

Open for Business in 2005: yourname.eu

The “.eu” top-level domain opens for business in 2005, bringing the benefits of the European single market into the age of eBusiness, providing new Internet space to European companies and citizens, and promoting an EU internet identity.

What is a top-level domain name?

A domain name is a simple way for a computer or network to be identified on the Internet. Rather than having numerical addresses that are difficult to remember, Internet users prefer domain names.

Examples include ‘europa.eu.int’ (the home page of the European institutions’ website) and the part following the ‘@’ in any email address.

Top Level Domains (TLDs) are at the heart of the international Internet domain name system – they are the ‘suffix’ at the end of the domain name, and come in two basic categories:

- generic TLDs (gTLDs): not tied to any country, these include “.com”, “.org”, “.net” and “.int”;
- country code TLDs (ccTLDs) such as the German “.de”, the French “.fr” and the British “.uk”.

What will “.eu” be, and Why?

The “.eu” TLD will be a new Top Level Domain. It will not replace the existing national ccTLDs in the EU, but will complement them and give users the option of having a pan-European Internet identity for their ‘internet presence’ – generally web sites and e-mail addresses.

Any individual resident in the EU or any organization or company established in the EU will be able to register a name under the .eu TLD. European law and the jurisdiction of European courts will apply.

It is expected to be particularly useful for those organizations which operate at a European level, such as companies which have taken advantage of the EU Single Market.

Until now, such companies either based their internet presence in one country, or created web sites in each EU country they operated in. The “.eu” TLD means that they can have one internet identity for the entire EU, operating under one single set of rules.

In this way the “.eu” TLD will create a new “Internet space” for European people and organizations, and provide a counterweight to the generic TLDs such as .com and .org, which are dominated by the US in terms of registrations and applicable law.

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What is the State of Play?

The first step was the adoption of a Regulation on the implementation of the .eu Top Level domain (EC Regulation 733/2002, 22 April 2002), which established that the new TLD will be managed and operated by a private, non-profit organization known as “the .eu Registry”.

Following a call for expressions of interest, in May 2003 the Commission chose EURid (www.eurid.org), a consortium of Belgian, Italian and Swedish organizations, to be the .eu Registry.

This was followed up by EC Regulation 874/2004 (28 April, 2004), which provides the public policy rules to deal with issues like speculative and abusive registrations of domain names, intellectual property and other rights, issues of language and geographical concepts, and the extra-judicial settlement of conflicts.

Finally, on 12 October 2004 the Commission signed a contract with the Registry (EURid), allowing it to set the .eu mechanism in motion.

Can I pre-register for a .eu domain name ?

Names cannot be registered until the Registry is operational, so pre-registration of names is not possible in the .eu Top Level Domain.

The Commission is aware that some companies are already offering to “pre-register” or “reserve” domain names, essentially by offering to make an application for the registration of a domain name to registrars as soon as the registration process is formally initiated.

Given a risk of confusion and even fraud, use of “pre-registration” services is not recommended by the Commission. In any case consumers and companies are encouraged to check exactly what is and what is not being offered.

Upon the signature of this contract, the Commission authorized EURid to negotiate with ICANN an agreement for the delegation of the .eu TLD.

This agreement, now approved by the Commission and signed on 21 March 2005, enshrines ICANN's official recognition that EURid will be the body appointed by the European Union to run the .eu TLD for the next five years.

What Next?

As of April 2005, a number of steps must still to be taken before users can start registering .eu domain names:

- The Registry will accredit **Registrars** – these are companies which can undertake the registration of domains on behalf of end users, under competitive market rules;
- The Registry will adopt a Registration policy in consultation with the Commission and other interested parties.

2005: Sunrise for “.eu”

The Registry is expected to become operational during 2005.

EURid will need 6-9 months after all contractual matters are concluded before beginning .eu registrations, starting with the four-month “sunrise period” required by the public policy rules.

This sunrise period will allow owners of “prior rights” (e.g. trademark holders, public bodies) to register their names as domain names before other eligible parties.

This is to avoid so-called “cybersquatting” – where an organisation or individual finds that someone else has registered their trademark, company, personal or other name as a domain name, and then tries to sell it to the rightholder for a profit.

A validation procedure has been established to ensure that applications filed during the sunrise period are indeed supported by a prior right. The validation agent will check all the applications filed during this period to ensure their compliance with the sunrise rules.

Once the sunrise period is over any individual resident in the EU or any organization or company established in the EU will be able to register a name under the .eu TLD.

Applications will need to be made through registrars who have been formally accredited by the .eu Registry.

The price of registering a domain name will depend on the services offered by the registrars, together with the registration of the name, eg. Web hosting.

As concerns the Registry, EURid, the .eu Regulation requires them to be a non-profit organization and any fees charged will relate to the actual costs incurred.

All Factsheets and more can be downloaded from “Europe’s Information Society: Thematic Portal”, below.

“The sunrise period is to avoid so-called “cyber-squatting” ... Once the sunrise period is over any individual EU resident, organization or company established in the EU will be able to register a name”

Further Information

- **dotEU:** <http://europa.eu.int/doteu>
- **Europe’s Information Society: Thematic Portal** http://europa.eu.int/information_society/
- **Information Society Directorate-General:** Av. de Beaulieu 24, 1160 Brussels info-desk@cec.eu.int