

New .wine online domain set to be uncorked

June 11 2014, by Rob Lever



The 'legs' of a glass of wine reflect onto the working surface of a destemming machine at Tres Sabores Winery September 25, 2009 in St. Helena, California

Online addresses ending in .wine and .vin are set to be uncorked soon, despite objections from European governments and several wine industry groups.

The Internet's chief regulator has reaffirmed its plan to allow the new "top-level domains" ending in [wine](#) and its French language equivalent, vin.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers said that, following a 60-day review, it found no problems with the process that gave preliminary approval in March to the new domains.

An ICANN statement said that in the process for launching new domain names that began in 2011, "parties with standing were afforded the opportunity to file formal objections... In this case, no such objections were filed against .vin or .wine."

The board also said there was no basis to claims that ICANN violated its bylaws in the process.

In recent months, several European governments and wine industry groups have protested the plan, while the US government has stood in favor.

Wine industry groups in Europe, California and elsewhere keen on defending appellations with valuable reputations such as Bordeaux or Napa have complained the new domains could harm them.

Wine makers also fear having to pay to register their names at websites in the new online terrain solely to stop online addresses from being used by imposters or in ways that could spoil reputations.

Three French government officials last week asked the European Commission last week to block any new .wine and .vin extension without protection for geographical origins such as Bordeaux or Napa.

The letter said the process has become "emblematic of Internet governance that is out of control."



A screen during a press conference hosted by ICANN in central London, on June 13, 2012

ICANN's 'ill-advised' attempt

But US officials earlier this year said giving special rights to the domains to wine groups or regions could set a dangerous precedent and that ICANN was in no position to determine if a website was operating in "bad faith" with respect to wine designations.

"It would be ill-advised for ICANN to attempt to define bad faith behavior related to the use of geographical indications... when the world's experts have been unable to do so for years," the US letter said.

Assigning new websites for wine still could take some months.

Because three companies have applied as the registrar for .wine, they

will be given until January 2015 to reach an agreement on a joint effort or to make financial arrangements before ICANN sets an auction.

For .vin, only one company applied to be the registrar, US-based Donuts Inc., which will now be allowed to move forward with ICANN in a process that typically takes several months.

Opening the Internet to domain names that go far beyond .com, .net, .gov and .edu has been heralded by Web overlords at ICANN as the biggest change to the Web since it was created.

More than 100 new gTLDs (generic top-level domains) have cleared hurdles to reach registries, such as Donuts.

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