

.eu: Why it was Worth dotting the EU

Paul Damm is a graduate of IEP Paris, the École du Louvre and the Sorbonne. His Master's degree treated of the French

Navy in the 18th century. At Sciences Po (now the IEP), he worked on education issues within the European students

Convention. At *Notre Europe*, he has worked on communication and public relations. ■



Paul Damm

The .eu well received

When launching its new Internet site, Notre Europe turned its attention to the timeliness of a new .eu European address. The association's new site is thus the opportunity to reflect on the Internet in Europe and on the .eu. this 'Bref' first outlines the main issues at stake when setting up the .eu and draws up lines for further thought.

2 millions domain names

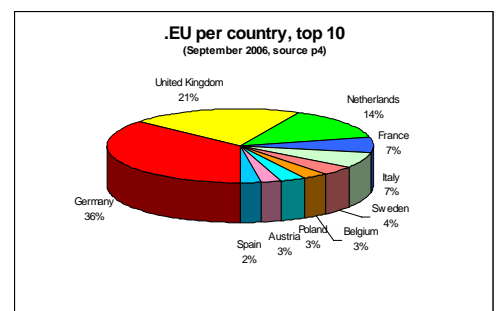
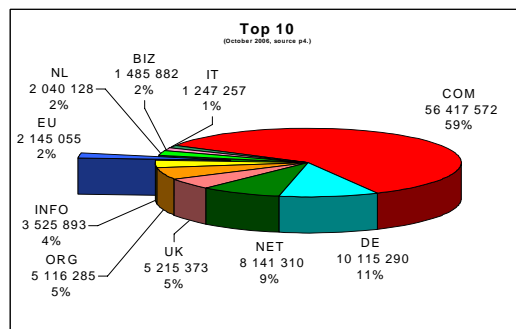
A few months after opening the .eu to the public, the TLD's unqualified success (+ 27% in 3 months) is a boon. For the Commission and EURid's most optimistic previsions had set an objective of one million domain names taken up in one year. At the end of September 2006, more than 2 millions domain names had been registered. The .eu phenomenon reaches beyond Europe as never since

the creation of the Internet, had a TLD risen to such importance in such a short time. Launched for restricted registration on 7 December 2005, the .eu had attracted 100 000 demands within its first three hours. On 7 April 2006, date of its opening to the public, the .eu added 1,028,248 names in a matter of hours and came close to 1.5 million names in one week. In September 2006, the Germans are the most numerous takers of .eu (691 858 names) ahead of the British (398 355) and the Dutch (263 237). France comes forth in front of Italy with 132 309 .eu.

If Europe can be proud of this success, the .com remains far ahead with 50 millions domain names. Nevertheless such a flying start bodes well for a significant expansion in years to come.

* What is a DNS? a TLD?

The domain name system (DNS) born in 1987 is the way that Internet sets addresses and which turns an IP address (Internet Protocol, that is the set of numbers by which any machine is identified on the net) into an alphanumeric address, meaningful and easy to remember. The domain name is prerequisite on the Internet. It is used for all services (web, messaging, etc.). A domain name is made up with a sequence of characters (from A to Z, from 0 to 9 and dash); and a suffix also called TLD (Top Level Domain) or ccTLD (for country code such as .fr, .de, .ca, .jp), (.net, .com are generic).



The result of seven years effort

The .eu enables Europe to mark out its territory on the web

In 1999, at the behest of the business and Internet communities, the European Commission included the .eu creation project into the action plan relating to the e-Europe initiative. It was approved in June 2000 by the Feira European Council with a view to reinforce the Internet infrastructure in Europe and promote e-commerce. A consultation process was then set in train by the Commission. At the same time, on 6 July 2000, it requested from ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) the delegation of the .eu. Unfortunately, in 2001 the Internet bubble burst setting off a wave of scepticism, which was to slow down the process at European level. However, the .eu was not stranded: regulation 733/2002/CE of 22 April 2002 concerning the implementation of the top level domain .eu and defining a few basic principles was adopted. In May 2003, EURid (www.eurid.eu), a consortium set up on the initiative of Belgian DNS

registry .be, joined by Italian (.it) Swedish (.se) DNS registries as well as associated members, qualified as a DNS registry. In April 2004, Regulation (EC) n° 874/2004 laid down the PPR (Public Policy Rules). At the end of 2004, the inception of the Barroso Commission breathed new life into the process. In March 2005, the contract between ICANN and EURid was signed. On 12 April 2005 the creation of the .eu in ICANN's root server signed the advent of the .eu on the Web. Finally on 7 December 2005 the "sunrise" period started leading on to the opening to the public of 7 April 2006. On 9 May 2006, Europe day, the European institutions symbolically passed to the .eu

According to EURid statistics, businesses have played a major part in .eu success by putting up the largest volume of names for registration. They are followed by the names of families and persons, an interesting phenomenon, which shows that the .eu is not just a business concern.

* What is ICANN?

ICANN: www.icann.org is a US non profit organisation created in 1998 on a US government initiative to allocate IP address space; assign protocol parameters; manage domain name systems for (gTLDs) and s (ccTLDs) and run the root server system management functions.

What is at stake for the EU in having its .eu?

A European territory on the web

The Commission's prime target in the creation of the .eu is trade: the aim is to enhance the single market through the creation of its virtual counterpart on the web. By marking out a European territory on the web, the .eu enables businesses, associations, and individuals with a European calling to affirm their identity and to offer guarantees of quality and security. For .eu users, required to live in the EU or to be established there, enjoy the standard legal protection applying in the EU. In this way, the Commission sought to reassure Europeans and encourage the growth of exchanges on the web.

If the Internet can be viewed as a space, each TLD is worth a portion of it. Today, this space is creating a structure and a hierarchy for itself. In this territorialisation process, the .com, with 50 million registered addresses has the largest territory and the EU with its .eu is only just beginning to take up its virtual territory.

The .eu fits into the i2010 European strategy

The new TLD belongs to a strategy broader than mere territorialisation. This strategy is framed in i2010: *A European Information Society for growth and employment*. This programme, a synthesis of prior instruments such as e-

Europe, has three ambitions: the establishment of a single information space; the strengthening of innovation and investment in ICT research; the establishment of an inclusive information society.

One approach to Internet governance

Internet governance is complex as it cuts across different aspects: technological, normative, representation of the different web actors (governments, businesses, non profit organisations, persons etc.) ICANN, to which falls the final decision in the creation of a new DNS is in effect the depository of all Internet regulation powers. Some see in it the USA's confiscation of the Internet. It can also be seen as an original governance model for the Internet, which must be improved rather than overturned.

At present, ICANN's relationship with the US government runs subject to an agreement which has just been signed:

le JPA (Joint Project Agreement), whereby the US Department of Commerce grants the management and administration of the DNS, for a period of 3 years, which is renewable. Thus with this new arrangement, ICANN increases its independence and we are moving towards the private management of Internet business.

Furthermore, the two world summits on the Information Society in Geneva and Tunis made the public at large aware of the existence of a debate on Internet governance, and lead to the creation of the Internet Governance Forum (see box). This process opens new prospects.

In this context, the setting up of the .eu and its success add to the weight of Europe in negotiations for an evolution of Internet governance. The technically trouble-free start of the European TLD bears out Europe's know-how in this domain and reinforces its credibility. What is more, the JPA, as currently framed, is close to the European vision for Internet governance.

The technically trouble-free start of the European TLD bears out Europe's know-how in this domain

*What is the IGF?

IGF (www.intgovforum.org): Internet Governance Forum is a forum the implementation of which was decided at the Tunis summit on the information society in November 2005. Its mandate and its functions are defined in the Tunis agenda at (www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1-fr.html) - First forum meeting: Athens, 30 October - 2 November 2006, (www.igfgreece2006.gr).

*What are ccTLD / gTLD?

The DNS (Domain Name System) operates on a tree-like structure. A Top Level Domain (TLD) is a domain name set at the highest hierarchic level; it has only one section after the last dot. There are two types of TLDs: the gTLDs (generic Top-Level Domain or generic TLD) and the ccTLD (country code Top-Level Domain). The gTLD are generic TLDs not linked to a given territory, e.g. the .com. whereas the ccTLD are TLDs linked to a given territory, as is the .eu.

Proposals

Grow the i2010 ambitions

1. A European naming policy

The granting of domains names works on a first come first serve basis. To which the registry adds a €10 service charge (a .com comes at about €7). These general principles were issued

by the Commission whose model choice does not appear best suited to the ambition stated in the i2010 programme, with its "Internet for all" keystone. For the Commission has favoured a commercial approach to the .eu without putting forward

"a European approach to domain name". As Sebastien Bachollet (president of EGENI) suggests, a domain name could be granted to every European citizen. This apparently radical solution would have the benefit of bringing Internet for all into being. Ultimately,

the Commission must progress the commercial approach to European naming with a view to create a European model, inspired by the principle of Internet for all.

2. Opening up on civil society

The European Community Panel of Participants (EC-POP) is an open forum created at the end of the 90s in order to help the Commission think up the creation of the .eu. This forum brought together businesses, organisations and persons interested in the development of the European TLD. Its work over, it is remembered as an original structure, open on civil society. This informal setting appears to have been replaced by punctual consultations on specific themes. It would be interesting for the Union to recreate an on-going structure, open to all stakeholders with views on the evolution

of the Internet in Europe and tuned into civil society.

Likewise, it would be a good idea to develop the ICANN model at European level and at the level of each member state, working towards a pyramidal structure

The interest of a forum of this type is to reinforce civil society participation to the Internet and more broadly to European policies.

3. A Knowledge and Information Superhighway

The idea of the Internet for all is generous, ambitious and necessary but it does not address the issue of the aim of such a development. What is the purpose of the Internet for Europeans citizens? Internet is a formidable knowledge and culture channel; it is as yet only tentatively used in this capacity and remains shapeless. Yet we cannot be content with the purely

commercial vision of the Internet currently proposed. Europe must grow the Web's cultural vocation.

Projects to digitalise books exist already but these initiatives are limited for want of means. Now the creation of an authentic universal virtual library can only emanate from a power such as Europe. The project could aim to go beyond the mere digitalisation of books. Music, films and works of art (in the shape of a picture library) could thus be kept and disseminated.

In that spirit European higher education partakes in this strategy. A site making all European university programmes available and allowing the students to register through it would meet one Bologna process (LMD) target.

Such projects would give a meaning to Internet development in Europe.



"The .EU"

"The .EU": Bibliographical sources and references

In *le .EU* (DomainsInfo, 2006) Pierre Berecz and Marie Emmanuelle Haas describe the .EU setting up procedures, and its legal aspects.

Information Sources on the web :

> www.domainsinfo.fr site offering information on domains names, DomainsInfo

> www.egeni.org Global Event on domain Names and address systems on Internet, EGENI

> http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/internationalrel/global_issues/ws/index_en.htm

The Commission's page concerning governance

> IP/06/1297 Commission press release on JPA

To go deeper:

Internet : la main invisible de la deliberation : Azi Lev-On and Bernard Manin, in Esprit, mai 2006.

Quand Google defie l'Europe Jean-Noël Jeanneney, 2005.

> www.notre-europe.eu ■