
New ".eu" Top Level Domain May Simplify Domain Registration Procedures in Europe

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U.S. companies may now be able to register just one domain name for all of the European Union, thus giving them access to a domain name targeted to some countries in which they were not previously allowed to register domain names. The 15 member nations of the EU have launched the supra-national ".eu" Top Level Domain (TLD) in order to simplify the domain name registration process that we previously discussed in our [March 29, 2001 Internet Alert](#).

For updated details of registration requirements for country TLDs in 59 different countries, please see the attached [chart](#).

On [March 25, 2002](#), the European Union's Council of Telecommunications Ministers adopted [Regulation \(EC\) No. 733/2002](#) on the implementation of the ".eu" TLD (the Regulation). It came into effect on April 22, 2002.

The Regulation is in line with trends internationally to limit domain name registrations within country TLDs to organizations registered in those countries. However, it does allow organizations with branches or subsidiaries within the EU to register a ".eu" domain name.

The Regulation provides for the European Commission to set up a ".eu" country TLD domain Registry (the Registry). The Registry will be responsible for managing the ".eu" TLD and for finalizing the rules for registration of domain names under the .eu TLD. The Registry shall not itself act as a registrar, but it will be responsible for accrediting .eu registrars. Domain names already registered within individual country TLDs are not affected by the Regulation.

Who may register? Registration of a ".eu" domain name will be open to:

1. Undertakings having their registered office, central administration or principal place of business within the EU;
2. Organizations incorporated or otherwise established within the EU;
3. Natural persons resident within the EU.

Public Policy The Regulation provides that the European Commission will draft a set of public policy rules to be followed by the Registry. Specifically, the public policy rules are to provide for:

1. an extra-judicial settlement of conflicts policy and procedure. The conflicts procedure is to be prompt and fees for the service are to be on a cost recovery basis only;
2. a policy on speculative and abusive registrations.

This includes the possibility of a so called "sunrise period", allowing registration of domain names in a phased manner; to give temporary opportunities to both the holders of prior rights, recognized or established by national and/or community law, and public bodies, to register their names. As was discussed in our [June 12, 2001 Internet Alert](#), similar procedures were followed in the United States in order to give trademark holders preferential treatment in the selection and registration of domain names within the new dot-biz and dot-info TLDs:

1. a policy on possible revocation of domain names, including the question of "bona vacantia", (that is - domain names whose registrations are not renewed or whose holders cease to exist);
2. issues of language and geographical concepts; and
3. the treatment of intellectual property and other rights.

When? The Regulation does not give a time frame for the achievement of these goals. However, the [Commission's web site](#) states that it is hopeful that all of the steps necessary can be completed in time for the Registry to "open for business" by the end of 2002 or early 2003.