

New rules on the .eu top level domain (TLD)

The .eu TLD is the domain name of the European Union, as well as its citizens, and in use since 2005. According to the European Commission, the existence of a specific domain name for the European Union under a clear and recognisable common label is an important and valuable building block for an online Union identity. The Commission has adopted a proposal to ensure that the .eu legal framework still serve its intended purpose and values and is future-proof. The Parliament and Council reached a negotiated agreement on the proposal, which is scheduled to be voted by Parliament at first reading during the January II plenary session.

Background

The [top-level domain .eu](#) was set up by [Regulation \(EC\) No 733/2002](#) and further governed by [Regulation \(EC\) No 874/2004](#). Since the adoption of the .eu regulations, however, the political and legislative context in the Union and the online environment and market have changed considerably. For instance, in 2013, a large global expansion of the domain-name market took place, leading to the introduction of more than 1 300 new generic top-level domains (such as .shop, .design and .wine). In this regard, the Commission proposed a Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme ([REFIT](#)) review of the current .eu laws.

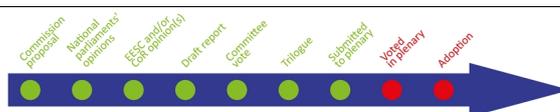
European Commission proposal

On 27 April 2018, after a consultation with stakeholders and an [impact assessment](#), the Commission adopted a [proposal](#) for a regulation on the implementation and functioning of the .eu TLD name. The proposal aims to: (a) remove outdated legal and administrative requirements and renew the rules; (b) continue incorporating and promoting EU priorities in the online world, ensuring both technical and governance best practice; (c) relax the current eligibility criteria for registration of .eu domains, e.g. independently of the place of residence; and (d) lift the prohibitions on vertical separation – namely the rules requiring strict separation between organisations managing domain names (registries) and those selling domain names to end-users (registrars) – while providing provisions safeguarding the application of the rules of fair competition.

European Parliament position

On 21 November 2018, Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) adopted its [report](#). It supported the Commission's approach, but would complement this by adding objectives such as promoting the EU's data protection rules as well as values (e.g. multilingualism, respect for users' privacy and security and respect for human rights). Furthermore, the registry (an [operator](#) that registers and operates the .eu TLD) should also cooperate with law enforcement agencies and national computer emergency response teams. Where a domain name is considered to be defamatory, racist or contrary to public policy or public security, it should be blocked by the registry upon notification of a court decision. Finally, the report suggests giving Parliament better control over the establishment of the criteria and procedure for designating the registry by means of delegated acts. The mandate to enter interinstitutional negotiations with the Council was confirmed in plenary in November, allowing the first trilogue meeting to be held on 5 December 2018. During this meeting, Council and Parliament came to an agreement on many of Parliament's amendments and successfully closed the negotiations. The agreed text now needs to be formally approved by Parliament during the January II plenary session.

First-reading report: [2016/0030\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: ITRE; Rapporteur: Frederick Federley (ALDE, Sweden).



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