

EC commissioner calls for government oversight of internet

ComputerWeekly.com

Legislation and Regulation

07 May 2009

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Europe took a further step to fence cyberspace this week when communications commissioner [Viviane Reding](#) called for [Icann](#) to become a private corporation subject to a "G12 for internet governance" to oversee internet governance policy and security issues from October.

This follows reviews of the current self-regulatory model of the internet in the US and UK. The reviews were prompted by the expiry of the US Department of Commerce's agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers on 30 September.

In 1998 the Department of Commerce agreed to let [Icann](#), a private not-for profit corporation established in California, manage the net's addressing system.

The UK followed this model with the establishment of [Nominet](#), also a private not for profit members' association, to manage the .uk domain name registry. But the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) has questioned the future viability of the model.

In response [Nominet](#) chairman Bob Gilbert argued strongly for the continuance of the self-regulatory model. "It is crucial that key infrastructure is managed as closely as possible to the technical and user community, allowing rapid response to threats and quick decisions on investments and innovation," he told BERR.

[Reding](#) said [Icann](#) had to be accountable and made more democratic. "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 all over the world," she said.

[Reding](#) outlined a new model of internet governance after 30 September. She said it should include a fully privatised, independent, financially transparent and judicially reviewed [Icann](#), and an informal multilateral "G-12 for Internet Governance" forum where governments can discuss general internet governance policy issues and can make, by majority, recommendations to [Icann](#).

This group would provide swift reaction to threats to the stability, security and openness of the internet, she said.

It would include two representatives from each 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. Competent international organisations with competencies could have observer status, she said.

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