

FRANCE'S DOMAIN NAME AUTHORITY, AFNIC, OFFERS NEW FACILITIES TO PRIVATE CITIZENS BY CREATING TWO NEW TYPES OF DOMAIN

- “nom.fr” and “com.fr” likely to boost private use of the Internet

Paris, June 24, 1999--AFNIC¹, France's national domain name authority, announces today two new types of domain that will allow users in the “.fr” zone to derive new benefits from use of the internet. The two new domain types are “.nom.fr” and “.com.fr”. The first may be used by individuals resident in France and able to prove their identity to open their own domain name. This will be fully transferable between internet service providers. The second will allow a totally free space to register any name without proof of identity.

“These two new domain types open up new horizons for users of “.fr” while maintaining an overall regulatory framework,” said Jean-Yves Babonneau, director of AFNIC. “In addition to creating exciting new applications, we also expect them to act as a powerful stimulus to encourage individuals to join the internet community, thus helping France catch up with nations where internet usage is more intensive.”

The “.nom.fr” domain type will be available from July 26. It opens the way for example for families to have their own domain. The Dupont family could register dupont.nom.fr. This would allow each family member to have their own space such as “pierre@dupont.nom.fr”, “isabelle@dupont.nom.fr” etc. This new domain type will also prepare the way for advances in technology such as the development of home automation. Using the family domain name, individuals can control their home heating, dishwasher, microwave, alarm and other systems while away from home (heating@dupont.nom.fr etc). Homonyms will be catered for by adding words after the patronym – “dupont-nemours” or “dupont-françois” or “dupont-1”.

The new domain “.com.fr”, will be available in Q4. Users in the “.fr” zone have made it clear that they want to be able to choose any name. French law does however make it possible to protect copyright and trademarks.

There are many examples of where .com.fr will provide the right solution to user needs. If a local football team wants a quick no-fuss name registration, it can do so with the minimum of administrative effort, and avoid having to use an ISP name, for example “eiffel-foot.com.fr” Similarly, exhibition organizers could use, say, “exposition-impressionnistes.com.fr.”

The only restriction is that any name already registered for “.fr”, “.asso.fr”, “.nom.fr”, “.tm.fr”, “.presse.fr” or “.prd.fr” cannot be used. AFNIC will make available any information required to resolve disputes so as to minimize recourse to legal proceedings.

Part of AFNIC's mission is to transfer knowledge in domain applications to those needing to know in both French and international communities. To this end, it wishes to encourage members of the general public to get to know all they can about internet technologies so they will be able to respond to the challenges of tomorrow's society.

¹ AFNIC Association Française pour le Nommage Internet en Coopération



Association Française pour le Nommage Internet en Coopération

As part of this education process, AFNIC is offering :

- A directory HarmoNIC, an English and French language reference document for domain names.
- Two French language learning tools on CD (Initi@tion à l'Internet, and A ch@cun son site WEB).
- Information on naming domains in France and internationally.
- Statistics on the use of the internet.
- An exhaustive and impartial list of internet service providers in the .fr zone, currently numbering 660.

About AFNIC...

AFNIC (Association Française pour le Nommage Internet en Coopération) is a not-for-profit organization created in January 1998. It has taken over the activities formerly carried out by NIC France under the aegis of INRIA (Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et Automatique). Apart from its founding members (INRIA and the French government ministries responsible for research, industry and telecommunications), AFNIC has three categories of members: internet service providers, users (physical and legal persons), and the representatives of international organizations.

AFNIC's missions are as follows:

- To establish a system for attributing domain names in the “.fr” zone;
- To implement this system in conformity with French law;
- Operate internet access name servers for “.fr” domains;
- To transfer knowledge and know-how acquired in internet naming inside and outside France.

For further information on AFNIC, consult the website <http://www.afnic.asso.fr/>

For further information:

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AFNIC - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

AFNIC (Association Française pour le Nommage Internet en Coopération), founded in 1998 and based just outside Paris, is responsible for the registration and management of French domain names (terminating in «.fr»), previously carried out by NIC France under the aegis of INRIA. AFNIC is a self-financing, not-for-profit organization.

Membership of AFNIC is made up of representatives of the different communities that are most closely concerned with the internet. These include internet service providers (ISPs), users (physical or legal persons) and members of corresponding international organizations.

AFNIC has published a charter for domain naming and the attribution of domain names. This guarantees respect for the right of domain name holders in the «.fr» zone to use their name and trademarks.

As of June 1999, AFNIC has a team of 27 people, plus logistical and information processing systems that have significantly improved the previous operation.

- Domain name registration or changes can be done within 24 hours, including changes to ISP.
- Any organization or individual wishing to register a name can consult AFNIC's list of ISPs (currently 660) in France able to send the application to AFNIC and to supply a connection.
- The cost of registration and maintenance of domain names ending on «.fr» (the amount billed by AFNIC to the ISP) has come down - -20% in 1998, -30% in 1999. In 1999 it has dropped below the «.com» price.
- AFNIC has no control over the prices set by ISP to end users. But it will require ISPs to clearly state the costs of the services provided by AFNIC.
- Foreign companies domiciled in France can register a domain name in «.fr». This gives a clear signal to their customers and partners that they are present in France and demonstrates that any dispute may be settled under French law.
- The «.fr» zone is divided into public domains such as «.fr», «.asso.fr», «.presse.fr» or «.tm.fr», and into sectorial domains such as «.notaires.fr» or «.pharmacien.fr». This is designed to make it easy to do intuitive searches and reduces the problems of homonyms.
- The Naming Charter is designed to ensure that trademark and intellectual property rights are respected. The person who requests a name has to show proof of usage (for example company documents).
- A survey carried out by CIGREF (Club Informatique des Grandes Entreprises Françaises) suggests that only five per cent of their members have problems with «.fr», while 55 per cent encounter problems linked to «.com».

Services to the General Public

Initially designed as a tool for researchers, the internet is spreading to all corners of the socio-economic world, including private individuals. Having started out using just email and website services, users will soon discover systems that allow them to manage their homes remotely (for example heating, alarms or dishwashers).

AFNIC is fully committed to these developments and includes the wider and better use of the internet among the general public among its most important objectives.

AFNIC has made information on internet naming and usage at an national and international level available to all. In addition, it has launched several innovative projects designed to educate the general public. These are:

- Two CD-ROMs
Initi@tion à l'Internet - beginners can learn about the history of the internet, how to navigate on the web, email, document search, composing a web page using HTML, and information for those wishing go further (HTML, file transfer, plug-ins, the JavaScript and Java programming languages).
A ch@cun son Site WEB - individuals already familiar with web techniques are given advice on how to build a web site.
- Since March 1998, AFNIC has offered a directory of French internet domains, HarmoNIC. This allows a multicriteria or multilingual search. English and French are currently catered for and other languages will follow. Information is available on «.fr» domains, on the ISPs, and on their websites.
- AFNIC has launched a new initiative designed to allow persons domiciled in France and able to produce proof of identity to register their own domain name under «.nom.fr» (for example «dupont.nom.fr»). Various combinations are allowed: «alexandre@dupont.nom.fr» or «alexandre@dupont-nemours.nom.fr» etc.

This approach has several advantages:

- a) The individual is independent from his ISP and has direct access to all internet services such as website implementation or home automation.
 - b) It allows official protection of the registered name.
- Another initiative is another domaine type «.com.fr». This allows anyone to register any name without proof of identity. It will be particularly useful to organizers of events or small informal associations.
 - AFNIC has also set up a Minitel service that replicates the website as far as technically possible. This will be available from end July 1999. It offers access to the same information as on the AFNIC website such as the list of ISPs, statistics, directories etc.
 - AFNIC plans to develop further its multilingual directory HarmoNIC.

AFNIC in the International Context

It is important that France's example in creating a regulatory environment that encourages respect of names and trademarks is made known internationally. Likewise, statistics and other information concerning the «.fr» zone need to be communicated to the outside world.

Since its creation, AFNIC has nurtured good working relationships with French speaking and other naming organizations.



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- It has actively supported the creation of AFRINIC, coordinating centre for African countries.
- Education tools are available to other French speaking countries. They are being adapted into Spanish in Mexico, and distributed by UNESCO and the Fonds Francophone des Inforoutes.
- The AFNIC directory, HarmoNIC has been presented to the Council of Europe National Top-level Registration body and to RIPE (Réseau IP Européen). It is a candidate to be the model for a European or international directory.
- AFNIC chairs a working group for French players in the internet market covering international affairs.
- AFNIC manages the server for ICANN (International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers). ICANN has the structure of an association with an executive committee that will be elected internationally by national registration bodies such as AFNIC.