

B. Focus Group and Interview Report

The RIPE NCC has been conducting member surveys for over a decade. Over that time, the focus group and interview process has evolved to ensure that the actual survey questions are clearly focused on capturing information that truly reflects members' needs and views. A key element of this has been the recognition that, while members have many common interests, they are not a homogeneous group. Their needs vary by sub-region, size, technical maturity and a variety of other factors.

When these surveys commenced, the organisation was much smaller and technically focused and those who participated were almost exclusively RIPE NCC members.

The Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) have always been very open organisations with democratic structures and bottom-up policy decision-making processes. Some non-members responded to the initial 2002 survey, and these were mainly members of the other two RIRs that existed at that time (APNIC and ARIN). As a consequence, the second survey had a section for "Stakeholders" to cover the needs of this group.

Since then, the RIPE NCC's interaction with external parties, such as the EU, governments, law enforcement agencies (LEAs), Telecommunication Regulatory Authorities (TRAs) and others, has grown. In this 2013 survey, the non-member category has been described as "Other Interested Parties".

Since the RIPE NCC is fully aware of the need to adequately serve this broad-ranging variation in interests, it means that each survey instrument must be carefully designed to support all these different types of input.

While focus groups and interviews have been held in the past, this time the focus group process has been enhanced. Individual interviews were held with members of the RIPE NCC as well as representatives from other interested parties, such as government and LEAs, who have an interest in the working of the Internet in general and the RIPE NCC in particular. Focus groups and interviews took place in:

- Belgium
- Germany
- Ireland
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- The Netherlands
- Poland
- Russia
- Serbia
- Spain
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom

Over 100 people were invited to attend the focus groups, including both new and older RIPE NCC members, outspoken participants in the RIPE community, representatives from government and law enforcement agencies, as well as individuals from relevant organisations such as Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) and national research and education networks (NRENs).

Those attending participated enthusiastically and with, as anticipated, a diverse and constructive range of views.

Issues for Discussion in the Focus Groups and Interviews

1. **IPv6**
IPv6 deployment in your country and what the RIPE NCC can do to help with deployment in the region
2. **Internet Governance**
The various Internet governance forums available to the Internet community
3. **Corporate Governance**
The corporate governance of the RIPE NCC and the use of the members' service fees
4. **Routing Security and Resource Certification (RPKI)**
The importance of routing security as an issue and the certification of Internet number resources
5. **Membership and Stakeholder Outreach**
The level of outreach and support that your region receives from the RIPE NCC
6. **Training and Development**
The training services that are offered by the RIPE NCC, particularly with regards to IPv6 training
7. **IPv4 Address Transfers**
The role that the RIPE NCC plays in facilitating IPv4 address transfers
8. **RIPE NCC Services**
The statistical services that are offered by the RIPE NCC, such as RIPEstat, and how useful these services are to the Internet community in your country
9. **RIPE NCC Priorities**
The main priority areas that the RIPE NCC should be focusing on

Other Issues

Participants were encouraged to raise any other issues they wished or to give emphasis to those of special importance to their circumstances or locality.

Summary of Main Comments Made by Participants

It should be noted that the comments and views that follow are very much influenced by local circumstances. Such circumstances include the availability of training, infrastructure development, country/region economics and other factors.

Importantly, this means that the post survey analysis and subsequent action by the RIPE NCC will need to take critical account of local needs.

The RIPE NCC is generally viewed as an objective, well-informed organisation seeking to meet members' varied needs, but is at the same time neutral between members.

1. IPv6

IPv6 adoption is happening but is much slower than expected. This is for three main reasons:

- Lack of resources or willingness to invest;
- Lack of information or training; and
- The general view and acceptance that network address translation (NAT) will solve any problems, especially with the growing use of carrier-grade NATs (CGNs)

It was perceived in the focus groups that this last point would provide operational problems in the medium to long term. The views show the variation of opinion among members in the different areas of the RIPE NCC service region.

While government bodies are active seekers of statistics and trends on IPv6 adoption, there was little optimism that governments would use legislation or regulation to promote adoption.

It was a widespread view that ongoing communication and information on IPv6 development will be necessary by the RIPE NCC and others. A number of participants noted that the RIPE NCC should be approaching and educating at the corporate level rather than at the technical level.

2. Internet Governance

The RIPE NCC is seen as a defender against the autocratic governance model proposed by the ITU. This is especially so with smaller ISPs that do not have the resources to participate in the debate but who also expect that they will receive regular reports of developments and opportunities to express their own views on RIPE NCC strategy. While interaction with governments and LEAs was supported in principle, this is

also seen as part of demonstrating that the RIR model of governance and policy-making is truly effective.

3. Corporate Governance

Some participants suggested that the service provided by the RIPE NCC declines the greater the distance they are from Amsterdam. The prime function of the RIPE NCC continues to be seen as the registry function together with directly related activities, while infrastructure development and management was also important.

There were a number of areas where more effort was seen as necessary, such as:

- Reviewing the Policy Development Process (PDP)
- Ensuring that employers saw the value of their staff attending RIPE Meetings
- Giving members a better understanding of the decision-making processes
- Members needing more help in understanding RIPE NCC General Meeting voting and decision-making

Several people expressed concern about the way the RIPE NCC Charging Scheme discussion was conducted in 2012; some also considered that the ultimate decision to have one fee per LIR was unfair to small members despite the majority decision, and there was some speculation as to the percentage of members who actually voted and the size distribution of the majority vote.

There was a general feeling that there was a lack of prior member discussion on new projects, leading to the organisation spending money without a clear mandate.

Despite these criticisms, the large majority of attendees stated that they had considerable trust in both the RIPE NCC Executive Board and in the staff. The external relations work of the RIPE NCC in the Middle East was especially recognised.

For many focus group attendees, current fees were considered to be relatively low and not a critical issue for their organisation, while the RIPE NCC finances were well and prudently managed.

4. Routing Security and Resource Certification (RPKI)

While members agreed that security was important, the issue of member consent to RPKI was an area of general concern. It was felt that a considerable amount of money had been spent by the RIPE NCC without adequate debate and that ultimately the RIPE NCC was telling members what was good for them. There were other security options that members did not have a serious opportunity to consider. There remained a series of unanswered questions:

- Will ISPs be able to afford the cost?
- Will they receive adequate benefit from the cost?
- Is route validation by the RIPE NCC a legitimate part of their activities?
- Will governments make regulations in regard to routing security?
- Despite the investment, should other options still be considered?
- What can be done to educate members more on the options?

5. Membership and Stakeholder Outreach

It was recognised generally that there is a need to define who the different groups of stakeholders are, why the RIPE NCC needs to contact them and about what issues. There was a desire to see objective measures in this area, and regional meetings were given as an example of where goals (and whether or not they were achieved) need to be laid out.

It was felt that there needs to be a programme that encourages government representatives, LEAs and others to not only attend RIPE Meetings but also to participate and explain their roles.

Consideration should be given to translating critical material into other major RIPE NCC service region languages.

The RIPE NCC needs to continually project itself as the main trusted source of information in this area.

6. Training and Development

The greatest need is for localised training – don't just train in major/capital cities. To this end, local people should be considered as source of translation and delivery of training material with the RIPE NCC ensuring quality assurance. There is a feeling that RIPE NCC training staff are not at the leading edge of current technical knowledge. There needs to be flexibility in training to reflect the different ways that some countries deal with number resources.

Training documentation standards need improvement; the LIR Portal is difficult to use and documentation is hard to find. Is there a database of available training material? Webinars, video training and remote training are good ideas but need to be presented in other languages, e.g. Russian and Arabic.

7. IPV4 Address Transfers

The role of the RIPE NCC should be to make transfers as easy as possible. People do not want transfers going underground. While it could be argued that “easy” transfers

delay IPv6 adoption – this seems to be an unfounded proposition – people do not want a black market for IPv4 addresses. There needs to be a clear, simple process for member use, which also ensures database integrity.

More effort needs to be made in recovering legacy address space and making much of that space in the ARIN region available to members of the RIPE NCC and other RIRs.

A shortage of addresses presents particular problems in the Middle East, Russia and other countries that feel that they have been denied a “fair share”.

8. RIPE NCC Services

Questions were asked about the usefulness of the monitoring tools. It was suggested that there should be more guidelines and a better process for starting new services. It was noted that RIPE Atlas is an interesting project and there is support in some quarters to keep it running – but is it absolutely necessary, and would it increase members’ profit or just their expenses? RIPEstat was seen as a useful tool for some but it cannot be effectively used without good training or some level of familiarity.

LIR Portal ticketing needs to be improved and additional features such as historical archives and current ticket status added.

The continuation of DNSMON and DNS secondary services is supported but more public interfaces are necessary.

9. Summary of RIPE NCC Main Priorities

The priorities listed below have all been addressed in more detail in the appropriate section above.

- The core function as a registry and the maintenance of an accurate and up-to-date WHOIS service
- For the Middle East, the addressing of local issues that are specific to that region’s concerns
- Continue and enhance the involvement with key external bodies such as the EU, governments, LEAs, TRAs and other Internet bodies such as the IETF, ISOC, ICANN and IANA
- Localise training, enhance training methodologies and focus on local needs as well as delivery
- Where appropriate, expand training to other interested parties, some of whom would consider paying
- Increase IPv6 awareness broadly

- Ensure that changes are widely and openly debated before expenditure on development
- Improve the PDP process and review other processes
- Maximise the utilisation of available IPv4 addresses and ensure that this pool is augmented when and wherever possible
- Improve LIR Portal ticketing and provide additional features
- Translate critical material into major RIPE NCC service region languages

Desiree Miloshevic & John Earls
July 2013