

Policy Development Process in RIPE

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1. Introduction

This document describes the RIPE Policy Development Process (RIPE PDP). It outlines how policies relating to the operation of the Internet are developed by, and for, the RIPE community. This document deals solely with policy. Everything else, such as RIPE NCC business practices, procedures and operations is out of scope.

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

1. 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.
2. It is transparent. All discussions and resulting actions are documented and freely available to all.
3. Decisions are taken by consensus.
4. All policies are documented within RIPE Documents that are placed in the RIPE Document Store.

2. The Process

Past experience shows that before any text is drafted, it is very important to share the idea for a policy proposal with as many members of the RIPE community as possible. Presenting an idea to the relevant RIPE Working Group (WG) can lead to clarifications and improvements before the formal PDP is started. This is not mandatory, but it can save time and effort both for the community and for the proposers themselves.

Feedback received prior to starting the formal PDP can help to:

- Clearly and concisely formulate the problem statement and the intended result
- Avoid creating a formal proposal with insufficient community interest or support

It can also offer an opportunity to:

- Research whether a similar idea has been discussed before
- Seek advice from authors of successful proposals (to help or become co-authors)
- Make RIPE Working Group Chairs aware of a possible upcoming proposal

The chairs of the relevant working group are encouraged to guide the proposer in preparing a policy proposal.

The process of developing a policy has four distinct phases:

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

These phases are detailed below with proposed timelines for the various stages. These may differ for individual proposals, but the actual timelines 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 and then addressed adequately by the proposer or by any supporter of the proposal.

At the end of each phase of the process, one of the chairs of the relevant WG will summarise the state of discussion on the WG mailing list.

The RIPE NCC (the RIPE community's secretariat) provides administrative support throughout this process 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 and statistics
- Publishing an impact analysis that points to the possible effects of the proposed policy and the work that would be involved in its implementation.

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

There are a number of points in the PDP where disputes could arise. The PDP is designed so that compromises can be made and [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 a PDP phase. To achieve the goals of openness, transparency and fairness, such conflicts must be resolved through a process of open review and discussion.

2.1 Creating a Proposal

Discussions may be started by anyone at any time. Community members 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.

This template forms a structure for the proposal. It sets out the reason for the proposal and any perceived consequences it might have.

After preliminary discussion of the idea as suggested above, a proposal is discussed publicly in the relevant RIPE Working Group (WG)[1]. The proposal is usually submitted via one of

the chairs 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. If a proposal may need input from more than one WG, 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 then has a specific status at any given time, which can be:

- **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 has been submitted, the RIPE NCC will announce it 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, usually on the relevant WG mailing list. The WG chairs set the period for the Discussion Phase and this is at least four weeks.

At the end of the Discussion Phase, depending on the feedback received, the proposer decides whether the proposal should be withdrawn from the RIPE PDP or, with the agreement of the WG chair, it can move to the next phase (Review Phase). This should be done no more than four weeks after the end of the Discussion Phase. If the proposer does not communicate their decision to the WG chairs within four weeks, the WG chairs 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 by the RIPE NCC. A new Discussion Phase will then start for the new version of the proposal.

If the suggested comments and changes are not so significant as to require a new Discussion Phase, the proposer and WG chairs 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 on the RIPE website to transparently show the history of changes to the proposal.

If the proposer decides to take the proposal to the next phase, they need to produce a draft RIPE Document which should be published within four weeks after the end of the Discussion Phase, before the proposal can be moved to the Review Phase. If the proposal results in the

modification or an update of an existing RIPE Document, then the draft RIPE Document needs to clearly mark the changes to the existing document.

The RIPE NCC can help the proposer to prepare this document.

The RIPE NCC will need to publish an impact analysis for the proposal before it can be moved to the Review Phase. The goal of this analysis is to provide relevant supporting information to facilitate discussions on the proposal and provide some projections about the possible impact if it were to be accepted. This analysis will contain the following points:

- The RIPE NCC's understanding of the proposed policy
- Impact on the registry and addressing systems (including Internet resource consumption, aggregation and fragmentation)
- Impact on RIPE NCC operations/services/capacity
- Legal impact

2.3 Review Phase

The purpose of the Review Phase is to review the full draft RIPE Document and impact analysis compiled at the end of the Discussion Phase. Further modifications to the draft RIPE Document can still be suggested during this phase. The Review Phase should last for a maximum of four weeks.

At the end of the Review Phase, the WG chairs determine, after summarising the state of the discussion and inviting corrections, whether the WG has [reached consensus](#). If the WG chairs decide that consensus has not been reached, then the WG chairs can withdraw the proposal. Alternatively, the WG chairs 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 according to feedback received from the community.
- Decide to have the draft RIPE Document edited and start a new Review Phase with a new version of the proposal.
- Extend the Review Phase for a maximum of four additional weeks if not enough community input was received.

2.4 Concluding Phase

Unless the proposal is withdrawn or sent back for further discussion or review, it enters the Concluding Phase. The WG chairs now issue a "Last Call for Comments" for the proposal on the WG mailing list and allow four weeks for comments. The RIPE NCC will send a copy of the Last Call announcement to the Policy Announce Mailing List (policy-announce@ripe.net).

The purpose of this Last Call 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 the community time after the relevant WG chairs declare 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 and then addressed just as they must in the other phases.

When the deadline for comments has been reached, the WG chairs 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 WG chairs at the end of the Review Phase still holds.

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

If consensus has not been achieved at the end of this phase, the WG chairs can decide either to withdraw the proposal or to send it back to one of the previous phases. After a withdrawal, anyone is free to re-introduce the topic on the mailing list.

3. Appealable Actions

3.1 Discussion Phase

During the Discussion Phase, anyone who has a complaint or other concern about the policy proposal or how it is being handled in the WG should first raise the matter with the chairs of that WG. If the dispute cannot be resolved with the WG chairs, the Appeals Procedure can be invoked.

3.2 Review and Concluding Phases

At these stages of the process – i.e. after the WG chairs have declared initial consensus or the proposal is in Last Call – complaints should not be about the policy proposal itself unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Anyone who believes that the proposal has not been handled correctly or that the WG chairs have made an incorrect determination of consensus should first raise the matter with the WG chairs. If the dispute cannot be resolved with the WG chairs, the Appeals Procedure can be invoked.

4. Appeals Procedure

If a grievance cannot be resolved with the chairs of the WG, an appeal can be submitted for consideration by the Working Group Chairs Collective (WGCC). Anyone may submit an appeal. This must be submitted to the relevant WG mailing list(s) and to the Policy Announce Mailing List (policy-announce@ripe.net). The appeal will also be published by the RIPE NCC at appropriate locations on the RIPE website. Any appeal should include a detailed and specific description of the issues and clearly explain why the appeal was submitted. An appeal must be submitted no later than four weeks after the appealable action has occurred.

The WGCC will decide by consensus whether to uphold or reject appeals which have been submitted. The decision of the WGCC should be reached no later than four weeks after submission of the appeal. The following list of people shall recuse themselves from any discussion or decision within the WGCC relating to the appeal:

- Co-chairs of the relevant WG(s) where the original proposal was discussed
- Proposer of the original policy proposal
- Appellant
- RIPE Chair and RIPE Vice Chair

It is worth noting that the WGCC only reviews the process and not the content of the proposal or the discussion. No less than five WG chairs shall participate in the appeal process.

When considering an appeal, the participating WGCC members shall select one of their number as facilitator, who will chair the discussions relevant to the appeal. Exceptionally, and by agreement with the RIPE Chair, an external facilitator may be appointed instead.

If the dispute cannot be resolved by the decision of the WGCC, they will refer it to the RIPE Chair no later than four weeks after the decision of the WGCC has been published. The RIPE Chair will make a final decision after due consideration and preferably within four weeks after the appeal has been referred to them. The decision of the RIPE Chair will be final.

If an extension of the deadlines is needed at any stage of the appeal procedure, this will be announced on the Policy Announce Mailing List (policy-announce@ripe.net) and to the appellant(s) via email.

5. Changes to the PDP

The PDP is a community governance document that describes how policy is made within RIPE, and not a policy. Any proposal to change the PDP is presented on the RIPE Discussion list and may be discussed during a RIPE Community Plenary. A consensus call is then issued on the RIPE Discussion list (ripe-list@ripe.net) by the RIPE Chair. It is crucial to carefully manage this process to ensure proper community consensus building.

6. Provenance

In April 2021, the PDP appeals process was reviewed, and the results were published as [ripe-760](#).

Around the same time, Niall O'Reilly, the RIPE Vice Chair at the time, did a detailed analysis of the evolution of the PDP and published it as [ripe-761](#).

This was a good opportunity to do an overall review of [ripe-710](#), the PDP as published in 2018.

Draft v1 was published and announced in October 2021:

<https://www.ripe.net/ripe/mail/archives/ripe-list/2021-October/002350.html>

This version was also presented and discussed during RIPE 83. The community requested a dedicated session to discuss the changes. An online feedback session was held in January 2022:

<https://www.ripe.net/participate/ripe/ripe-community-plenary/minutes/revised-pdp-workshop/>

Incorporating this feedback, draft v2 was published and announced in February 2022:

<https://www.ripe.net/ripe/mail/archives/ripe-list/2022-February/002450.html>

Incorporating feedback made on the mailing list, draft v3 was published and announced in April 2022:

<https://www.ripe.net/ripe/mail/archives/ripe-list/2022-April/002518.html>

There was general support for this version. No additional requests for changes were received.

7. Acknowledgments

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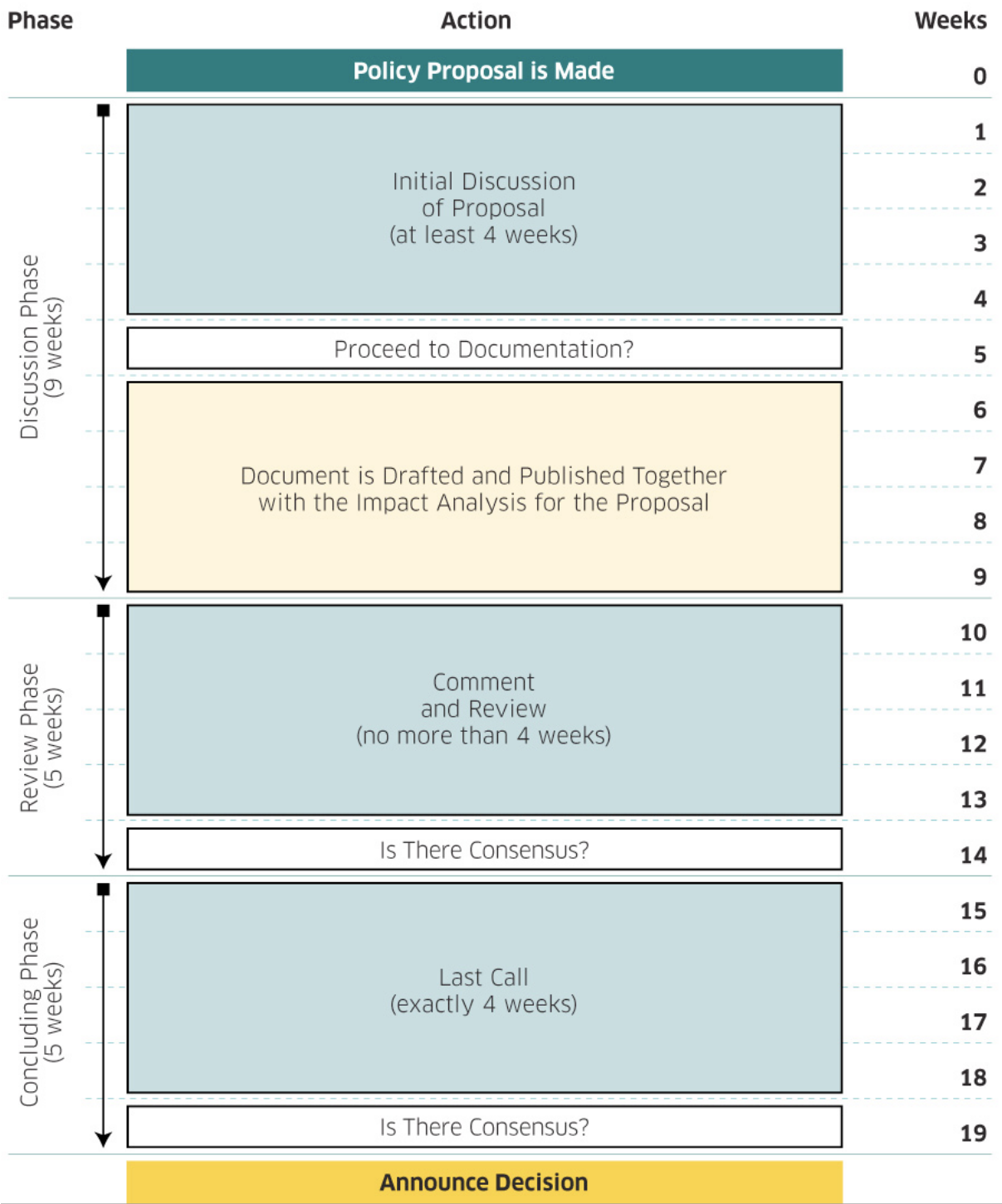
Any remaining errors or omissions are solely the fault of the authors.

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 either two or three 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. In this document the terms "proposer" and "author" are interchangeable and refer to one or multiple persons who author and submit a proposal.

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. Motivation for the proposal (problem statement)
 - b. Arguments supporting the proposal
 - c. Arguments opposing the proposal