

World Trademark Review Daily

Kazakhstan now third country in the world to offer Cyrillic domain names
Kazakhstan - Hogan Lovells International LLP

Domain names

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A few years ago the [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#) (ICANN) introduced internationalised country-code top-level domain names (often referred to as 'IDN ccTLDs'). Until recently, it was possible to register only the first part of a domain name in non-Latin characters, while the domain name extension itself remained in Latin script. However, ICANN is now introducing ccTLDs in different scripts, which means that entire domain names may now be written in non-Latin characters, thereby enabling non-Latin language speakers to use domain names in their own language.

This is a major development and 29 countries such as China, India and Russia have now obtained their IDN ccTLDs (or strings). Of these, 21 countries (represented by 31 IDN ccTLDs) have been delegated in the root, with the remainder either preparing to apply, or actively applying for, delegation of the string (delegation being the third step of the ICANN fast track process, after preparation and string evaluation). Once a string has been delegated, it can be launched by the registry in charge of it.

Recently Kazakhstan applied for, and obtained, the IDN ccTLD '.қаз'. '.қаз' is the latest string to have been delegated. Malaysia requested the IDN ccTLD 'مليسيا' - meaning '.malaysia' in Malay (in the Arabic script) - and successfully completed the string evaluation phase at the same time as Kazakhstan, but has not obtained the delegation of its string yet.

Until now it was only possible to register domain names in Kazakhstan under the TLD '.kz', as well as various second-level domains such as '.com.kz'. Domain name registrations under these two extensions are unrestricted and thus open for registration to all entities - local and foreign, companies and individuals.

Now that the '.қаз' string has been delegated, the Kazakh Registry has announced its launch and the opening of domain name registrations under '.қаз', which means that it is now possible to register domain names entirely in characters from the Kazakh Cyrillic alphabet.

The schedule for the opening of '.қаз' is as follows:

- Sunrise period from May 1 to July 31 2012 - holders of trademarks, logos and brand names registered before December 31 2011 and containing Kazakh alphabet characters will be able to register the exact equivalent domain name under '.қаз'. When several applications are made for the same domain name, the domain name will be granted to the first applicant.
- General opening from August 15 2012 onwards: '.қаз' domain names will be open to all entities without the need for a prior right and they will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Domain name registrations will be possible directly under '.қаз', but also under a number of second-level domains such as '.ком.қаз' (the Cyrillic equivalent of '.com.kz'). However, if '.қаз' is eventually opened to all entities, '.ком.қаз' will remain reserved for local companies (contrary to '.com.kz', which has no restrictions).

With the launch of '.қаз', Kazakhstan is now the third country in the world to offer domain name registrations in the Cyrillic alphabet, after Russia (with '.рф', which has been a success with around 800,000 domain name registrations since its launch in November 2010) and Serbia (with '.срб', launched in January 2012).

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