

Quorum Interpretation Study Group Final Report

18 June 2014

1) Background

After reviewing the final report of the Quorum Study Group (<http://ccnso.icann.org/workinggroups/quorum-final-04dec13-en.pdf>), the ccNSO Council decided that recommendation 2 of the Study Group needs to be further explored before taking a final decision:

Recommendation 2: Develop a mechanism where ccNSO members can indicate how their “non-vote” should be interpreted during a voting – Abstain/Will not subscribe to policy/Do not count me as quorum (the latter meaning that the member does not consider itself having enough insight on the matter, but does not want to hinder the issue to pass a voting).

In order to properly explore the implications of this recommendation and to find out whether there is adequate Community support for such a change, a sub-committee called the *Quorum Interpretation Study Group* was formed in April 2014.

It was agreed that the Study Group is to focus on following matters:

- 1) Clarify what the various meanings of a “No vote” are¹;
- 2) Analyse what implications the suggested model in recommendation 2 could have;
- 3) Find out the community sentiments on recommendation 2
- 4) Based on the outcome - make a final recommendation to the Council
- 5) Depending on Council decision: Prepare and manage process of implementing recommendations (in ccNSO Rules and Election Guidelines)

The Study Group was comprised by following volunteers:

Katrina Sasaki, .lv (Chair)
Celia Lerman-Friedman, NomCom appointee to the ccNSO Council
Abibu Ntahigiye .tz
Nigel Roberts, .gg & .je
Hong Xue, NomCom appointee to the ccNSO Council

The main staff support was Gabriella Schitteck.

¹ The original goal was to “Clarify/ing/ what the various options of “Abstain” are to mean”; however, after internal discussions, it was agreed that “Abstain” should be replaced by “no vote”, as that was the issue that needed to be focused on.

2) Meanings of “No Vote” and Implications of Recommendation 2

The Study Group members identified two meanings of how a “No Vote” could be interpreted:

- 1) ***The entitled voter does not have enough insight on the matter, but does not want to hinder the issue to pass a voting. The entitled voter is content with allowing their non-vote be counted as an “Abstention”.***

Implications: If the entitled voter selects this option prior to a voting, the non-vote will be treated as an active “Abstention” and will be part of the quorum. The chances of a voting to pass in the first round will increase.

- 2) ***The entitled voter does not subscribe to the suggested policy and/or certain circumstances prevents the entitled voter to cast a vote – i.e. the non-vote should not be counted for a quorum.***

Implications: If the entitled voter selects this option, their non-vote will be treated as a lack of vote and will not be part of the quorum. The chances of a voting to pass in the first round will decrease.

3) Community Sentiments

In order to find out what the ccNSO members feel about the possibility of choosing what interpretation of a “non vote” they prefer, the Study Group decided to conduct a survey.

The survey was launched to the ccNSO membership on 28 May and ended on 11 June 2014. It asked the members, whether:

- 1) The respondent would agree on allowing to indicate the meaning of a non-vote
- 2) How a non-vote is to be viewed in the respondent’s opinion.

The survey also gave the respondents the possibility to clarify their choices.

57 replies were received in total. The full survey and the survey results are available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-MY8FRNV8/>.

Following explanatory text preceded the questions:

With a growing membership, the ccNSO has started facing problems in reaching the quorum when members are asked to vote. The main reason seems to be that the non-votes are interpreted differently amongst the members – in some areas, a non-vote might mean an “abstention”, in others - “I do not subscribe to this policy”.

One approach to handle this issue is to let members define themselves how a “non-vote” should be interpreted before every voting occasion (noting that an offer to actively “abstain” in the voting always will be offered additionally). This would help us to avoid misunderstandings and to reduce the necessity to run second rounds of voting and thus to avoid the fatigue of those members who do vote.

The possible interpretations of a non-vote would be:

1) I do not have enough insight on the matter, but do not want to hinder the issue to pass a voting – count my non-vote in the total number of voted members for a quorum, i.e. "Abstention".

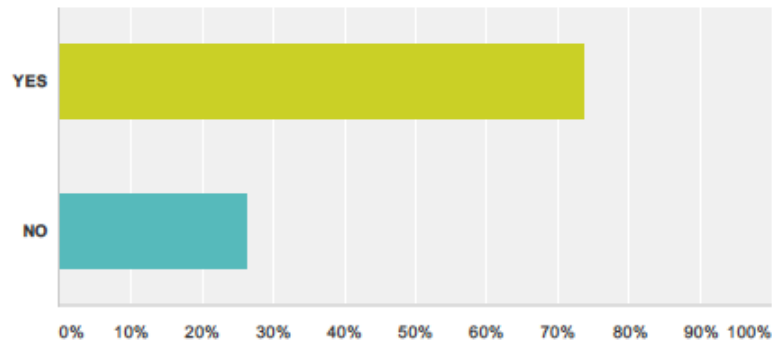
2) I do not subscribe to the suggested policy/certain circumstances prevent me from voting– do not count my non-vote for a quorum.

We would be grateful if you could let us know your feelings on this suggestion of handling a non-vote.

The most crucial input to the Study Group members, were the replies received to question number one:

Q1 Do you think the aforementioned method of allowing members to indicate how their non-vote should be interpreted would be a satisfactory way to deal with the issue of non-votes?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
YES	73.68%	42
NO	26.32%	15
Total		57

Although around 74% of the respondents indicated that they would support the idea of being able to indicate how a non-vote should be interpreted, a significant minority (26%) did not approve this suggestion. Strong arguments were raised in the comment field on why it would be harmful to choose such a direction, indicating that it would be better to re-conduct the voting, than to change the rules.

A small selection of the input received:

Not voting means "0" and should not be counted nor valuated.

I think the provision to have a second round of voting where quorum is not required is still the best way to go even though it is expensive in several ways

To offer ANY interpretation of inaction, REQUIRES ACTION, which is what you are missing in the first place. It implies that there are ulterior motives for not voting.

Members should be made aware when signing up that there is an obligation to participate. If the ccNSO voice is reduced to 20-30? active members, we lose credibility. What is so hard about voting that it should be considered OK not to vote? Mark emails requesting for a vote clearly so they can be filtered out for those who can not cope with the volume on the list. If that doesn't help then don't hesitate to conclude that they don't care enough to be a member.

A non vote is a non vote and ought not to be counted. Quorum is defined by the number voting.

4) Study Group Recommendations

Based on the community feedback and acknowledging that there is no consensus on the Quorum Study Group's recommendation 2, ***the Quorum Interpretation Study Group recommends that the ccNSO Council should not enforce recommendation 2***; the current quorum rules should continue to pertain.