

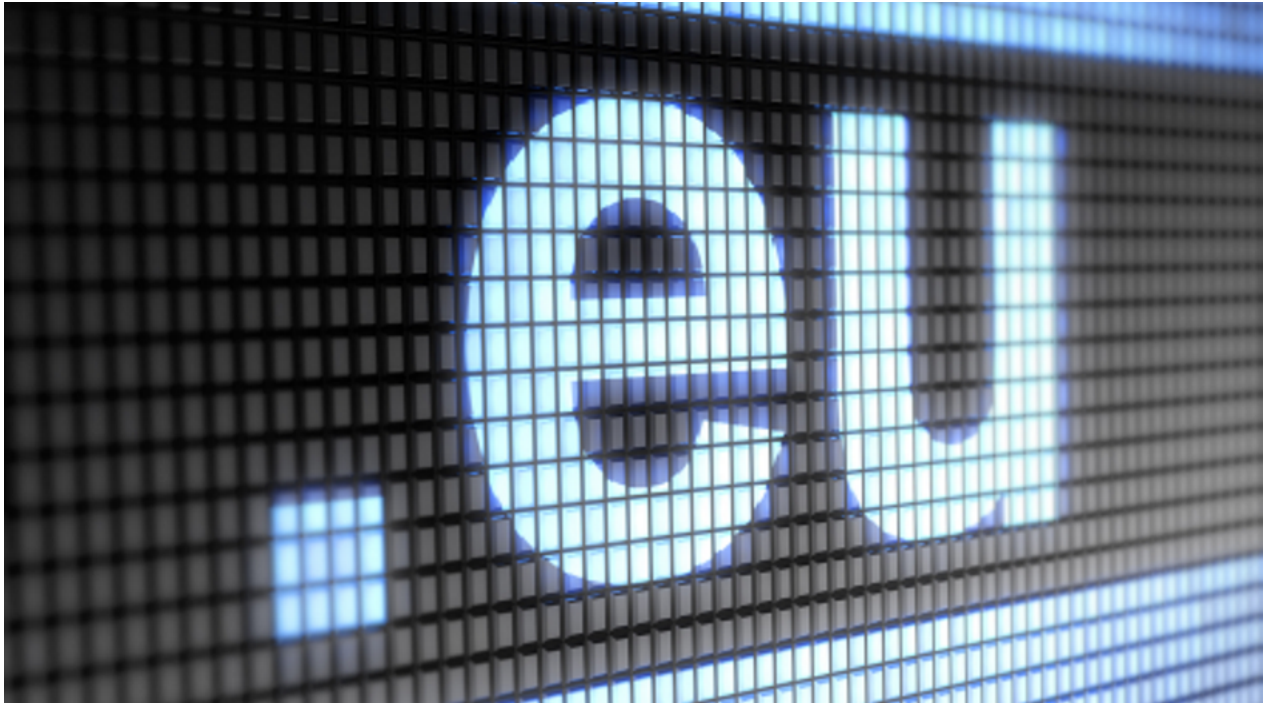


European Commission report gives '.eu' a clean bill of health

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- **The European Commission has published its latest report on the implementation, functioning and effectiveness of the '.eu' top-level domain name**
- **'.eu' growth was flat across the entire period under scrutiny (April 2019 to April 2021)**
- **The report highlighted several measures as contributing to the security and trustworthiness of the '.eu' TLD**

On 11 January 2022 the European Commission published its report "On the implementation, functioning and effectiveness of the '.eu' top-level domain name from April 2019 to April 2021". This report, which must be submitted every two years under the relevant European Commission regulations, reviews the yearly audited accounts, financial reports, budget proposals, and the strategy and operational plans of the '.eu' registry.

The '.eu' domain covers the country-code top-level domain (ccTLD) of the European Union, as well as its variants in Cyrillic and Greek scripts, as administered and managed by the non-profit organisation EURid. There were 3.7 million registered '.eu' domain names in April 2021, making the '.eu' domain the 12th-largest TLD and the eighth-largest ccTLD in the world.

The report notes that '.eu' growth was flat across the entire period under scrutiny, as negative growth of -2% in 2019, which resulted from a "continued saturation and consolidation of the domain name market", as well as the impact of Brexit, was offset by positive growth of 2.2% subsequent to the rise in demand for domain names during the covid-19 pandemic, when many people and business shifted their activities online.

Bucking the trend for stagnation was Germany, which had the largest share of '.eu' registrations at the end of the first quarter of 2021, along with Portugal, Ireland and Latvia, which had the highest growth over the period examined (124.2%, 78.7% and 33.3%, respectively).

The period covered by the report also witnessed the removal of the right of UK residents and organisations established in the United Kingdom to hold a '.eu' domain name pursuant to Brexit, with the report stating that "the impact of [the United Kingdom]'s withdrawal from the [European Union] has been substantial on the '.eu' domain". From an initial figure of 240,000 '.eu' domain names registered to UK registrants in 2018, following several warnings from the registry this dropped to 190,000 in 2019; the remaining 81,000 domain names were suspended by the registry on 1 January 2021.

The report also highlights the fact that, in the period covered, the '.eu' registry allowed EU citizens to register a '.eu' domain name irrespective of their place of residence and that it "expanded European linguistic diversity and multilingualism across the '.eu' domain" by launching the '.eu' extension, the Greek-script equivalent of '.eu'. The report boasts that the registry offers "one of the largest IDN spaces in the world", with over 42,000 IDNs registered at the end of the first quarter of 2021, including 1,300 registered under '.eu' (the equivalent of '.eu' in Cyrillic script) and 2,700 under '.eu'.

Measures such as the Abuse Prevention Early Warning System (an automated system for predicting abusive behaviour that delays the delegation of suspicious registrations and triggers a verification procedure including a manual review leading to the delegation or the suspension of the domain name), the registrar lock service implemented in 2020 and the nearly 9,000 checks on covid-19-related domain name registrations that resulted in the suspension of more than 6,500 domain names during the pandemic, were highlighted by the report as contributing to the security and trustworthiness of the '.eu' TLD.

Cooperation between the registry and the Belgian Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Belgian Customs (Cybersquad), the Belgian Public Prosecutor's Office and Europol, as well as a joint action plan between the registry and the European Union Intellectual Property Office launched in 2021 to combat abusive and speculative domain name registrations, are all cited in the report as shoring up the fight against illegal and abusive activities involving '.eu' domain names.

The report concludes that:

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the '.eu' domain continues to function in an effective and financially healthy manner, facilitating access to the Digital Single Market, allowing Europeans to display their European identity online, supporting the online presence of SMEs, and promoting multilingualism.

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It further states that the '.eu' domain provides "an example to follow for other DNS operators". However, the report also warns against complacency, stating that the registry should:

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continue on its path to ensure a trusted '.eu' domain and to ensure that illegal behaviours and abuses that are evident elsewhere in the DNS ecosystem do not gain a foothold in the '.eu' domain space.

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