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EC calls for one world internet governance

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The European Commission is once again calling for the United States to let go of ICANN and place it under international supervision.

Echoing an earlier appeal from EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Viviane Reding, the Commission said in a statement today that future internet governance "should reflect the key role that global network has come to play for all countries."

ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) is a California-based non-profit group that oversees the internet's address system. It currently operates under a Joint Project Agreement with the US government, which expires at the end of September 2009.

"It is an appropriate time therefore for the EU to review the progress of ICANN to date, and to identify what changes if any may be desirable," the Commission said.

In a communication entitled "Internet governance: the next steps," the EC proposed that ICANN operate under private-sector authority for day-to-day internet management, "but ultimately be properly accountable to the international community as a whole."

The Commission didn't follow Reding in directly calling for a "G-12 for internet governance" to oversee ICANN, but the paper does say current arrangements with the US government "need to be replaced with an alternative mechanism to ensure that ICANN has multilateral accountability."

As the Joint Project Agreement is ending now, the Commission believes that ICANN should become universally accountable, not just to one government but to the global internet community," the EC stated. "This is particularly relevant given that the next billion internet users will mainly come from the developing world."

The Commission adds that the question needs to be addressed of how to ensure ICANN's incorporation in California doesn't prevent proper account being taken of US government input.

It concludes that the EU should begin discussions with the US over making ICANN more open to global input, "which respects the national priorities of the US while at the same time reflecting the legitimate expectations and interests of the international community."

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