

2,000 potential new web domains could include .sex, .app and .pizza (Update 2)

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Move over .com -- it might have to compete with suffixes such as .sex, .app and .fail and after the body in charge of website domain names unveiled some 2,000 applications for new ones Wednesday.

The US-based Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) revealed details of 1,930 requests for new web address endings, ranging from the general (.shop) to the highly specialised (.motorcycles).

Many of the requests are from large companies such as Apple, Mitsubishi and IBM -- with Internet giant Google alone applying for

over 100, including .google, .YouTube, and .lol -- Internet slang for "laugh out loud".

"This is an historic day for the Internet and the two billion people around the world that depend on it," ICANN president and CEO Rod Beckstrom said at a press conference in London unveiling the list.

California-based ICANN says the huge expansion of the Internet, with around two billion users around the world, half of them in Asia, means new names are essential.

There are currently just 22 generic Top-Level Domains, or gTLDs, in use, including .com.

Beckstrom said ICANN hoped the first of the new suffixes to be live by the first quarter of 2013, but warned that evaluating all of the applications could take around 20 months.

"We're standing at the cusp of a new era of online innovation -- innovation that means new businesses, new marketing tools, new jobs, new ways to link communities and share information," Beckstrom said.

"But let me stress that these are just applications. They are not yet approved, and some of them may not be. None of them will enter the Internet until they've undergone a rigorous, objective and independent evaluation."

A total of 911 organisations from North America paid the \$185,000 (150,000 euro) fee to lodge an application, along with 675 from Europe and 303 from the Asia-Pacific region.

Just 17 applications for new suffixes were received from African applicants, while 24 came from Latin America and the Caribbean.

ICANN said 66 proposals were linked to geographical locations -- such as .nyc, .miami and .paris -- while others relate to industries, such as .insurance.

The most sought-after suffix is .app, with 13 applicants including Google and Amazon.

In cases where several organisations have applied for the same domain, so-called "community-based applications" -- those from bodies representing several groups such as trade associations -- will take precedence.

Where no community-based application is involved, ICANN will encourage applicants to "come to some kind of teaming arrangement", Beckstrom said.

Failing this, the domain name will be auctioned off -- which could lead to a bidding war in cases where companies such as Google and Amazon are vying for the same domain, such as .books and .blog.

The Vatican has applied for .catholic, while a Turkish company has requested .islam.

Four firms have applied for for .pizza, six for .baby and three for .basketball.

"It's up to the consumers to pick the winners and the losers," said Beckstrom.

"Our job is to focus on the security and stability of the domain name system, and making sure there's more choices out there. So it's just like the app market on smartphones: which ones are going to win? The users decide."

ICANN, which began taking applications in January, also revealed that 116 of the claims are for what it termed "internationalised domain names" -- addresses that are not in the Latin alphabet.

On top of the registration fees, maintaining a suffix will cost \$25,000 annually. ICANN has raised \$352 million in application fees -- which Beckstrom defended, saying they only just allowed the company to break even.

ICM Registry, which runs the freshly established domain .xxx, hopes to add other online red-light districts ending in .sex, .porn or .adult.

Dubai-based web hosting firm Directi, meanwhile, has spent around \$30 million applying for new domains, including .law, .bank and .doctor.

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