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The '.eu' top-level domain

Regulation (EC) No 733/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 April 2002 on the implementation of the .eu top-level domain

This briefing is one in a series of 'implementation appraisals' produced by the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) on the operation of existing EU legislation in practice. Each such briefing focuses on a specific EU law which is likely to be amended or reviewed, as foreseen in the European Commission's annual work programme. 'Implementation appraisals' aim at providing a succinct overview of publicly available material on the implementation, application and effectiveness to date of an EU law, drawing on input from EU institutions and bodies, as well as external organisations. 'Implementation appraisals' are provided by the EPRS Ex-Post Evaluation Unit to assist parliamentary committees in their consideration of new European Commission proposals, once tabled.

Summary

The .eu top-level domain ('.eu TLD')¹ is based on Regulation (EC) No 733/2002 and was launched in December 2005. EURid, a Belgian not-for-profit organisation, manages the .eu TLD registry; .eu domain names can be registered through a network of 712 'accredited registrars'.

According to the latest Commission report on the .eu TLD, at the beginning of 2015, with almost 4 million registrations, the .eu TLD ranked eleventh among the biggest top-level domains in the world (with '.com' heading the list) and sixth among country code top-level domains (ccTLD).

The inception impact assessment² on the review of the .eu TLD regulation, published by the Commission, pointed to problems which should be tackled, e.g. market development. The reviewed regulation should also simplify the management of the .eu TLD.

Between May and August 2017, the Commission ran public consultations with the aim of reviewing the existing .eu TLD legislation. The results of the consultations are not yet available.

1. Background and current legislation

The .eu top-level domain ('.eu TLD') was created on the basis of Regulation (EC) No 733/2002.³ Regulation 874/2004⁴ sets out the rules for the implementation and functions of the .eu TLD and the principles governing registration. The .eu TLD was



¹ Abbreviations: top-level domain (TLD); country code top-level domain (ccTLD); generic top-level domain (gTLD); internationalised domain name (IDN); domain name system (DNS).

² The European Commission [inception impact assessment](#) on the review of the regulation establishing the .eu TLD.

³ [Regulation \(EC\) No 733/2002](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 April 2002 on the implementation of the .eu top-level domain, O.J. L 113 of 30.04.2002 with amendments.

⁴ [Regulation \(EC\) No 874/2004](#) of 28 April 2004 laying down public policy rules concerning the implementation and functions of the .eu top-level domain and the principles governing registration, OJ L 162 of 30.4.2004 with amendments.

approved by [ICANN](#) (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) in March 2005, and was launched in December 2005.

The .eu TLD was established with the aim, inter alia, of boosting the internet identity of the European Union and its citizens, to promote the European Union's image on the global information networks and to raise the profile of the EU's internal market on the virtual marketplace on the internet. The .eu TLD should also boost electronic commerce and accelerate the benefits of the information society in Europe.⁵

The European identity is underlined in relation to the .eu TLD, to distinguish the .eu domain from national country code top-level domains (ccTLD; for example .es, .pl) or global domains like .com. The .eu TLD complements the existing domains, particularly the ccTLDs, being a ccTLD itself (Article 1 of Regulation No 733/2002).

Top 10 largest TLDs		
(second quarter of 2017)		
	Millions	Growth
.com	127.7	1.0 %
.cn	20.9	7.8 %
.de	16.2	0.5 %
.net	14.9	-4.5 %
.uk	10.7	-0.5 %
.org	10.4	-4.2 %
.info	5.9	8.1 %
.nl	5.7	1.8 %
.ru	5.5	5.0 %
.xyz	5.2	14.9 %

Source: [DomainWire](#), Global TLD Stat Report, second quarter of 2017

The .eu TLD (.eu in Latin script)⁶ ranks among the largest TLDs. According to the Commission's data, at the beginning of 2015, the .eu domain, with almost 4 million registrants, was the world's 11th-largest TLD and sixth-largest ccTLD.⁷

The TLD system has been changing in recent years, mainly on account of the introduction of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs)⁸ following opening of the gTLD space by ICANN. Examples of older/legacy gTLD are .com, .net, .org; and of new gTLD, are .top and .xyz, or for specific uses .bank and for, mainly, local use, e.g. .brussels. This change may affect the .eu TLD as well, inter alia, by increasing competition among TLDs. The .xyz domain already ranks as the tenth largest TLD in the world, with annual growth at almost 15 %. In July 2017, the market share of the new gTLDs was at 7.5 %, while the legacy TLDs occupied 52 % and ccTLDs 40.5 %.⁹

The .eu TLD registry is managed by [EURid](#); operating under contract for the European Commission.¹⁰ EURid is a non-profit organisation with its head office in Diegem (Belgium) and three regional offices located in Stockholm (Sweden), Prague (Czech Republic) and Pisa (Italy). The main EURid servers are located in Brussels (Belgium) and in Amsterdam (The Netherlands).

As of the second quarter of 2017, .eu domain names can be registered via a network of 712 companies (693 in the first quarter of 2017) called 'accredited registrars'. The .eu domain name can be registered by a natural person, company or organisation residing in or established in the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway ('residence restriction').¹¹ Some names are reserved. The reservations can be made by the European Union institutions, the Member States, EEA countries, and countries in the EU accession phase or by EURid. Regulation (EC) No 1654/2005 sets out the list of reserved names.

In 2014, EURid launched the annual [.eu Web Awards](#) to acknowledge the best .eu websites. They are awarded in five categories, described in the .eu Web Awards [rules](#). In September 2017, the names of final nominees for 2017 were published on the .eu Web Award website and the awards ceremony will take place in Brussels (Belgium) on 21 November 2017.

⁵ As explained in the preamble to Regulation (EC) No 733/2002.

⁶ More than 90 % of .eu IDNs (internationalised domain names) are in Latin script, 5 % are in Greek and 4 % in Cyrillic, [World report on internationalised domain names 2015](#), UNESCO, EURid and Verisign.

⁷ [10 years of .eu!](#), European Commission, 2016.

⁸ Generic top-level domains (gTLD) are one of the categories of TLD maintained by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority ([IANA](#)). See also: [The dot is making new friends!](#), a video on new gTLDs by ICANN.

⁹ [DomainWire](#), Global TLD Stat Report, Q2 2017 (Edition 20), CENTR.

¹⁰ Based on Decision 2014/207/EU, [Commission Implementing Decision of 11 April 2014 on the designation of the .eu top-level domain registry](#) (OJ L 109 of 12.4.2014); the contract has an initial period of five years and may be extended twice, each time for an additional period of maximum five years. Previously EURid was granted a contract based on Decision 2003/375/EC, [Commission Decision of 21 May 2003 on the designation of the .eu top-level domain registry](#) (OJ L 128 of 24.5.2003).

¹¹ Concerns have been expressed as to the future of the British owners of .eu domain names after Brexit.

2. EU-level reports and evaluations

2.1. European Commission's report

In December 2015, the European Commission presented its latest biannual report on the implementation, functioning and effectiveness of the .eu top-level domain.¹² The report reflects the results both of the last two years and of all ten years of the functioning of the .eu domain.

The Commission underlined in the report that 'the .eu TLD model has been implemented successfully and is operating effectively'. The Commission also pointed out that 'over the past two years, the .eu TLD has strengthened its position as one of the biggest and most popular TLDs in Europe and the world. It remains successful despite the continued, albeit slower, growth of the 28 Member States' ccTLDs and the increased availability of gTLDs, with which the registry has been able to cope thanks to the quality label associated with the .eu TLD'.

The Commission also added that 'the .eu TLD and its registry have shown that they are able to cope very well with the challenges to date, although the environment is expected to be even more competitive in the future'. That is why, the Commission together with the registry 'investigate and identify possible ways of dealing with the new DNS [domain name system] landscape while keeping the .eu space secure, reliable and worthwhile for current and future stakeholders'.

2.2. EURid reports

EURid prepares yearly and quarterly reports.¹³ The latest quarterly report presents data for the second quarter of 2017 ([Q2 2017](#)). At the end of June 2017, there were 3 737 331 .eu domain names registered, of which 1 029 464 in Germany and 479 853 in the Netherlands. In the second quarter of 2017, there were 185 334 new registrations and the average renewal rate during this period accounted for 83 % (while the average renewal rate in business is at around 70 to 75 %). The EURid report also shows that since 2014 the number of .eu TLD names has decreased slightly.

.eu TLD names	
(in total)	
Q2 2017	3 737 331
2016	3 760 695
2015	3 862 467
2014	3 907 406
2013	3 330 439
2012	3 703 553
2011	3 709 691
2010	3 142 375
2009	3 514 446

Source: EURid reports

EURid cooperates with several international organisations, including the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Europol, and the European Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). In June 2107, the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Centre was added as the .eu alternative dispute resolution (ADR) provider. In May 2017, EURid and UNESCO renewed their cooperation, which includes preparing [world reports](#) on international domain name (IDN) deployment. In December 2016, EURid established cooperation with [Europol](#) on cybercrime and internet security cooperation and in June 2016, EURid began cooperating with [EUIPO](#) to join forces on raising awareness about trademarks and domain names.

3. European Parliament position

The [debate](#) on the recommendations for second reading of the proposal for a regulation on the implementation of the .eu top-level domain took place in February 2002. During the debate, the rapporteur from the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy underlined that the .eu TLD 'should raise the profile of the European Union in cyberspace and allow the ring of confidence created by the single market to shine through to the Internet'.

4. European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

In March 2001, the Committee expressed support to the proposal for a regulation, seeing the initiative as 'an essential element of eEurope'.¹⁴

¹² Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation, functioning and effectiveness of the .eu top-level domain, [COM \(2015\) 680 final](#).

¹³ EURid's [quarterly report archive](#).

¹⁴ Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the internet top-level domain '.EU', [TEN/068](#), 2001.

.eu TLDs by country of registrant (Q2 2017)

Germany	1 029 464
Netherlands	479 853
France	340 233
United Kingdom	318 668
Poland	263 872
Italy	260 212
Czech Republic	154 788
Austria	148 591
Belgium	136 097
Spain	103 729

Source: EURid's quarterly reports

5. Other organisations

In June 2017, the European Communities Trade Mark Association (ECTA) published its [position paper](#) on the revision of the .eu Regulations. ECTA recommends, inter alia, giving the .eu registry more flexibility, considering whether the residence restrictions at registration should be maintained, further stressing the security and trust aspects, introducing mediation and doing more to promote the .eu TLD among young people.

6. European Commission public consultation

The European Commission launched its [public consultations](#) on the revision of the .eu regulation in May 2017, with a deadline for submitting opinions at the beginning of August 2017. The results of the public consultations are not yet available.

As explained in the questionnaire, the Commission is hoping to define policy options to be pursued with the review of the .eu regulations. Based on the questionnaire, the Commission plans to facilitate operational management, adjust regulation to the changed market circumstances, ensure the rules are future-proof, and allow the .eu TLD registry to introduce new services, and if appropriate, promote EU priorities in internet governance, while also enhancing the use of the .eu TLD as an online European identity.

7. Other sources of reference

1. European Commission webpages on [The top-level domain .eu](#).
2. Van Gelder, S, [Dot EU – The first decade](#), EURid, 2016.

EP committee responsible at time of adoption of the EU legislation: Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy

Date of adoption of original legislation in plenary: 28 February 2002 ([2000/0328\(COD\)](#))

Entry into force of original legislation: 30 April 2002

Planned date for review of legislation: not provided for in the regulation

Timeline for new amending legislation: fourth quarter of 2017 (according to the inception impact assessment)

According to [Annex 2](#) of the [2017 Commission work programme](#), the Commission plans to revise Regulation EC 733/2002 and Regulation EC 874/2004 as 'over the past decade, the TLD market place has undergone significant changes that provide both strategic challenges and opportunities for the .eu TLD'. The revision falls under 'A Connected Digital Single Market for All' ([COM\(2017\) 228](#)) and its mid-term review ([COM\(2017\) 228](#)).

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