

Press conference on 20th January 2004



PRESS FILE

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PRESS RELEASE

Saint Quentin en Yvelines, France, 7th January 2004

Liberalization of *.fr* domain name registrations:

Anyone listed on official on-line databases will be able to
register the domain name of one's choice

The registration policy for *.fr* and *.re* has been evolving since 1998.

In May 2004, the abolition of the "right to a name" is a new step.

This change will be put into effect in two stages:

- **As from 11th May 2004**, ANYONE WHO CAN BE IDENTIFIED ON-LINE IN OFFICIAL and NATIONAL DATABASES (companies, the self-employed, associations listed in the INSEE directory, trademark owners, etc.), may register the domain name of one's choice, without compliance anymore with the terms of any legal document;
- a few months later, this possibility will also be extended to EVERY INDIVIDUAL OR LEGAL ENTITY – having a link with France – who is not identifiable from official on-line databases (private individuals, associations not identified in the INSEE directory, etc.).

The change in the *.fr* and *.re* registration policy will enable AFNIC to **fully automate its domain name registration system.**

Aware of the importance of this move, and keeping up with its will to develop the "**Internet with confidence**", AFNIC will introduce two novel features:

- *The qualification of domain names*: in its *.fr* and *.re* domain-names base accessible on line via "Whois", AFNIC will insert Web links connecting directly to the national databases used in identifying the registrants (the databases of the INPI, trade-court registries and INSEE);
- *Information about a dispute resolution policy.*

For further information:

Press conference by the Board of AFNIC
Tuesday 20th January 2004 from 9:30 to 11 a.m.
at the ACFCI - 45 avenue d'Iéna - 75016 Paris - Salle Chaptal

With a special guest: Mr. Renaud Dutreil,
Minister of State for SMEs, Trade, the Small-Scale industry,
and the Professions.

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REGISTERING DOMAIN NAMES WITH THE .FR AND .RE SUFFIXES FROM 11th MAY 2004

The governing principles

◇ **Preservation of the principle of national “territoriality”**

Representing the French geographical area, the *.fr* suffix can only be allocated to **entities or persons having legal existence** in France, i.e. any applicant organisation officially declared in France, any trademark, including foreign trademarks provided they are protected in France, and any individual resident in France or of French nationality.

This territoriality principle also covers registration with the *.re* zone suffix: it is necessary to have an officially ascertainable link with the French Overseas *Département* of La Réunion in order to register a *.re* domain name.

In this way, AFNIC ensures that disputes relating to the management of its domain-name space are under French jurisdiction.

◇ **Stringent identification requirements have been maintained**

As before, checking of the **applicant’s identity** will be **systematic**, but will in future be **performed after AFNIC delegates the domain name** (i.e. after its registration). Any domain name that fails to comply with the rules at the time of checking (applicant not identifiable in France, etc.) will be suspended then deleted if identification is found to be impossible.

Keeping on with its policy of “the Internet with confidence”, AFNIC wishes to set up the principle of **domain-name qualification**, and among other measures in support of this aim, will indicate on-line, on its “Whois” base, pointers or **links** enabling site visitors **to see the information contained in the official databases** (of the Conseil National des Greffes, INPI and INSEE) concerning registered site operators; AFNIC will thus enable users to consult the sources used by it to identify the applicant at the time of registration.

◇ **Automation of registration**

Post-registration identity checking of the domain-name owner will enable AFNIC to automate the process of registering *.fr* and *.re* domain names; **automation will not impair technical quality**: the automated process will include the running of “ZoneCheck”, the tool used by AFNIC for checking proper installation of a domain name:

- if the service providers’ servers are properly configured, the domain name registration will be fully automatic;



- otherwise, the service provider will receive a message and must re-run the checking procedure manually.

This move means that the sending of the commitment letter will be discontinued for all service providers; this is the only remaining paperwork in the AFNIC procedures, in the cases of domain name creation and change of service provider.

◇ **Abandonment of the “right to a name”**

The AFNIC naming charter, the only **reference document** involved when registering in the French domain-name space, will be considerably streamlined with the abandonment of the “right to a name”: **any identifiable person may, from the above date on, register the domain name it wishes directly under .fr** without the requirement for such name to appear in any documentary evidence.

The public domains *.asso.fr*, *.nom.fr*, *.prd.fr*, *.presse.fr* and *.tm.fr* remain reserved for the categories for which they were created and the name registered must have a link with the supporting information consulted; for example, only a non-profit association may be registered under *.asso.fr*; it must choose one or more terms of its name as the domain name.

The names of **local-government entities**, hitherto blocked by AFNIC, will become open to registration by any identifiable person; an information circular was sent out in December 2003 to the local mayors and the presidents of the councils for the *départements* and regions, to inform them of this change.

◇ **Promoting dispute settlement**

In the event of a dispute, AFNIC wishes to give the most comprehensive information on possible ways of settling disputes; in addition to the official solution of the law courts, it will indicate other channels of redress to promote the settlement of disputes relating to *.fr* domain-name registrations.

At least two currently-operating “dispute resolution centres” will be mentioned; AFNIC is currently in contact with several of them to examine their possibilities. The names of the bodies selected will be released later.



THE TWO PHASES OF THE LIBERALIZATION

AFNIC decided to liberalize .fr and .re domain-name registration in two stages:

➔ **As from 11th May 2004, any person identifiable from the official on-line databases of the Conseil National des Greffes (CNG), INPI and INSEE may choose whatever domain name or names that person wishes:**

- this phase concerns **legal entities** (businesses, various corporations, non-profit associations registered with INSEE, trademark owners, etc.) identifiable from the official bases consulted;
- as well as concerning **certain individuals** (self-employed craftsmen and professionals, trademark-owning private individuals, etc.) identifiable from the INPI and INSEE bases.

In order to ensure more efficient and equitable handling of applications, to begin with, domain names will be processed in alphabetical order:

1. Tuesday 11th May will be reserved for domain names beginning with digits (0 to 9) and letters A and B ;
2. On 12th May will be added names beginning with C, D, E and F ;
3. On 13th May will be added names beginning with G, H, I, J, K L, M and N
4. From 14th May onwards, all domain-name applications will be processed in order of arrival.

➔ **A few months later, after analysis of the first phase, the liberalization will be widened to all legal entities and individuals, while maintaining the principle of territoriality.**

- To have assurance as to the identity of persons (mainly individuals) not present in the on-line databases, a system of sworn statements may be introduced;
- The date for the launch of this second phase will be defined subsequently, after analysis of performance during the first phase.



THE BENEFITS EXPECTED

- **The greater freedom in choosing a domain name** will enable as many people as possible to have access to French naming cyberspace; this will initially benefit businesses and generally, legal entities located in France which, as a survey shows, 3 web users out of 4 expect to find in the .fr zone¹.
- Trust will be strengthened by a simple link enabling web users to **access the official databases used by AFNIC in identifying the applicant**.
- The registration procedures simplification - enabling a more sophisticated automation - may lead to a **fall in .fr registration costs**. The benefits will thus be shared by both end customers (easier registration, reduced costs) and service providers (automatable procedures, reduced costs).
- In the event of disputes, a **dispute resolution system will be proposed** by competent French and international arbitration bodies. This system will be **in addition to the courts** which have a considerable body of case law relating to domain names.

In the medium to long term:

- the system implemented as described above may be extended to the **creation of a “trustmarks directory”** listing such marks possessed by owners of .fr and .re domain names;
- in addition, as with the official databases, **the databases of trustmark managers could be made accessible using pointers**. This feature, termed “Qualification”, will promote on the Internet the trustmarks existing in the real world, and so build a bridge between the two worlds.

¹ TNS-SOFRES survey in June 2002: <http://www.afnic.fr/actu/nouvelles/nommage/CP20020627>