University of the Valley of Guatemala. The university is a private university, and Guatemala is the first country in the line of the Central American region.

Next slide, please. So how did COVID-19 arrive in our lives and how did we respond? On the 6th of March, the government declared a state of calamity. Then, on the 13th of March, we had our first case in Guatemala, brought by a tourist from Europe. Then, the next Monday, right after that first case, all school and universities were closed, and people were told to stay at home. It was quite unexpected. You go from Friday to Monday to remote working. Fortunately, at .gt, we're already used to working from home since we do not close at any time. We are not 24/7 but we do work all of the days of the year to make sure that our customers are attended to. On the next day, we went remotely with no other news. The next week we started to think about how we can help our fellow citizens.

Next slide, please. What we wanted to do first was to allow the government to be kept online. So we started extending their expiration dates three months every end of the month since this day. Second, we agreed that every person who would have an issue paying their fee would get an automatic three-month extension on their expiration day. Up to this day, it's less than 15 customers that

requested this, mainly because we have a very good financial system. It's very modernized, and all transactions can be done online. These are the very few that had some sort of issues, like they had to issue a check, for example, to pay, and they could not pay by credit card or by any other means. So those are the ones that asked for help. But, further, we thought how to help our fellow citizens because everyone went to their homes and they wanted to continue their businesses. So we've been having promotions for several years: when you register a .gt domain name, you get one year for free. So we decided, why not have that promotion now when people need it the most?

Next slide, please. So this is the graph. I will walk you through it. You can see the data of the new registrations for .gt since January 2015 until September 2020. In yellow, you will see the months that we've been having these promotions—so one year for free.

Next slide, please. We started this promotion as a campaign during the months of September. That's our patriotic month where we celebrate our independence day.

Next, please. Then we added another month in May, since it's the Internet month, where the International Internet Day is celebrated on the 17th.

Next slide, please. During 2018, we didn't go to any campaigns because we were devoted in migrating to a new system, which happened in May of 2018. We not only made a big change in our systems but also in our policies. In particular, the most popular change in policy was the ability to get a new domain name for a

minimum of one year. Before that, the minimum was two years. That's why we had a huge spike there in May.

Next, please. Since we didn't have any promotions during 2018, we analyzed our registration numbers and saw that our lowest months of new registrations, as you can see in the green arrows, coincide with our regional holidays during December and January. Therefore, we had a promotion at the end of 2018 and at the end of 2019, as you can see in the red arrows.

Next slide, please. The last portion—that is what we are talking about—is the COVID-19 period so far, which goes from March to September 2020. There are three months that we kept our promotion of one year for free with every new registration. That went from May to July. As you can see there, there is a significant growth. We hope that our promotion was able to help people get online.

Next slide, please. Following the same color pattern, here we can see the growth of the total domain names at .gt. We talk about global change because .gt has several categories of domain names that it manages.

Can we go to the next slide, please? This is how .gt domains are distributed. We have .com.gt, .gt, which we opened in May of 2012. We have .edu.gt, .org.gt, .gov, .net, [.ind], and .mil.gt. The ones that you see with the red hand are restricted categories because we need to verify that these domains actually belong to entities that pertain to that specific sector—for example, edu for educational institutions, gov for government (of course, in Spanish), and mil for military. Since

2007, to help the digital development of Guatemala, the first domain name per entity is free of charge.

Next slide, please. In the following slides, I will focus on our top-three categories, which are .com, .gt, and.edu.

Next slide, please. As we have seen this color pattern, it's the same color pattern that we will see in the next slides. Here you can see the .com.gt domains. It's highlighted—the COVID-19 period. And it's evident that the growth has been steady and increased in this period. Everyone is going online.

Next slide, please. Also, under the second-level domain name space, we see, again, steady growth. These, in particular, are one of the domain name spaces that's more wanted because you can get shorter domain names, right?

Next slide, please. But, for this one, the .edu.gt, you can see that it's a very dramatic increase in domain names. Again, from Friday to Monday, all schools and universities went remote without any warning. So that's why we see this increase. Again, these domains are restricted, and the first one is free of charge.

With that, we can go to the last slide. This is all I have for you. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them. Thank you.

YURI TAKAMATSU:

Thank you, Alejandra. Are there any questions?

I see a question in the chat box from [Young-Eum]. Her question is to all the panelists. I thought this question to discuss at Part 2, so I'd like to keep this question to Part 2.

Alejandra, do you agree to my idea?

ALEJANDRA REYNOSOS: Yes. Perfect.

YURI TAKAMATSU: So, other than that, are there any questions for Alejandra?

Okay. None from the chat box.

Also, I have to announce—this is not regarding Alejandra's question—to everyone to please look at the chat box. Part 2 is going to be at a different Zoom room. It means the URL is different, so please check the chat box. It was [just the] announcement.

Oh, there is a question through the chat box—thank you—from [Svetlana]: "Have you seen changes in the .gov.gt domain?"

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO: Thank you, [Svetlana]. No, not much. We did have some requests for new domain names from the government to tackle the COVID-19 situations—very few of them, maybe five at most. Since we are keeping them frozen in time, we are not expiring any government domain names. So there are no deletions. I believe that the government was too focused on dealing with the pandemic situations

that they were not also increasing their government domain names as much. So I would say we were asked for a few domain names just for the pandemic, but they remain quite steady.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Thank you.

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO: Thank you, [Svetlana].

YURI TAKAMATSU: Are there any questions?

If not, may I ask one question to you?

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO: Of course.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Regarding .edu.gt, I was so surprised to see the increase of the number. What was the usage for those domain names?

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO: Well, we actually do not see the content of the domain names, so we have mostly seen, in the few that we have actually went into, that it is a web page to announce all the activities that a school has or its programs. It's more informative than anything else. I know from closer people to me with kids that most schools which did not have any

online platforms, because that was not something that we used to see here in Guatemala, went to all the other available software, like Zoom, Teams, and even Google Meet—everything they had their hands on. So they do not use it for classes themselves. Some of them do use them for payments, but this is more of my guess than actual data that we have.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Thank you.

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO: You're welcome.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Other than that ... The time is three minutes over. Thank you, Alejandra.

I would like to move on to the wrap-up for today's Part 1 session.

ALEJANDRA REYNOSO: Thank you.

YURI TAKAMATSU: Thank you. Thank you, presenters, for all the presentations, and thank you to those who asked some questions. Sorry, Pablo and Patrick, for not being able to take your questions during this session. Because of

the technical issue preparation, we have to finish this session in a few minutes, so I'd likely to briefly wrap up today's Part 1.

One lesson we learned from all the presenters was that, regarding a number of the registrations, there seems to be no negative impact to the numbers.

Other than that, we had many points, but, unfortunately, we have to finish earlier, so I'd like to wrap up. We'd like to have further discussion in Part 2.

So we had a question?

Oh, okay. So we will have several questions [from Young-Eum] and others, but I'd like to take those questions for Part 2.

So I'd like to close Part 1. I hope everyone will come back after the 30-minute break. Again, as a reminder, please check the URL for Part 2. Part 2 is having a different URL, so please check it out and please come back 30 minutes later.

Thank you for the participation. I'm looking forward to seeing you after the 30-minute break. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]