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Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance (DMARC) Failure Reporting

Abstract

Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance (DMARC) is a scalable mechanism by which a domain owner can request feedback about email messages using their domain in the From: address field. This document describes "failure reports," or "failed message reports," which provide details about individual messages that failed to authenticate according to the DMARC mechanism.

Status of This Memo

This Internet-Draft is submitted in full conformance with the provisions of BCP 78 and BCP 79.

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Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Failure Reports](#)
- [3. Reporting Format Update](#)
- [4. Verifying External Destinations](#)
 - [4.1. Transport](#)
- [5. IANA Considerations](#)
 - [5.1. Feedback Report Header Fields Registry Update](#)
- [6. Privacy Considerations](#)
 - [6.1. Data Exposure Considerations](#)
 - [6.2. Report Recipients](#)
- [7. Security Considerations](#)
- [8. Normative References](#)
- [Appendix A. Examples](#)
 - [A.1. Entire Domain, Monitoring Only, Per-Message Reports](#)
 - [A.2. Per-Message Failure Reports Directed to Third Party](#)
- [Appendix B. Example Failure Report](#)
- [Appendix C. Change Log {change-log}](#)
 - [C.1. 00 to 01](#)
 - [C.2. 01 to 02](#)
 - [C.3. 02 to 03](#)
 - [C.4. 03 to 04](#)
 - [C.5. 04 to 05](#)
- [Author's Address](#)

1. Introduction

RFC EDITOR: PLEASE REMOVE THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH BEFORE PUBLISHING:

The source for this draft is maintained in GitHub at: <https://github.com/ietf-wg-dmarc/draft-ietf-dmarc-failure-reporting>

Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance (DMARC) [[I-D.ietf-dmarc-dmarcbis](#)] is a scalable mechanism by which a mail-originating organization can express domain-level policies and preferences for message validation, disposition, and reporting, that a mail-receiving organization can use to improve mail handling. This document focuses on one type of reporting that can be requested under DMARC.

Failure reports provide detailed information about the failure of a single message or a group of similar messages failing for the same reason. They are meant to aid in cases where a domain owner is unable to detect why failures reported in aggregate form did occur.

It is important to note these reports can contain either the header or the entire content of a failed message, which in turn may contain personally identifiable information, which should be considered when deciding whether to generate such reports.

2. Failure Reports

Failure reports can supply more detailed information about messages that failed to authenticate, enabling the Domain Owner to determine exactly what might be causing those specific failures.

Failure reports are normally generated and sent almost immediately after the Mail Receiver detects a DMARC failure. Rather than waiting for an aggregate report, these reports are useful for quickly notifying the Domain Owners when there is an authentication failure. Whether the failure is due to an infrastructure problem or the message is inauthentic, failure reports also provide more information about the failed message than is available in an aggregate report.

These reports should include as much of the message header and body as possible, consistent with the reporting party's privacy policies, to enable the Domain Owner to diagnose the authentication failure.

When a Domain Owner requests failure reports for the purpose of forensic analysis, and the Mail Receiver is willing to provide such reports, the Mail Receiver generates and sends a message using the format described in [\[RFC6591\]](#); this document updates that reporting format, as described in [Section 3](#).

The destination(s) and nature of the reports are defined by the "ruf" and "fo" tags as defined in [Section 6.3](#) of [\[I-D.ietf-dmarc-dmarcbis\]](#).

Where multiple URIs are selected to receive failure reports, the report generator **MUST** make an attempt to deliver to each of them. External destinations **MUST** be verified, see [Section 4](#). Report generators **MUST NOT** consider ruf= tags in records having a "psd=y" tag, unless there are specific agreements between the interested parties.

An obvious consideration is the denial-of-service attack that can be perpetrated by an attacker who sends numerous messages purporting to be from the intended victim Domain Owner but that fail both SPF and DKIM; this would cause participating Mail Receivers to send failure reports to the Domain Owner or its delegate in potentially huge volumes. Accordingly, participating Mail Receivers are encouraged to aggregate these reports as much as is practical, using the Incidents field of the Abuse Reporting Format [\[RFC5965\]](#). Indeed, the aim is not to count each and every failure, but rather to report different

failure paths. Various pruning techniques are possible, including the following:

- *store reports for a period of time before sending them, allowing detection, collection, and reporting of like incidents;
- *apply rate limiting, such as a maximum number of reports per minute that will be generated (and the remainder discarded);

3. Reporting Format Update

Operators implementing this specification also implement an augmented version of [[RFC6591](#)] as follows:

1. A DMARC failure report includes the following ARF header fields, with the indicated normative requirement levels:

*Identity-Alignment (REQUIRED; defined below)

*Delivery-Result (OPTIONAL

*DKIM-Domain, DKIM-Identity, DKIM-Selector (REQUIRED for DKIM failures of an aligned identifier)

*DKIM-Canonicalized-Header, DKIM-Canonicalized-Body (OPTIONAL if reporting a DKIM failure)

*SPF-DNS (REQUIRED for SPF failure of an aligned identifier)

2. The "Identity-Alignment" field is defined to contain a comma-separated list of authentication mechanism names that failed to authenticate an aligned identity, or the keyword "none" if none did. ABNF:

```
id-align      = "Identity-Alignment:" [CFWS]
                ( "none" /
                  dmarc-method *( [CFWS] "," [CFWS] dmarc-method ) )
                [CFWS]
```

```
dmarc-method = ( "dkim" / "spf" )
                ; each may appear at most once in an id-align
```

3. Authentication Failure Type "dmarc" is defined, which is to be used when a failure report is generated because some or all of the authentication mechanisms failed to produce aligned identifiers. Note that a failure report generator MAY also independently produce an ARF message for any or all of the underlying authentication methods.

4. Verifying External Destinations

If the target domain of a mailto address of a ruf= tag is not the same as the DMARC record domain where the tag was found, the report generator **MUST** verify that the target domain acknowledges sending those reports; the procedure is described in [Section 3](#) of [[I-D.ietf-dmarc-aggregate-reporting](#)].

4.1. Transport

Email streams carrying DMARC failure reports **SHOULD** provide be DMARC aligned.

Reporters **MAY** rate limit the number of failure reports sent to any recipient to avoid overloading recipient systems. Unaligned reports may in turn produce subsequent failure reports that could cause mail loops.

5. IANA Considerations

5.1. Feedback Report Header Fields Registry Update

IANA is requested to change the "Identity-Alignment" entry in the "Feedback Report Header Fields" registry to refer to this document.

6. Privacy Considerations

This section discusses issues specific to private data that may be included in the DMARC reporting functions.

6.1. Data Exposure Considerations

Failed-message reporting provides message-specific details pertaining to authentication failures. Individual reports can contain message content as well as trace header fields. Domain Owners are able to analyze individual reports and attempt to determine root causes of authentication mechanism failures, gain insight into misconfigurations or other problems with email and network infrastructure, or inspect messages for insight into abusive practices.

These reports may expose sender and recipient identifiers (e.g., RFC5322.From addresses), and although the [[RFC6591](#)] format used for failed-message reporting supports redaction, failed-message reporting is capable of exposing the entire message to the report recipient.

Domain Owners requesting reports will receive information about mail claiming to be from them, which includes mail that was not, in fact, from them. Information about the final destination of mail where it

might otherwise be obscured by intermediate systems will therefore be exposed.

When message-forwarding arrangements exist, Domain Owners requesting reports will also receive information about mail forwarded to domains that were not originally part of their messages' recipient lists. This means that destination domains previously unknown to the Domain Owner may now become visible.

6.2. Report Recipients

A DMARC record can specify that reports should be sent to an intermediary operating on behalf of the Domain Owner. This is done when the Domain Owner contracts with an entity to monitor mail streams for abuse and performance issues. Receipt by third parties of such data may or may not be permitted by the Mail Receiver's privacy policy, terms of use, or other similar governing document. Domain Owners and Mail Receivers should both review and understand if their own internal policies constrain the use and transmission of DMARC reporting.

Some potential exists for report recipients to perform traffic analysis, making it possible to obtain metadata about the Receiver's traffic. In addition to verifying compliance with policies, Receivers need to consider that before sending reports to a third party.

7. Security Considerations

Considerations discussed in [Section 11](#) of [\[I-D.ietf-dmarc-dmarcbis\]](#) apply.

In addition, note that Organizational Domains are only an approximation to actual domain ownership. Therefore, reports may be sent to someone unrelated to the actual sender or domain owner. That makes considerations in [Section 6.1](#) all the more relevant.

8. Normative References

[\[I-D.ietf-dmarc-aggregate-reporting\]](#)

Brotman, A., "DMARC Aggregate Reporting", Work in Progress, Internet-Draft, draft-ietf-dmarc-aggregate-reporting-05, 20 April 2022, <<https://www.ietf.org/archive/id/draft-ietf-dmarc-aggregate-reporting-05.txt>>.

[\[I-D.ietf-dmarc-dmarcbis\]](#) Herr, T. M. and J. Levine, "Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance (DMARC)", Work in Progress, Internet-Draft, draft-ietf-dmarc-dmarcbis-15, 28 July 2022, <<https://www.ietf.org/archive/id/draft-ietf-dmarc-dmarcbis-15.txt>>.

[RFC5965]

Shafranovich, Y., Levine, J., and M. Kucherawy, "An Extensible Format for Email Feedback Reports", RFC 5965, DOI 10.17487/RFC5965, August 2010, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc5965>>.

[RFC6591]

Fontana, H., "Authentication Failure Reporting Using the Abuse Reporting Format", RFC 6591, DOI 10.17487/RFC6591, April 2012, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc6591>>.

Appendix A. Examples

This section presents some examples related to the use of DMARC reporting functions.

A.1. Entire Domain, Monitoring Only, Per-Message Reports

The owners of the domain "example.com" have deployed SPF and DKIM on their messaging infrastructure. As described in, [Appendix B.2.1](#) of [\[I-D.ietf-dmarc-aggregate-reporting\]](#) they have used the aggregate reporting to discover some messaging systems that had not yet implemented DKIM correctly. However, they are still seeing periodic authentication failures. In order to diagnose these intermittent problems, they wish to request per-message failure reports when authentication failures occur.

Many Receivers will not honor such a request, but the Domain Owner feels that any reports it does receive will be helpful enough to justify publishing this record.

The Domain Owner accomplishes this by adding the following to its policy record:

Failure reports should be sent via email to the address "auth-reports@example.com" ("ruf=mailto:auth-reports@example.com")

The updated DMARC policy record might look like this when retrieved using a common command-line tool (the output shown would appear on a single line but is wrapped here for publication):

```
% dig +short TXT _dmarc.example.com.  
"v=DMARC1; p=none; rua=mailto:dmarc-feedback@example.com;  
ruf=mailto:auth-reports@example.com"
```

To publish such a record, the DNS administrator for the Domain Owner might create an entry like the following in the appropriate zone file (following the conventional zone file format):

DMARC record for the domain example.com

```
_dmarc IN TXT ( "v=DMARC1; p=none; "  
                "rua=mailto:dmARC-feedback@example.com; "  
                "ruf=mailto:auth-reports@example.com" )
```

A.2. Per-Message Failure Reports Directed to Third Party

The Domain Owner from the previous example is maintaining the same policy but now wishes to have a third party receive and process the per-message failure reports. Again, not all Receivers will honor this request, but those that do may implement additional checks to validate that the third party wishes to receive the failure reports for this domain.

The Domain Owner needs to alter its policy record from {#entire-domain-monitoring-only-per-message-reports} as follows:

Per-message failure reports should be sent via email to the address "auth-reports@thirdparty.example.net" ("ruf=mailto:auth-reports@thirdparty.example.net")

The DMARC policy record might look like this when retrieved using a common command-line tool (the output shown would appear on a single line but is wrapped here for publication):

```
% dig +short TXT _dmarc.example.com.  
"v=DMARC1; p=none; rua=mailto:dmARC-feedback@example.com;  
ruf=mailto:auth-reports@thirdparty.example.net"
```

To publish such a record, the DNS administrator for the Domain Owner might create an entry like the following in the appropriate zone file (following the conventional zone file format):

; DMARC record for the domain example.com

```
_dmarc IN TXT ( "v=DMARC1; p=none; "  
                "rua=mailto:dmARC-feedback@example.com; "  
                "ruf=mailto:auth-reports@thirdparty.example.net" )
```

Because the address used in the "ruf" tag is outside the Organizational Domain in which this record is published, conforming Receivers will implement additional checks as described in [Section 4](#) of this document. In order to pass these additional checks, the third party will need to publish an additional DNS record as follows:

Given the DMARC record published by the Domain Owner at "_dmarc.example.com", the DNS administrator for the third party will need to publish a TXT resource record at

"example.com._report._dmarc.thirdparty.example.net" with the value
"v=DMARC1;"

The resulting DNS record might look like this when retrieved using a common command-line tool (the output shown would appear on a single line but is wrapped here for publication):

```
% dig +short TXT example.com._report._dmarc.thirdparty.example.net  
"v=DMARC1;"
```

To publish such a record, the DNS administrator for example.net might create an entry like the following in the appropriate zone file (following the conventional zone file format):

```
zone file for thirdparty.example.net  
; Accept DMARC failure reports on behalf of example.com  
  
example.com._report._dmarc    IN    TXT    "v=DMARC1;"
```

Intermediaries and other third parties should refer to [Section 4](#) for the full details of this mechanism.

Appendix B. Example Failure Report

This is the full content of a failure message, including the message header.

Received: from gen.example (gen.example [192.0.2.1])
(TLS: TLS1.3,256bits,ECDHE_RSA_AES_256_GCM_SHA384)
by mail.consumer.example with ESMTPS
id 00000000005DC0DD.0000442E; Tue, 19 Jul 2022 07:57:50 +0200
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/simple;
d=gen.example; s=mail; t=1658210268;
bh=rCrh1aFDE8d/Fltt8wbcu48bLOu40M23QXqphUZPAIM=;
h=From:To:Date:Subject:From;
b=IND9JkuwF9/5841kzxMbPeej0VYimVzNKozR2R89M8eY02z0lCBb1x507Gz0YK7mE
/h6pslWm0ODBVFzLlwY9CXv4Vu62QsN0RBIXHPjEX0koM2VCD5zCd+5i5dtCFX7Mxh
LThb2ZJ3efklbSB9RQRwxcmRvCPV7z6lt/Ds9sucVE1RD0DYHjx+iWnAUQrlos6ZQb
u/YOUGjf60LPpyljfPu3EpFwo80mSHyQlP/4S5KEykgPQMgCqLPPKvJwu1aAIDj+jG
q2yl03fmc/ERDeDWActR67YNabEKBWtjqCRLNxKttazViJTZ5drcLfpX0853KoougX
Rltp7zdoLdy4A==
From: DMARC Filter <DMARC@gen.example>;
To: dmarcfail@consumer.example
Date: Tue, 19 Jul 2022 00:57:48 -0500 (CDT)
Subject: FW: This is the original subject
Mime-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: multipart/report; report-type=feedback-report;
boundary="=_mime_boundary_"
Message-Id: <20220719055748.4AE9D403CC@gen.example>;

This is a MIME-formatted message. If you see this text it means that
your E-mail software does not support MIME-formatted messages.

--=_mime_boundary_
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=utf-8
Content-Disposition: inline
Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit

This is an authentication failure report for an email message
received from IP 192.0.2.2 on Tue, 19 Jul 2022 00:57:48 -0500.

--=_mime_boundary_
Content-Type: message/feedback-report
Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit

Feedback-Type: auth-failure
Version: 1
User-Agent: DMARC-Filter/1.2.3
Auth-Failure: dmarc
Authentication-Results: gen.example;
dmarc=fail header.from=consumer.example
Identity-Alignment: dkim
DKIM-Domain: consumer.example
DKIM-Identity: @consumer.example
DKIM-Selector: epsilon
Original-Envelope-Id: 65E1A3F0A0

Original-Mail-From: author=gen.example@forwarder.example
Source-IP: 192.0.2.2
Source-Port: 12345
Reported-Domain: consumer.example

--=_mime_boundary_

Content-Type: message/rfc822; charset=utf-8
Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit

Authentication-Results: gen.example;

dkim=permerror header.d=forwarder.example header.b="EjCbN/c3";
dkim=temperror header.d=forwarder.example header.b="mQ8GEWPc";
dkim=permerror header.d=consumer.example header.b="hETrymCb";
dkim=neutral header.d=consumer.example header.b="C2nsAp3A";

Received: from mail.forwarder.example

(mail.forwarder.example [IPv6:2001:db8::23ac])

by mail.gen.example (Postfix) with ESMTP id 5E8B0C159826

for <x@gen.example>; Sun, 14 Aug 2022 07:58:29 -0700 (PDT)

Received: from mail.forwarder.example (localhost [127.0.0.1])

by mail.forwarder.example (Postfix) with ESMTP id 4Ln7Qw4fnvz6Bq

for <x@gen.example>; Tue, 19 Jul 2022 07:57:44 +0200

DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=ed25519-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed;

d=forwarder.example; s=ed25519-59hs; t=1658210264;

x=1663210264; bh=KYH/g7ForvDbnyyDLYSjauMYMW6sEIQu75/9w30IONg=;

h=Message-ID:Date:List-Id:List-Archive:List-Post:List-Help:

List-Subscribe:List-Unsubscribe:List-Owner:MIME-Version:Subject:To:

References:From:In-Reply-To:Content-Type:Content-Transfer-Encoding:

autocrypt:cc:content-transfer-encoding:content-type:date:from:

in-reply-to:message-id:mime-version:openpgp:references:subject:to;

b=EjCbN/c3bTU4QkZH/zwTbYxBDp0k8kpmWSXh5h1M7T8J4vtRo+hvafJazT3ZRgq+7

+4dzEQwUhl+NOJYXXNUAA==

DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed;

d=forwarder.example; s=rsa-wgJg; t=1658210264; x=1663210264;

bh=KYH/g7ForvDbnyyDLYSjauMYMW6sEIQu75/9w30IONg=;

h=Message-ID:Date:List-Id:List-Archive:List-Post:List-Help:

List-Subscribe:List-Unsubscribe:List-Owner:MIME-Version:Subject:To:

References:From:In-Reply-To:Content-Type:Content-Transfer-Encoding:

autocrypt:cc:content-transfer-encoding:content-type:date:from:

in-reply-to:message-id:mime-version:openpgp:references:subject:to;

b=mQ8GEWPcVpBpeqQ88pcbXpGHBT0J/Rwi8Zd2WZTXWneQGRC0JLRcbBJpjqrwtqd

76IqawH86tihz4Z/12J1GBCdNx1gfazsoI3yaqfooRDYg0mSyZHRyYhQBmodnPcqZj4

/25L5278sc/UNrY09az2n7R/skbVZ0bvSo2eEiGU8fcp08+a5SKNYskhaviAI4eGIB

iRMdEP7gP8dESdnZguNbY5HI32UMDPpNqajzd/BgcqbveYpRrWCD0hcY47P0V7GHM

i/KLHiZxtJsL3/Pr/4TL+HTjdX8EDSsy1K5/JCvJCFsJHnSvkEaJQGLn/2m03ew9r8

9w1bQ90aY+VCQ==

X-Original-To: users@forwarder.example

Received: from mail.consumer.example (mail.consumer.example [192.0.2.4])

(using TLSv1.3 with cipher TLS_AES_256_GCM_SHA384 (256/256 bits)

key-exchange ECDHE (P-256) server-signature ECDSA (P-384)

server-digest SHA384)
(Client did not present a certificate)
by mail.forwarder.example (Postfix) with ESMTPS id 4Ln7Qs55xmz4nP
for <users@forwarder.example>; Tue, 19 Jul 2022 07:57:41 +0200 (CEST)
Authentication-Results: mail.forwarder.example;
arc=none smtp.remote-ip=192.0.2.4
Authentication-Results: mail.forwarder.example;
dkim=pass (512-bit key; secure) header.d=consumer.example
header.i=@consumer.example header.a=ed25519-sha256
header.s=epsilon header.b=hETrymCb;
dkim=pass (1152-bit key; secure) header.d=consumer.example
header.i=@consumer.example header.a=rsa-sha256
header.s=delta header.b=C2nsAp3A
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=ed25519-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed;
d=consumer.example; s=epsilon; t=1658210255;
bh=KYH/g7ForvDbnyyDLYSjauMYMW6sEIQu75/9w30IONg=;
h=Date:Subject:To:References:From:In-Reply-To;
b=hETrymCbz6T1Dyo5dCG9dk8rPykKLdhJCPFeJ9TiiP/kaon2afpUYtj+SrI+I83lp
p1F/FfYSGy7zz3Q30dxBA==
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed;
d=consumer.example; s=delta; t=1658210255;
bh=KYH/g7ForvDbnyyDLYSjauMYMW6sEIQu75/9w30IONg=;
h=Date:To:References:From:In-Reply-To;
b=C2nsAp3AMNX33Nq7nN/StPo921xE3XGF8Ju3iAKdYB3EKhsril0N5IjWGlglJECst
jLNKSo7KWZZ2lkH/dVZ9Rs1GHT2uaKy1sc/xmNIC5rHdhrxammiwpTSo4PsT8disfc
3DVF6Q62n0EsdLFqcw1KY8A9inFqYKY2tqoo+y4zMtItqCYx3xjsj3I0IFLuX
Author: Message Author <author@consumer.example>;
Received: from [192.0.2.8] (host-8-2-0-192.isp.example [192.0.2.8])
(AUTH: CRAM-MD5 uXDGrn@SYT0/k, TLS: TLS1.3,128bits,
ECDHE_RSA_AES_128_GCM_SHA256)
by mail.consumer.example with ESMTPSA
id 00000000005DC076.00004417; Tue, 19 Jul 2022 07:57:35 +0200
Message-ID: <2431dc66-b010-c9cc-4f2b-a1f889f8bdb4@consumer.example>;
Date: Tue, 19 Jul 2022 07:57:33 +0200
List-Id: <users.forwarder.example>;
List-Post: <mailto:users@forwarder.example>;
List-Help: <mailto:users+help@forwarder.example>;
List-Subscribe: <mailto:users+subscribe@forwarder.example>;
List-Unsubscribe: <mailto:users+unsubscribe@forwarder.example>;
List-Owner: <mailto:users+owner@forwarder.example>;
Precedence: list
MIME-Version: 1.0
Subject: This is the original subject
Content-Language: en-US
To: users@forwarder.example
Authentication-Results: consumer.example; auth=pass (details omitted)
From: Message Author <author@consumer.example>;
In-Reply-To: <20220718102753.0f6d9dde.cel@example.com>;
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8; format=flowed

Content-Transfer-Encoding: 8bit

[Message body was here]
--=_mime_boundary_--

If the body of the message is not included, the last MIME entity would have "Content-Type: text/rfc822-headers" instead of message/rfc822.

Appendix C. Change Log {change-log}

[RFC Editor: Please remove this section prior to publication.]

C.1. 00 to 01

- *Replace references to RFC7489 with references to I-D.ietf-dmarc-dmarcbis.
- *Replace the 2nd paragraph in the Introduction with the text proposed by Ned for Ticket #55, which enjoys some consensus:
<https://mailarchive.ietf.org/arch/msg/dmarc/HptVyJ9SgrfxWRbeGwORagPrhCw>
- *Strike a spurious sentence about criticality of feedback, which was meant for feedback in general, not failure reports. In fact, failure reports are not critical to establishing and maintaining accurate authentication deployments. Still attributable to Ticket #55.
- *Remove the content of section "Verifying External Destinations" and refer to I-D.ietf-dmarc-aggregate-reporting.
- *Remove the content of section "Security Considerations" and refer to I-D.ietf-dmarc-dmarcbis.
- *Slightly tweak the wording of the example in Appendix A.1 so that it makes sense standing alone.
- *Remove the sentence containing "must include any URI(s)", as the issue arose `<eref target="https://mailarchive.ietf.org/arch/msg/dmarc/mFk0qiTCy8tzghRvcxus01W_Blw"/>`.
- *Add paragraph in Security Considerations, noting that note that Organizational Domains are only an approximation...
- *Add a Transport section, mentioning DMARC conformance and failure report mail loops (Ticket #28).

C.2. 01 to 02

*Add a sentence to make clear that counting failures is not the aim.

C.3. 02 to 03

*Updated references.

C.4. 03 to 04

*Add an example report.

*Remove the old Acknowledgements section.

*Add a IANA Consideration section

C.5. 04 to 05

*Convert to markdown

*Remove irrelevant material.

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