

## EU wants 'Internet G12' to govern cyberspace

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The European Commission wants the US to dissolve all government links with the body that 'governs' the internet, replacing it with an international forum for discussing internet governance and online security.

The rules and decisions on key internet governance issues, such as the creation of top level domains (such as .com and .eu) and managing the internet address system that ensures computers can connect to each other, are currently made by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a private, not-for profit corporation based in California which operates under an agreement with the US Department of Commerce.

The decisions made by ICANN affect the way the internet works all around the world.

EU information society commissioner Viviane Reding on Monday (4 May) suggested a new model for overseeing the internet from October this year, when the Commerce Department agreement runs out.

She called on US President Barack Obama to fully privatise ICANN and set up an independent judicial body, described as a "G12 for internet governance," which she described as a "multilateral forum for governments to discuss general internet governance policy and security issues."

"I trust that President Obama will have the courage, the wisdom and the respect for the global nature of the internet to pave the way in September for a new, more accountable, more transparent, more democratic and more multilateral form of Internet Governance," she said via a video message posted on her commission website.

The expiry of the agreement between ICANN and the US government "opens the door for the full privatisation of ICANN, and it also raises the question of to whom ICANN should be accountable," she said.

"In the long run, it is not defensible that the government department of only one country has oversight of an internet function which is used by hundreds of millions of people in countries all over the world."

Instead, Brussels would prefer that an international government forum that to meet twice a year makes recommendations by majority vote to the newly privatised ICANN. The forum would be restricted to representatives from 12 countries, with a regional balance taken into consideration.

Her "Internet G12" would include two representatives each from North America, South

America, Europe and Africa, three representatives from Asia and Australia, as well as the Chairman of ICANN as a non-voting member. International organisations with competences in this field meanwhile could be given observer status.

The new US administration's position on global internet governance is not yet clear. However, during the Bush administration, Washington was steadfastly opposed to handing ICANN over to the United Nations.

The commission will hold a conference on Wednesday (6 May) in Brussels to discuss the issue with Europe's internet community.

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