

Universal Acceptance (UA)

A Concise Guide, May 2026

1. What Is Universal Acceptance?

Universal Acceptance (UA) is ensuring the use of all scripts and languages in the digital space. UA is a fundamental principle for building an inclusive, multilingual digital environment. It ensures that all domain names and email addresses – regardless of script, language, or character set – are fully recognized and function seamlessly across digital platforms and services. By enabling people to use the internet in their own languages and writing systems, UA supports cultural and linguistic diversity and strengthens equal participation for all in the digital sphere. ([UNESCO definition](#)).

In other words, all valid domain names and email addresses must be accepted, validated, stored, processed, and displayed correctly and consistently by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. This applies regardless of the script, language, or length of the domain name as well as if it is registered under gTLD or ccTLD (Ref: [UASG003](#), [UASG005](#) p.2, [UASG007](#) p.6).

In simple terms: if someone registers a domain name under a top-level domain such as .рф (Russia), .ไทย (Thailand), .中国 (China), or .مليسيا (Malaysia), every website, mail service, and online form should handle it just like a traditional two-letter domain such as .de, .cl, or .sg. The same should apply to email addresses, which should be fully supported and treated no differently from ASCII-based addresses as both the part before and after the @ may use non-ASCII (Unicode) characters.



All Domain Names and email addresses must work equally

.рф (Russia), .ไทย (Thailand), .中国 (China), or .مليسيا (Malaysia)

Figure: The five criteria of UA — every system must handle the applicable steps correctly (Ref: UASG005 p.2, UASG007 p.9–10)

2. Why UA Matters for ccTLDs

The majority of new Internet users come from non-English-speaking communities. Since 2010, internationalized ccTLDs (IDN ccTLDs) allow countries and territories to represent their names in their own script. There are now over 60 IDN ccTLDs in the DNS root (Ref: UASG007 p.5–6).

Without UA, users with these domain names face rejected forms, bounced emails, and broken links — effectively becoming second-class Internet citizens.

Key reasons for ccTLDs to prioritize UA:

Digital Inclusion	Enables citizens to use the Internet in their own language and script. At least one billion new users are expected online, many from non-Latin script communities (Ref: UASG003).
Economic Opportunity	A 2017 UASG study estimated UA-readiness represents a US\$9.8+ billion opportunity globally. Non-UA-ready businesses lose customers who cannot complete transactions (Ref: UASG Whitepaper, icann.org/ua).
ccTLD Growth	ccTLD registries that promote UA internally and among local stakeholders unlock the full value of their IDN ccTLDs. Without UA, registrations in local-script domains have limited utility (Ref: ICANN ccTLD UA whitepaper).
Standards Compliance	UA is based on existing IETF and Unicode standards. Adopting UA means aligning with Internet best practices, not implementing new technology (Ref: UASG006).

3. Standards to Follow

UA compliance is built on well-established Internet standards. The key standards are organized into three groups, as documented in UASG006:

Category	What It Covers	Key RFCs/other standards
IDNA 2008	Internationalized Domain Names in Applications. Defines how Unicode domain names are handled.	RFC 5890–5895
EAI	Email Address Internationalization. Enables email addresses with Unicode characters in local and/or domain parts.	RFC 6530–6533, RFC: 9755
Unicode & Internationalized Resource Identifier	Unicode Normalization Forms (UAX15), Security (UTS36, UTS39), Unicode URL linkification (UTS#58), IDNA compatibility (UTS46), and Internationalized Resource Identifiers (RFC3987).	RFC 3492, 3987; UAX15, UTS36/39/46, UTS58, RFC3987

4. Some published Use Cases and Local Initiatives

Many ccTLD Managers are involved in [UA and related matters](#). Highlighting some of the local use cases and to illustrate initiatives:

- **Thailand:** The Thai local initiative hosted EAI hackathons and identified UA-ready websites, working with the Thai IDN ccTLD community.
- **India:** The Indian Language Internet Alliance (ILIA/FICCI) promotes UA adoption for Indic scripts across business, government, and academia, supporting IDN ccTLDs like .भारत.
- **CIS-Eastern Europe:** Members of local initiative set up EAI Testbeds on the Cyrillic and Armenian scripts, developed technical guides for IDN and EAI support in local software, launched the Cyrillic domains and mail infrastructure project (поддерживаю.рф), testing UA-readiness of software, websites and mail servers (SMTPUTF8) used in countries of the region.
- **China:** The Chinese local initiative work focuses on Registration Roadmap: IDN registration and hosting journey with “.中国”; Standardization: Establishing a national industry standard system based on UA and building a Chinese domain name email testing platform. Educational Outreach: Promoting the understanding of UA in academia through dedicated courses, research projects, and youth talent cultivation..
- **APTLD:** The Role of Country Code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs) in Achieving Universal Acceptance
- **ICANN:** Universal Acceptance (UA) Roadmap for Domain Name Registry and Registrar Systems
- **Programming Languages (UASG037):** Testing of libraries in Java, Python, PHP, .NET, and others revealed gaps in IDNA 2008 and EAI support, with code samples published on GitHub (UASG043).
- **ccNSO UA Coordination (est. 2023):** A ccTLD community platform for sharing UA and IDN best practices globally under the ICANN umbrella.

5. References and Resources

1. [Documents published by UASG](#) (archived, includes [UASG004: Use Cases for UA Readiness Evaluation](#))
2. [ICANN UA Portal](#)
3. [ICANN ccTLD UA Whitepaper](#)
4. [EAI Check Tool](#)
5. [APTLD - The Role of Country Code Top-Level Domains \(ccTLDs\) in Achieving Universal Acceptance](#)
6. [ICANN - Universal Acceptance \(UA\) Roadmap for Domain Name Registry and Registrar Systems](#)
7. [UA Day Initiatives](#): Annual mobilization events for UA adoption across the world since 2023
8. [Unicode Consortium Standard](#)
9. [IANA Root Zone](#)

10. [ICANN - LGR Tool](#)
11. [IDN World Report](#)