

The Impact of COVID-19 on ccTLDs

Miguel Ignacio Estrada



¿What is LACTLD?

- LACTLD is the association of Country Code Top Level Domains (ccTLD) from Latin America and the Caribbean
- It was created on August 20th, 1998 in Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Our Vision is “to promote an Internet that contributes to the economic and social development by using domain names”
- Our Mission is “to be an active agent in the development of the Internet and its governance through the Association’s and its members’ involvement in the main topics related to the Internet, domain names, and digital presence”

Members

- 29 associates
- 5 affiliates
- 8 observers



Anycast Cloud

- Started in December 2016
- A non for profit collaborative network that seeks to strengthen the DNS infrastructure and stability in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Benefits
 - Optimal load management: dynamically activates the answers to the users queries according to the availability of each of the nodes
 - Shorter response times: clients gain greater availability to respond to the users queries
 - Robustness and resilience: if one of the nodes goes down it will automatically be removed from the available routing options, and future traffic will continue to be directed to the remaining nodes
 - Efficient use of infrastructure: optimizes the use of participants infrastructure

Anycast Cloud

- 9 Nodes
 - 6 in the LAC region
 - 1 in the US
 - 2 in Europe
- 13 Users/Clients
 - 12 LAC ccTLDs
 - .TT / .DO / .PR / .GP
 - LACNIC reverse DNS



Illegal Online Content Forum

Goals

- Train and update LEAs from LAC territories on the Internet, the ecosystem organizations and the different mechanisms that exist to interact with those responsible for online content
- Raise awareness that acting on the “logical layer” of the Internet should never be the first step and can have unexpected consequences
- Create a space to establish networks and exchange experiences and best practices

Participants

- Judges, Prosecutors and LEAs from LAC.

Illegal Online Content Forum

Activities

- Workshop in Bogotá
 - 50 participants from 9 countries in South America
- Workshop in Cancún
 - 40 participants from 8 countries from Central and North America and spanish speaking Caribbean territories
- Workshop in the Caribbean cancelled do to the Pandemic
- Webinars
 - Interpol
 - Cybercrime Unit of the Public Ministry of Argentina

Challenges of the Pandemic

¿What was our approach to the Pandemic?

Once the Pandemic was Declared:

1. We had an exchange meeting with our members
2. Hosted a Business Continuity Webinar (BCP)
3. Conducted a survey for our members on the impact of the Pandemic
4. Hosted a Webinar on remote work optimization
5. Conducted a second survey for our members on domains registered with terms related to COVID-19

Business Continuity

Our region is prepared for
natural disasters

Business Continuity

Our region is prepared for natural disasters



Business Continuity

Our region is prepared for natural disasters

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Disaster Preparedness and Business Continuity Plan

LACTLD interviewed four experts on contingency plans for ccTLDs: Sebastián Castro, Chief Scientist at InternetNZ (the registry for .NZ domains and the operator of the .NZ domain)

What are the responsibilities of ccTLD operators?
How can incidents, disasters and emergencies be averted and reduced?
Who should be in charge of such a task?



Business Continuity

- The situation was not of great technical concern
 - Many ccTLDs already had a Business Continuity Plan
 - In case of interruption of operations, most ccTLDs have Anycast services that can respond in an emergency, almost half of them use our Anycast Cloud
- From the operational point of view, there were some challenges to address
 - Payments using cash or checks
 - Domain expirations in the first days of the Pandemic
 - Extensions were granted and in some cases domains were automatically renewed

Business Continuity

- Regarding ccTLDs staff
 - In general, the remote work mode was chosen
 - In several cases, adequate equipment had to be provided to employees
 - In cases where it was 100% necessary, rotating in-person schemes were generated with the proper health protocols

Domain name registration growth

- During the first weeks of the pandemic, some registries noted a slight decrease in domain registrations and renewals
- Proactive measures were introduced for those domains that were close to expiring
- In the following weeks there was a recovery in the number of registrations, renewals returned to normal values and registrations began to grow

Domain name registration growth

- April, year-on-year growth exceeded April of 2019 by 24 percentage points
- May went up to 64 % points and June to 57 % points
- 2020 Q2 was the highest quarterly growth peak since 2016
- More than 330 thousand domains were registered in LAC
- Historical growth levels for several of our members
- Explanation?
 - Migration of many companies and institutions to the online world
 - Ventures that arose from new needs
- We will have to evaluate in a year if the negative effect on small and medium-sized companies has its correlation in domain renewals

DNS Abuse during the Pandemic

¿What do we call DNS Abuse?

- What is illegal offline is illegal online
- In addition, there is a certain consensus on some uses considered "abusive"
 - Phishing
 - Malware distribution
 - Pharming
 - Botnets
 - Spam if used as a route for the above

Some concerns about the Pandemic

- Some media (mainly in Europe) spoke of increasing domain registration for illegal purposes
 - Sale of "remedies" or "treatments" for COVID-19
 - Anti-vaccine material
- The transfer of companies operations to employees' homes could cause additional problems due to Abuse in the DNS

¿What happened in LAC?

- LACTLD conducted a study in July of this year
- We had the participation of 85% of our members
- 1739 domains were registered including words such as: coronavirus, covid, virus, sars, corona, pandemic, pandemic, etc.
- They represent only 0.58% of the total registries of the period
- Only 11.5% of the surveyed ccTLDs received reports of abusive or malicious use in those domains
- Reports represent less than 1% of domains with these terms
- The close relationships built with LEAs from the region in our Illegal Online Content Forum resulted in immediate action in different cases of DNS Abuse



THANKS

Miguel Ignacio Estrada
gm@staff.lactld.org
@acmuzic

