

Policy Development Process in RIPE

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1. Introduction

This document describes the RIPE Policy Development Process (RIPE PDP), outlining how policies relating to the operation of the Internet are developed by and for the RIPE community.

Since its creation in 1989, RIPE has been a forum for people to decide on common practices. These common practices may come in different forms and/or under different names:

- best common practice (BCP)
- recommendations and guidelines to the community
- recommendations and guidelines to the RIPE NCC
- policy

This document refers solely to “Policy”.

The process that results in the creation of a policy has some important and fundamental principles:

- a. It is open to all and follows an established, bottom-up process of collaboration. Everyone interested in the well-being of the Internet may propose a policy and take part in the discussions that follow on from the proposal.
- b. It is transparent. All discussions and resulting actions are documented and freely available to all.
- c. Conclusions are reached by consensus.
- d. All policies are documented within RIPE Documents and placed in the RIPE Document Store.

The policies referred to in this document are those developed through the bottom-up RIPE PDP. This document does not describe the specific administrative or technical procedures established in order for a policy to be applied. Depending on the specifics of a policy, procedures can be set by the Local Internet Registries (LIRs), End Users and the RIPE NCC as required. These procedures must conform to all policies that are in place.

RIPE Policies are also separate from RIPE NCC business practices and procedures. Business practices and procedures that the RIPE NCC follows are defined and governed by the RIPE NCC Executive Board and approved by the RIPE NCC membership.

2. The Process

The process of developing a policy has four distinct phases:

1. Creating a Proposal
2. Discussion Phase
3. Review Phase
4. Concluding Phase

These four phases are detailed below with timelines. They are proposed deadlines for the various stages. Individual proposals may choose to vary these, but the actual timescales must be documented.

In all phases of the RIPE PDP, suggestions for changes to the proposal and objections regarding the proposal must be justified with supporting arguments.

In this process, the RIPE NCC (the RIPE community's secretariat) gives administrative support by:

- publishing proposals and related discussions on relevant webpages
- tracking deadlines
- making announcements to the RIPE community
- providing assistance in drafting policy proposals if requested
- providing relevant facts, statistics and an assessment of the work involved in the implementation of a policy

The process flow is illustrated in a diagram, attached as Appendix A.

There are a number of points in the PDP at which disputes could arise. The PDP is designed so that compromises can be made and genuine consensus achieved. However, there are times when even the most reasonable and knowledgeable people are unable to agree on the decisions made at the end of any PDP phase. To achieve the goals of openness, transparency and fairness, such conflicts must be resolved through a process of open review and discussion. This process is documented in Appendix C, RIPE Policy Development Dispute Resolution.

2.1 Creating a Proposal

Discussions may be started by anyone at any time. Participants are welcome to discuss broad ideas as well as to make detailed policy proposals. Proposals are made using the Policy Proposal template, attached as Appendix B.

The template forms a structure for the proposal. It details the reason for the proposal and any perceived consequences of the proposal.

A proposal is discussed publicly in the relevant RIPE Working Group (WG)[1]. The proposal is usually submitted via the chair of that WG. If the proposer [2] is not certain which WG is appropriate for discussion of the proposal, they can send the proposal to the RIPE Chair at policy-proposal@ripe.net. In some cases, a proposal may need more than one WG's input. In such cases, before the proposal is published, the relevant WG chairs will discuss the situation and decide the WG most suited to discussion of the proposal. Necessary announcements will be made to the other WG(s) so they can follow the discussions.

The RIPE NCC gives each proposal its own unique identifier and publishes it on a dedicated RIPE webpage. This webpage contains the version history and the status of all proposals. A proposal can have one of the following statuses at any given time:

- **Open for Discussion:** Meaning that the proposal is still being discussed within the RIPE PDP.
- **Accepted:** Meaning that the RIPE community accepted the proposal after all stages of the RIPE PDP were completed.
- **Withdrawn:** Meaning that the proposal is withdrawn either by the proposer or by the WG chairs at one of the decision-making points.

2.2 Discussion Phase

Once a proposal is submitted, it is announced on the Policy Announce Mailing List (policy-announce@ripe.net), which anyone can subscribe to. This announcement also indicates where discussion on the proposal will take place. This is usually sent to the relevant WG mailing list. The WG chair sets the period for the Discussion Phase and this is at least four weeks.

At the end of the Discussion Phase, the proposer, with the agreement of the WG chair, decides whether the proposal will move to the next phase (Review Phase) or if it should be withdrawn from the RIPE PDP, depending on the feedback received. This should be done no more than four weeks after the end of the Discussion Phase. If the proposer does not communicate this decision to the WG chair within four weeks, the WG chair can withdraw the proposal due to lack of response from the proposer.

If significant comments or changes are suggested during the Discussion Phase, the proposer will edit the proposal and the new version of the proposal will be published. A new Discussion Phase will then start for the new version of the proposal.

If the suggested comments and changes are not so significant to require a new Discussion Phase, the proposer and WG chair can decide to move the proposal to the next phase (Review Phase) with a new version of the proposal incorporating the necessary edits.

Each version of the proposal is publicly archived to transparently show the history of changes to the proposal.

If the proposer decides to take the proposal to the next phase, the draft RIPE Document should be prepared within four weeks. A policy proposal can result in the modification of an

existing RIPE Document or can result in publication of a completely new RIPE Document. If the proposal is a modification of an existing policy or it is a new policy that needs to be documented in an existing RIPE Document, then a draft RIPE Document clearly pointing to the changes to the existing document will be published. If the proposal requires a completely new RIPE Document to be published, the draft should be produced before the proposal can be moved to the Review Phase.

2.3 Review Phase

The purpose of the Review phase is to review the full draft RIPE Document compiled at the end of the Discussion Phase so that the final documentation the proposal will lead to and all modifications made to that document are transparent to the community. During the Review Phase, discussion of the proposal can continue and within the context of the proposal, further modifications can still be suggested regarding the draft RIPE Document. The Review Phase should last for a maximum of four weeks.

At the end of the Review Phase, the WG chair determines whether the WG has reached rough consensus. If the WG chair decides that consensus has not been reached, then the WG chair can withdraw the proposal. Alternatively, the WG chair can send the proposal back to the Discussion Phase if the proposer is willing to continue to author the proposal and make the necessary changes to the proposal according to the feedback received from the community. The WG chair can also decide to have the draft RIPE Document edited and start a new Review Phase with a new version of the proposal.

2.4 Concluding Phase

If the WG chair determines that the WG has reached consensus at the end of the Review Phase, the WG chair moves the proposal to a “Last Call for Comments” and the Concluding Phase starts. The Last Call period lasts four weeks. The Last Call announcement is also posted to the WG mailing list and to the Policy Announce Mailing List (policy-announce@ripe.net).

The purpose of this Last Call period is to provide the community with a final opportunity to comment on the proposal. This is mainly intended for those who missed the previous two phases and want to oppose the proposal. It gives time to the community after the relevant WG chair declares rough consensus at the end of the Review Phase so that suggestions for any final changes or objections to the proposal can be sent to the WG mailing list. At this stage, objections need to be justified just as in the other phases for them to be taken into account.

At the end of the Last Call period, all RIPE WG chairs as a group will evaluate the feedback received during this period and decide whether consensus has been achieved. If there is no feedback from the community at this stage, this is likely to be regarded as consensus and it will mean the previous call of rough consensus from the relevant WG chair at the end of the Review Phase still holds.

If consensus has been achieved, the RIPE NCC will announce the decision of the RIPE WG chairs and, if necessary, implement the policy.

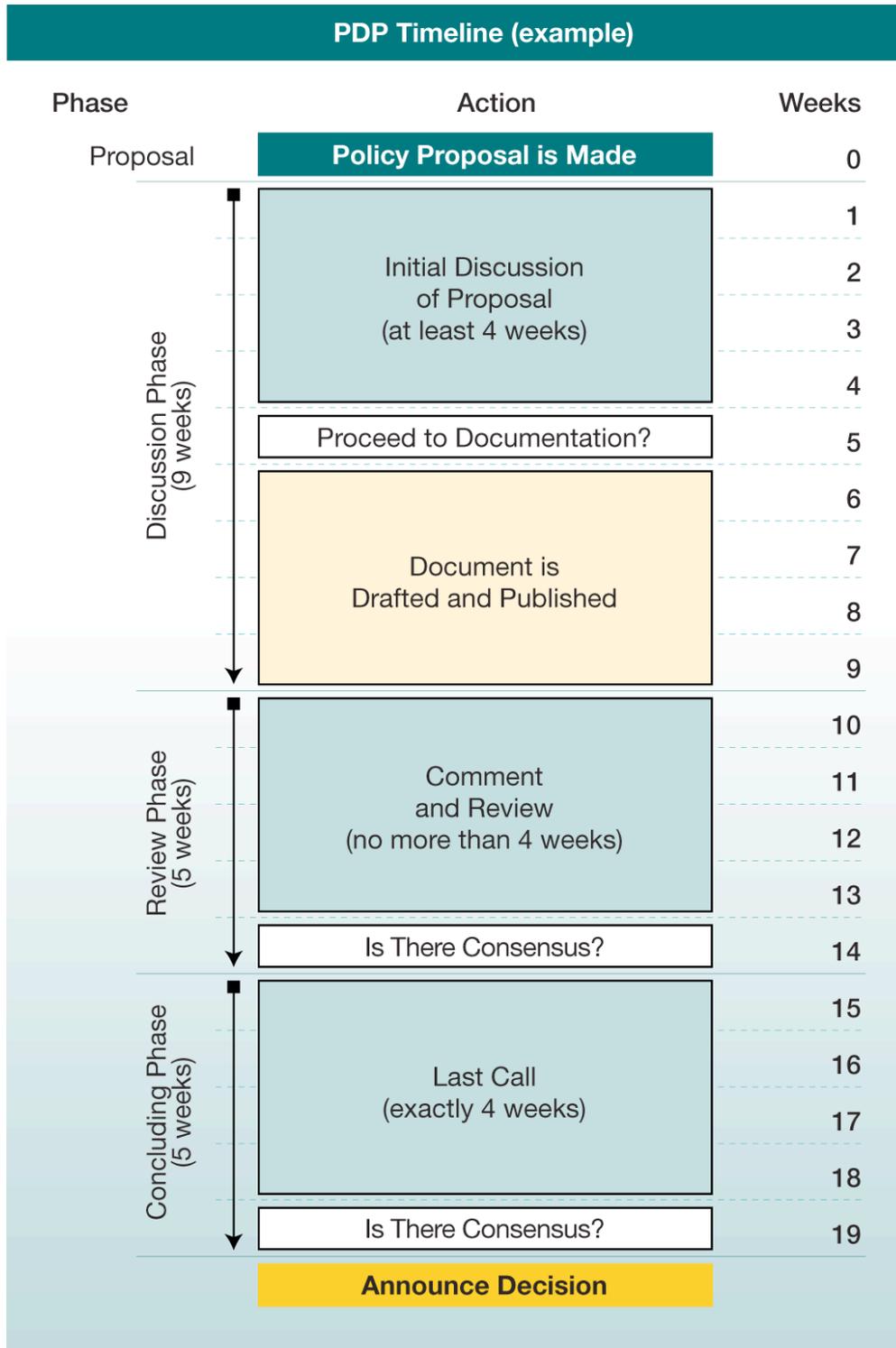
If consensus has not been achieved, the RIPE WG chairs can decide to either withdraw the proposal or send it back to one of the previous phases. The proposer (or anyone else) is free to return the proposal to the WG for further discussion.

References

[1] The RIPE community has formed a number of working groups to deal with issues and topics affecting the Internet community. Every RIPE Working Group has at least one chair (some working groups may have co-chairs). They are responsible for chairing discussions in the working group and, where necessary, making decisions in the Policy Development Process.

[2] A proposal can have more than one author.

Appendix A: Policy Development Process Diagram



NOTE: The actual timelines of individual proposals may vary. They are documented and announced per proposal.

Appendix B: Policy Proposal Template

1. Number (assigned by the RIPE NCC)
2. Policy Proposal Name:
3. Author Details
 - a. name:
 - b. email:
 - c. organisation:
4. Proposal Version (assigned by the RIPE NCC):
5. Submission Date:
6. Suggested RIPE WG for discussion and publication:
7. Proposal Type:
 - a. new, modification or deletion
8. Policy Term:
 - a. Temporary (time period)
 - b. Indefinite
9. Summary of Proposal
10. Policy Text
 - a. Current Policy Text (if modification):
 - b. New Policy Text:
11. Rationale:
 - a. Arguments supporting the proposal
 - b. Arguments opposing the proposal

Appendix C: RIPE Policy Development Dispute Resolution

1. Introduction

This document specifies the procedures that shall be followed to deal with disputes regarding the PDP.

In each of the situations described in Section 3 of this appendix, the action being appealed is the decision to declare consensus or lack of consensus. One cannot appeal the merits of the policy proposal itself or its technical, political or legal grounds. These issues must be addressed in the PDP phases and should be taken into account by community members during discussion of the proposal.

2. Terminology

2.1 Working Group Chairs Collective

For the purpose of this document, the term "working group chairs collective" refers to the chairs and co-chairs of all current RIPE Working Groups, not including the current RIPE Chair.

2.2 Working Group Chair(s)

For the purpose of this document, the term "working group chair(s)" refers to the current chair and co-chairs of a working group.

3. Appealable Actions

3.1 Discussion Phase

If, during the Discussion Phase, a community member believes that their views have not been adequately considered, their first action should be to raise the issue with the working group chair(s) for consideration.

If the dispute cannot be resolved with the working group chair(s), the matter shall be brought to the attention of the working group chairs collective, which will vote for or against upholding the decision made by the working group chair(s). The relevant working group chair(s) shall recuse themselves from any related discussion within the working group chairs collective.

The decision by the working group chairs collective shall be final in relation to the appeal. However, the matter can always be brought back to the working group for consideration.

3.2 Review Phase

If a community member believes that the working group chair(s) have erred in their judgement when declaring consensus or lack of consensus at the end of the Review Phase, they should first raise the matter with the working group chair(s).

If the dispute cannot be resolved with the working group chair(s), the matter shall be brought to the attention of the working group chairs collective, which will vote for or against upholding the decision made by the working group chair(s). The relevant working group chair(s) shall recuse themselves from any related discussion within the working group chairs collective.

If the dispute cannot be resolved by the decision of the working group chairs collective, the issue should be brought to the RIPE Chair. The decision of the RIPE Chair will be final.

3.3 Concluding Phase

If a community member believes that the working group chairs collective has erred in their judgement regarding consensus in the Concluding Phase Last Call, they should bring the issue to the attention of the RIPE Chair. The decision of the RIPE Chair will be final.

4. Appeals Procedure

All appeals should include a detailed and specific description of the issues and clearly outline the decision being appealed. An appeal must be submitted no later than four weeks after a decision has been made.

5. Conflicts of Interest

Working group chair(s) that are involved in an appeal should not be part of any discussion regarding that appeal in the working group chairs collective.

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