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New rulebook for '.mk' domain names introduces major changes
Macedonia - Hogan Lovells LLP

Domain names

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On October 1 2013 the Macedonian ('.mk') registry, [Marnet](#), adopted a new rulebook which implements a number of changes, including the introduction of a registrar system to handle the administrative and technical aspects of Macedonian domain name registrations and the liberalisation of second-level extensions under '.mk'. Current holders of '.mk' domain names would be wise to review their portfolios and assess the risks that these changes may pose to the protection of their brands in the '.mk' domain space.

As in other jurisdictions round the world, the new Macedonian registrars will be authorised to effect registrations and renewals, and to make any changes requested by the administrative or the technical contacts of a particular domain name; however, the central register of Macedonian domain names will remain with Marnet. The newly appointed registrars will not be allowed to register more than 30 domain names for which they themselves act as registrant.

In order to persuade registrants to seek out the services of one of the newly-appointed registrars, Marnet intends to raise, as of next year, the price of registrations and renewals carried out directly via the registry.

Another major change heralded by the new rulebook is the liberalisation of second-level extensions such as '.com.mk', '.net.mk' and '.inf.mk'. Up to now, '.mk' registrants had the privilege of enjoying protection for their '.mk' domain names in the corresponding second-level extensions as these were blocked against registration by third parties. For example, once 'domain.mk' had been registered, no third party was allowed to register 'domain.com.mk' or 'domain.net.mk'. This changed on January 1 2014 when the relevant extensions were effectively untethered and, therefore, are now vulnerable to registration by unrelated parties.

Registrants who have, up to now, relied on this blocking mechanism and registered only in '.mk' would be well advised to review their portfolios to consider whether registration of the domain name in the second-level extensions is warranted in order to protect their brands. This is particularly important in cases where the brands do not enjoy trademark protection in Macedonia that could be cited in any eventual opposition against an infringing registration.

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