

*Public consultation
For the opening to domain
names containing 1 & 2
alphabetical and/or
alphanumerical characters
under the .fr TLD*

Overview

afnic

Like some of its European counterparts and as part of its commitment to the State, Afnic intends to allow the public to register domain names containing only or two characters, which was hitherto prohibited.

Today the Afnic naming policy excludes the possibility of applying to register a domain name consisting of a single alphabetic or numeric character, and those composed of two alphabetic characters only. This exclusion also applies to domain names containing special characters (IDN).

In the interests of transparency and cooperation with the user community, Afnic wishes to obtain public input in order to guide it in implementing the opening that will take place in late 2013 for the extensions that it manages.

Afnic opened the project to public consultation on its website for 22 days from Monday March 25 to midnight on Tuesday, April 16, 2013 in order to gather all the opinions, comments and suggestions about the project, with particular respect to:

- the various opening procedures possible;
- the naming restrictions that might be adopted by Afnic.

A series of questions was asked for each of the points in the consultation.

The information about the public consultation launched by Afnic was relayed and discussed by Internet observers and stakeholders (forum, journalists, individuals, web sites, registrars) in 47 occurrences on the social media, 40 of which were positive in tone. 70% of this activity was on Twitter; 54% of the occurrences were in English against 38% in French and 8% in German and Spanish. Most of the occurrences relayed the information about the opening of the consultation.

Against this background, a contribution was received from the Managing Director of one of the registrars. The latter advocated:

1. **A special rate** when the naming policy for domain names with 1 and 2 characters is opened with a dissuasive price of around € 100 per name to prevent massive registration by a few people with technical and financial means giving them a competitive advantage;
2. **An opening with no sunrise period** because the system would be too expensive to implement for registrars given the low potential of domains with 1 & 2 characters which only represent a few hundred names;

3. A **direct opening on the "first come, first served" basis** with subsequent management of any claims by rights holders.

In parallel to this public consultation, Afnic collected the practices of other European registries and the opinions, comments and suggestions of their [consultative committees](#).

With respect to the practices of other European registries, it was noted in particular that:

1. Most of the European registries audited have opted for a **protective system for rights holders** (sunrise or auction);
2. Most European registries have adopted **naming restrictions**.

In the opinions, comments and suggestions given by the registrars during consultative committee meetings, it was argued that:

1. If an opening with protection of rights holders is chosen, a **sunrise period** is preferred to an auction system, because it could be divided into several periods in order to prioritize different types of rights;
2. The **differentiated and/or variable pricing system** applied by some registries was both very complicated and poorly perceived by users.

In the opinions, comments and suggestions given by the registrars during consultative committee meetings, it was noted that:

1. A **sunrise period** was widely accepted for the launch of domain names with one and two characters because it prevented cybersquatting;
2. Opinions were divided about the use of an auction system or the "first come, first served" rule as well as the prices that might be applied;
3. If naming restrictions were to be defined, they should be few in number.

To summarize, and provide an overview of the various contributions, it was noted that the following were generally recommended for the opening of domain names with one or two alphanumeric and/or alphabetic characters for registration under the .fr TLD:

- **A sunrise period to protect rights holders, avoid disputes and prevent cybersquatting;**

- **Special dissuasive pricing to prevent speculation and protect rights holders¹;**
- **Limited naming restrictions.**

On behalf of Afnic, we should like to thank all of the participants for their help in preparing the deployment of this new policy by defining its guidelines.

With respect to the rest of the project, based on the above guidelines, we are currently drafting and finalizing the registry’s policy for the opening to registration of domain names with one or two alphanumeric and/or alphabetic characters, for approval thereafter by the decision-making bodies of Afnic.

Afnic and its registrars will then proceed with the actual opening of the registration process.

¹ In this case, Afnic would pay the funds received to charity or to the future Support Fund for the Development of the Internet.