



85 | COMMUNITY
FORUM



Guiding ICANN's Work on Universal Acceptance



Guiding ICANN's Work on Universal Acceptance

Overview of the Session

- UNESCO's efforts to promote multilingual Internet and collaboration with ICANN on Advancing Universal Acceptance – Guilherme Canela, UNESCO
- Guidelines for Advancing UA Adoption – Edmon Chung, UA Expert WG

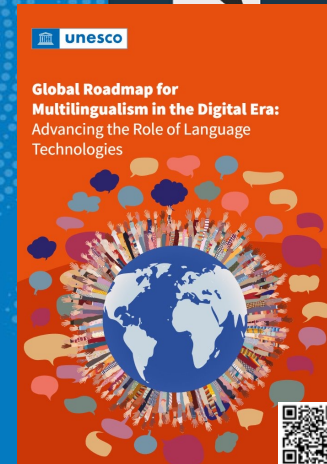
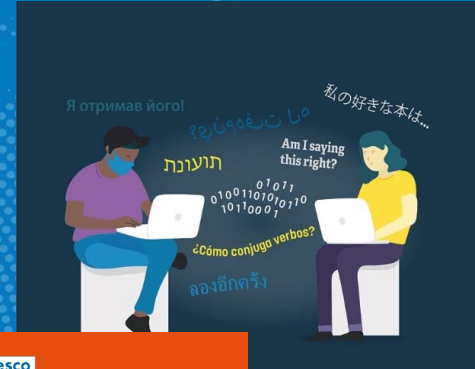


UNESCO's Efforts to Promote a Multilingual Internet and Collaboration with ICANN on Advancing Universal Acceptance

Guilherme Canela, Director for Division for Digital Inclusion and Policies and Digital Transformation, UNESCO

UNESCO's Commitment to Multilingualism

- UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the **Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace** (2003)
- **International Decade of Indigenous Languages** (IDIL 2022-2032)
- **Global Roadmap for Multilingualism in the Digital Era: Advancing the Role of Language Technologies**
- **Collaboration with ICANN**



UNESCO's Recommendation Concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (2003)

- Promotion of linguistic diversity online
- Universal access to cyberspace
- Policy and institutional support
- Capacity-building and technical development
- Cultural and educational integration
- Collaboration and international cooperation
- Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring Sixth reporting process : Does your country have a policy or regulatory framework to support Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), Email Address Internationalization (EAI) and ensure Universal Acceptance² of all domain names and email addresses, including those in local languages and scripts, as part of efforts to enable access to multilingual Internet? If so, how is this framework being implemented in practice? Are there any capacity building efforts for this purpose?

International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032) and the Global Action Plan



2022-2032 | INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF
Indigenous Languages

Global Action Plan developed to provide a strategic framework, outline major actions: the third output of the plan is **digital empowerment**.

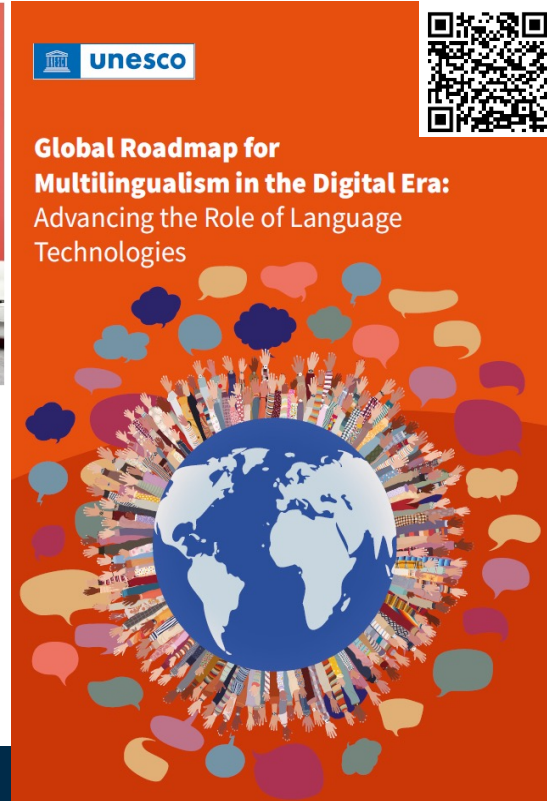
UNESCO Global Roadmap for Multilingualism in the Digital Era

- Developed by **UNESCO** to promote linguistic diversity in digital spaces
- Aims to ensure **equal access to information** in all languages online
- Supports **digital inclusion** for minority and Indigenous languages
- Encourages governments to create **national digital language policies**
- Calls for collaboration between **governments, tech companies, academia, and civil society**



Doha Declaration at WSSD2:

Leaving no one behind = no language should be left behind.



Advancing Universal Acceptance (UA)

- A joint initiative with the **Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)** to ensure that the Internet is truly **global and inclusive thanks to UA**.
- In 2025, Universal Acceptance Day was celebrated across **59 events** worldwide gathering **7,695 participants**.
- Development of a **Policy Brief on Universal Acceptance** fostering a more equitable and accessible Internet ecosystem for everyone **aligned with UNESCO's commitments**.



An Evolving Internet
TLDs and Email Addresses

No longer just 2 or 3 characters

← .MOCKBA → .asia

.公益 .ファッション

.photography .مصر

More TLDs available

.ভারত

Use of non-ASCII scripts and characters

ICANN UNESCO Intergovernmental Panel on Internet Governance

UNESCO and ICANN Call for Proposals Universal Acceptance (UA) Day 2026



UNESCO and ICANN Collaboration 2025-2026



Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet.

UNESCO Series on Advancing Multilingualism in the Digital Age

Consultation:
Your inputs by 20 March

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Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet – **Background of Policy Brief**



Joint UNESCO-ICANN Partnership

A coordinated effort between UNESCO and ICANN to work toward advancing Universal Acceptance of all domain names and email addresses, supporting linguistic diversity and multilingualism online.



Goal of an Inclusive, Multilingual Internet

Ensuring that every domain name and email address – regardless of script or length - can be used without barriers, thereby expanding participation for all language communities.



Primary Audiences

Targeting national governments, regulatory authorities, civil society organizations, and academics institutions that shape Internet policy and practice.



Structure of the Brief

A logical progression from conceptual foundations, through technical and policy guidance, to monitoring mechanism and concrete policy recommendations

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet –

Objectives of Policy Brief



Legal and Regulatory Frameworks for UA

Despite growing awareness, there is an uneven pace of adoption of UA across jurisdictions, and some governments and regulators may not have updated frameworks, procurement systems, and public services.



Promoting Digital Inclusion and Multilingualism

UA is not only a technical milestone; it is a cornerstone of a multilingual Internet. As more people connect to the Internet using diverse scripts and languages, UA ensures that everyone can access domain names or email addresses in their native languages.



Capacity Building, Education, and Stakeholder Engagement

Even where tools and standards for UA exist, a significant gap remains in the technical capacity to implement them.



Monitoring, Evaluation and International Coordination

A logical progression from conceptual foundations, through technical and policy guidance, to monitoring mechanism and concrete policy recommendations

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet – **Recommendations of Policy Brief**

Technology Applications and Service Providers

- Embed UA in design and development lifecycles,
- Upgrade existing systems
- Invest in staff training
- Collaborate with governments and standards bodies
- Demonstrate market leadership

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet – **Recommendations of Policy Brief**

Civil Society and Language Communities

- Raise public awareness
- Advocate for UA implementation
- Document and share success stories
- Collaborate with Indigenous communities

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet – **Recommendations of Policy Brief**

International and Intergovernmental Organizations

- Integrate UA in global digital agendas,
- Provide technical assistance and guidance
- Facilitate multistakeholder collaboration,
- Support international monitoring and reporting,
- Champion UA as a development priority,

Thank you !

Guilherme Canela
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and Policies and Digital Transformation,
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A large, stylized globe is the central background element, rendered in shades of blue. It is overlaid with a network of glowing white lines and dots, representing global connectivity. The globe shows the outlines of continents, with a focus on Europe, Africa, and Asia. The background of the entire slide has a subtle pattern of diagonal lines.

Guidelines for Advancing UA Adoption

Universal Acceptance (UA) Expert WG

Overview of the Presentation

- Background
- Scope of Work
- Summary of Proposed Guidelines
- Next Steps

What is Universal Acceptance?

Universal Acceptance (UA) ensures that all valid domain names and related email addresses, regardless of length, language, or script, can be used in all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems.

- UA allows Internet users to choose an online identity in the language or script of their choice and ensures that their chosen domain names and email addresses work seamlessly on the Internet.
- Achieving UA-readiness is essential to enabling a more linguistically diverse Internet.
- For more information on UA, please visit <https://www.icann.org/ua>.

Background

The UA Expert Working Group formed to focus on UA adoption

Focusing on UA Adoption

- March 2025: ICANN Board resolved for ICANN org to evaluate and evolve strategies to support UA adoption work by ICANN org and the community, aligning with ICANN's Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2026-2030.
- In response, the ICANN President and CEO announced the establishment of a **Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group** (UA EWG), which will provide guidelines for ICANN's future work on UA adoption.
- Proposed timeline for UA EWG:
 - August 2025: Commence work
 - February 2026: Publish draft guidelines for public comment
 - March 2026: Finalize and publish guidelines

Formation of UA Expert Working Group

- Following a Call for Nominations, ICANN's Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees nominated the following members:
 - Abdalmonem Tharwat Galila Governmental Advisory Committee
 - Edmon Chung At-large Advisory Committee
 - Nabil Benamar Security and Stability Advisory Committee
 - Nitin Walia Generic Names Supporting Organization
 - Sami Mohamed Ali Country Code Names Supporting Organization
- ICANN Board nominated its liaison to UA EWG:
 - James Galvin ICANN Board

Formation of UA Expert Working Group

- ICANN President and CEO appointed the following additional representatives:
 - Cathy Wissink Unicode Consortium
 - Guilherme Canela UNESCO
 - Jiankang Yao China Internet Network Information Center
 - Richard Ishida Worldwide Web Consortium
 - Sean Bedford Meta
 - Thomas Mullaney Stanford University
- ICANN President and CEO appointed the following co-Chairs:
 - Edmon Chung
 - Sarmad Hussain (ICANN org)

Scope of Work

The UA Expert Working Group tasked to develop guidelines to address multiple topics

Guidelines

- UA Expert WG started weekly meetings in August 2025 discussing the 10 topics in its charter, developing and reviewing guidelines for these topics.
 - Details of its deliberations are posted at the community wiki page.
- UA Expert WG has developed a total of 45 guidelines covering these topics.
- ICANN org published these guidelines for public comment on 23 Feb. 2026.
- ICANN org invites the community on behalf of the UA Expert WG to review the detailed guidelines and provide their feedback.

Stakeholders Discussed

#	Topic	Gs
	General	2
1	Encourage big tech organizations	5
2	Encourage open-source communities	5
3	Contribute to specific standards	3
4	Reach out to software development professionals	4
5	Reach out to system administrators	2

#	Topic	Gs
6	Encourage the DNS industry, including gTLD and ccTLD registry, registrars and resellers	5
7	Encourage hosting providers and internet service providers	4
8	Reach out to the public sector, in collaboration from intergovernmental organizations	5
9	Reach out to academia	6
10	Measure aspects of UA adoption	4

Summary of Proposed Guidelines

Guiding ICANN org work to enable UA adoption

Guidelines

Generally applicable across multiple charter questions.

- Define what is meant to be UA-ready for a variety of stakeholders in the context of multilingual internet and how it is dependent on internationalization of the technology stack.
- Maintain dedicated webpages for stakeholders with relevant materials.

1. Strategies to encourage big tech organizations to adopt UA in their applications and systems.

- Showcase the economic, business, social, linguistic and cultural value of this work in tailored messaging, while also arguing for technical aspects, including interoperability, security and trust aspects achieved by supporting UA.
- Prioritize engagement based on technology stack, focusing on underlying systems and applications used by higher layers.

Guidelines

2. Strategies to encourage open-source communities to adopt UA in their applications and systems

- Prioritize fixing issues both from the way the technology stack is set up vertically, the category and the usage of the software applications.
- Develop messaging to engage with the maintainers of the software coming from different perspectives.
- Plan to also develop their capacity in relevant areas.

3. Specific standards to contribute toward

- Work with standards organizations to update relevant core and ancillary standards. A coordinated approach is necessary to avoid “chicken-and-egg” barriers between underlying platform providers and higher-level application and service providers.
- Participate in internationalization standards groups to help integrate the UA concepts when consulted by other standards groups.

Guidelines

4. Platforms and mechanisms to reach out to software development professionals

- Develop the right messaging and identify the strategies to reach out to them by collaborating with relevant organizations, presented at conferences and events, using learning platforms for professionals, and conducting targeted campaigns.
- Given the limited number of experts who understand these concepts, especially internationalization, train the trainers, develop materials using the existing resources, and find mechanisms to build capacity.
- Showcase adoption to motivate others.

5. Platforms and mechanisms to reach out to system administrators

- Develop capacity development materials using existing resources, and strategy to create awareness using relevant platforms and conferences.
- Develop effective messaging to engage and then build capacity, reaching out at the right forums.

6. Engagement with the DNS industry, including gTLD and ccTLD registries, registrars, and resellers

- The DNS industry also has a crucial role. Encourage to adopt UA using the right messaging and reaching out to the stakeholders.
- Consider developing an issue report to address UA support by registries and registrars, as well as explore policy to incentivize adoption.
- Work with IGOs to make UA adoption part of the global digital agenda, encouraging Member States to include UA adoption by the DNS industry and the broader digital industry in their national action plans.

Guidelines

7. Mechanisms to encourage hosting providers and internet service providers to provide IDN and EAI hosting services to the registrants

- Determine the extent and reasons for gaps in UA adoption by the hosting providers.
- Develop out-of-the box technical solutions and build awareness and capacity to deploy them.
- Build capacity of hosting providers and encourage them to adopt UA through relevant messaging.

8. Mechanisms to reach out to the public sector to promote UA adoption. Collaboration from intergovernmental organizations to achieve the goals

- Engage with multiple relevant ministries and departments in the public sector with a policy-oriented messaging strategy which highlights the value of UA adoption.
- Engage with GAC representatives.
- Collaborate with intergovernmental organizations to reach out to public sector organizations.

Guidelines

9. Mechanisms to reach out to academia

- Academic engagement is a long-term strategy. Publish articles in academic conferences and journals for awareness. Integrate UA into multiple disciplines, including IT, internet governance and linguistics.
- Develop curricular materials and engage with regional and global curricular bodies to promote curricular integration.
- Create hub and network model for universities in different regions to collaborate on integration.
- Utilize other channels available, e.g., by involving intergovernmental organizations.

10. Aspects of UA adoption to be measured

- Implement a framework to measure effort and outcome in the areas of:
 - Awareness / Policy support / Implementation / Capacity development
- Promote collaboration to gather, process and publish data, and encourage mechanisms which promote self-reporting.

Next Steps

Planning and implementing the guidelines

Next Steps

- UA Expert Working Group to review the feedback from the Public Comment, finalize the guidelines and publish them in May 2026.
- ICANN org to review and prioritize the guidelines.
- ICANN org to implement the guidelines prioritized, providing update to the community at ICANN meetings.

ICANN Webpage and Social Media Links



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