

Internet lords keep .wine bottled for now

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A man looks at bottles of red wine, on April 2, 2014 in Saint-Emilion, southwestern France

Internet overseers are keeping .WINE and .VIN online addresses bottled in the hope a few months of aging will make them more palatable.

The head of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) was under directive by its board on Monday to put a temporary hold on the process of contracting .WINE and .VIN [domain names](#).

The 60-day hold on the process was implemented to "provide additional time for the relevant impacted parties to negotiate, which they are encouraged to do," the ICANN board said in a resolution approved late Friday at a meeting in Singapore.

Wine industry groups in Europe, California and elsewhere keen on defending appellations with valuable reputations such as Bordeaux or Napa.

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.

ICANN has measures in place to safeguard trademarks and other third-party interests, Universite Pantheon-Assas law professor Jerome Passa noted in a legal analysis solicited by the board.

In regard to Donuts Inc. seeking to operate online terroir dubbed .VIN and .WINE, Passa concluded in a written analysis that "there is no rule of the law of geographical indications, nor any general principle which obliges ICANN to reject the applications."

An ICANN committee recommended that the board consider the larger implications of "legally complex and politically sensitive issues" at issue and whether there is a forum better suited to address concerns raised by .WINE and .VIN applications.

New online neighborhoods began opening in January when Donuts began offering Web addresses ending in ".guru," ".bike"—and even ".singles."

Donuts, based in the northwestern state of Washington, manages domains, letting website registry firms such as GoDaddy sell addresses to the public.

Donuts has rolled out domain suffixes including camera, equipment, estate, gallery, graphics, lighting, and photography.

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 have cleared hurdles to reach registries such as Donuts.

Online neighborhoods with addresses ending in the Chinese word for "game;" the Arabic words for "web" or "network," or the Cyrillic word for "online" were cleared last year and more were to follow suit.

California-based ICANN says the huge expansion

of the Internet—with some two billion users around the world, half of them in Asia—means new names are essential.

The arrival of new online neighborhoods has been heralded as a "revolution" greatly expanding online terrain from the long-used 22 gTLDs, of which .com and .net comprise the lion's share.

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