

Policy Development Process in RIPE

R. Blokzijl

Document ID: ripe-428

Date: February 2008

Obsoletes: ripe-350

1. Introduction

Since its creation in 1989, RIPE has from time to time agreed on common practices. These common practices may come in different forms and/or under different names:

- best common practice (or BCP),
- recommendations to the community,
- requests to the RIPE NCC,
- recommendations to the RIPE NCC,
- or just policy.

In this document they are all called 'Policy'.

The process that results in a policy has a few important and fundamental principles:

- a. It is open to all. Everyone interested in the well-being of the Internet may propose a policy, and take part in the discussions.
- b. It is transparent. All discussions and results are documented and freely available to all.
- c. Conclusions are reached by consensus.

This process has worked quite well over the years. This document does not seek to change that.

What this document does try to accomplish is a description of the process that will improve its management.

2. The Process

In the process of developing a policy, several distinct phases are identified:

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

4. Concluding Phase

These four phases are detailed below.

In the descriptions below, timelines are mentioned. They are proposed deadlines for the various stages. Individual proposals may choose to vary these, however the actual timescales must be documented.

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

- administering proposals
- publishing on relevant web pages
- tracking deadlines

Anyone who wants to draft a policy proposal may seek assistance from the RIPE NCC. The RIPE NCC will provide relevant facts, statistics and an assessment of the work involved in the implementation of a proposal. The RIPE NCC will also assist with the drafting of text if its editorial services are required.

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. To achieve the goals of openness and fairness, such conflicts must be resolved through a process of open review and discussion. This is documented in Appendix C.

2.1 Creating a Proposal

Discussions may be started by anyone at any time. Participants are welcome to discuss broad ideas as well as 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 usually submitted via the Chairⁱ of the relevant RIPE working group. If the proposerⁱⁱ is not certain which working group is appropriate for discussion of the proposal, they can send the proposal to the RIPE Chair at <policy-proposal@ripe.net>.

The RIPE NCC identifies each proposal with a number and publishes them on a dedicated webpage. This web page contains the version history and the status of all proposals. A proposal can have the following status:

- Open for Discussion
- Accepted
- Withdrawn

2.2 Discussion Phase

Once a proposal has been submitted, it will be announced on the Policy Announce Mailing List (policy-announce@ripe.net), which anybody can subscribe to. This announcement will also indicate where discussion on this proposal will take place, usually the relevant working group mailing list. The proposal will also be sent to the relevant working group mailing list.

If significant comments or changes are suggested, there may be multiple iterations of this phase. Each published revision of a proposal will contain a history of changes to document this process.

The working group chair will set a limited time period for the discussion phase, which is usually not less than four weeks.

At the end of the Discussion Phase, the proposer, in consultation with the working group chair, should decide if the proposal will 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 this decision to the working group chair within four weeks, the working group chair can withdraw the proposal due to a lack of response from the proposer.

If the proposer decides to take the proposal to the next phase (Review Phase), the draft RIPE Document should be prepared within four weeks.

2.3 Review Phase

The purpose of this phase is to review the draft RIPE Document compiled at the end of the Discussion Phase. During the Review Phase, discussion of the proposal can continue while also focusing on the draft RIPE Document.

At the end of the Review Phase, the working group chair determines whether the working group has reached consensus. If consensus has not

been reached, then the proposer may decide to withdraw the proposal. Alternatively, the proposal may return to the Discussion Phase, which can result in new documentation.

The Review Phase should last for a maximum of four weeks.

2.4 Concluding Phase

If the working group chair determines that the working group has reached consensus at the end of the Review Phase, the Chair moves the proposal to a Last Call for Comments. The Last Call announcement is posted to the working group mailing list and to the Policy Announce Mailing List (policy-announce@ripe.net). Suggestions for any final changes or objections to the proposal can be sent to the working group mailing list during this phase.

The Last Call period lasts four weeks.

At the end of the Last Call period, the RIPE working group chairs will decide as a group whether consensus has been achieved. If there is no feedback from the community at this stage, this will likely be regarded as consensus.

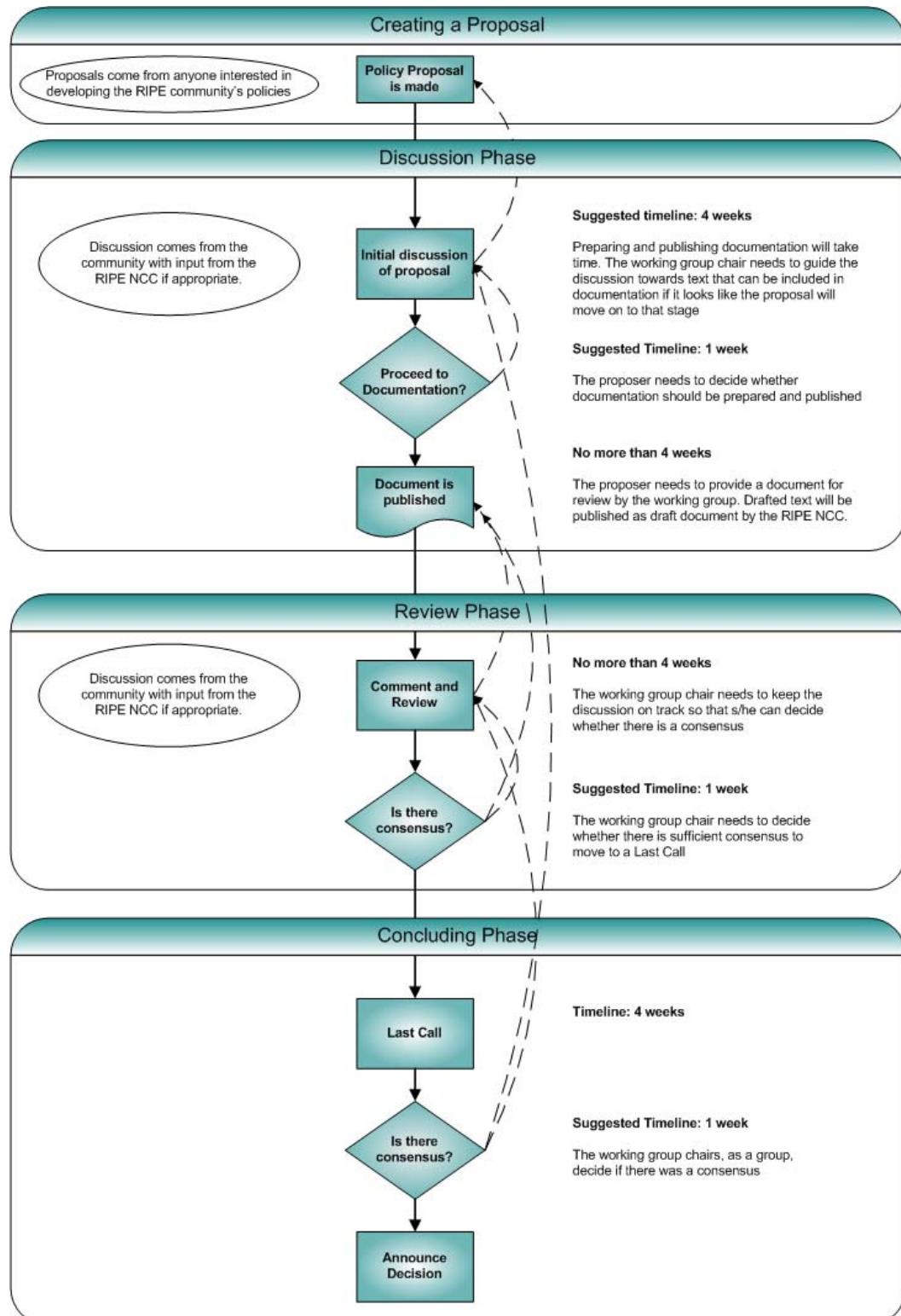
If consensus has been achieved, the RIPE NCC will announce the decision of the RIPE working group chairs and, if necessary, implement the policy.

If consensus has not been achieved, the proposer (or anyone else) is free to return the proposal to the working group for further discussion.

ⁱ 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.

ⁱⁱ A proposal can have more than one author.

Appendix A: Policy Development Process Diagram



Appendix B: Policy Proposal Template

1. Number (assigned by the RIPE NCC)
2. Policy Proposal Name:
3. Author
 - a. name:
 - b. e-mail:
 - c. organisation:
4. Proposal Version:
5. Submission Date:
6. Suggested RIPE WG for discussion and publication:
7. Proposal type:
 - a. new, modify, or delete.
8. Policy term:
 - a. temporary, permanent, or renewable.
9. Summary of proposal
10. Policy text
 - a. Current (if modify):
 - b. New:
11. Rationale:
 - a. Arguments supporting the proposal
 - b. Arguments opposing the proposal

Appendix C: RIPE Policy Development Dispute Resolution

1. Introduction

This appendix 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

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)

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 her or his 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 chairs 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 chairs 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, she or he should bring the issue first 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.

Acknowledgement: This appendix was prepared by Kurt Erik Lindqvist.