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Let's talk about '.sx' (and others)

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Last year, the [International Organisation for Standardisation](#) (ISO) granted the islands of Sint Maarten and Curaçao the country codes '.sx' and '.cw', respectively.

Sint Maarten and Curaçao used to be part of the Netherlands Antilles, an autonomous Caribbean country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands consisting of two separate groups of islands:

- Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, off the Venezuelan coast; and
- Sint Maarten, Saba and Sint Eustatius, southeast of the Virgin Islands.

Sint Maarten and Curaçao became separate countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands in October 2010, when the Netherlands Antilles was dissolved; Aruba (.aw) already had this status since 1986. As for Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba (also known as the 'BES Islands'), they became municipalities of the Netherlands and were granted the country code '.bq' by ISO.

Following the allocation of their country codes, Sint Maarten and Curaçao made applications to the [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#) (ICANN) for the delegation of the '.sx' and '.cw' country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs), and these were granted.

The '.sx' registry recently announced the launch of '.sx', which will follow the schedule below:

- Grandfathering period: until May 2 2012 - during this period, holders of existing '.an' domain names who are based in Sint Maarten will be able to secure the corresponding domain names under '.sx'. '.an' was the ccTLD for the Netherlands Antilles, which have been dissolved. Thus the '.an' ccTLD is now being phased out; since January 31 2012, domain name registrations under '.an' are no longer possible, and existing '.an' domain names will be deleted from October 31 2013.
- Sunrise period: May 3 to July 4 2012 - during this period, holders of any registered national trademarks (including Community and Benelux trademarks) will be able to apply for the corresponding '.sx' domain name, provided that the mark was registered on or before March 1 2011. However, when several applications are made for the same domain name, the domain name will go to auction and will be awarded to the applicant with the highest bid.
- Local phase: July 5 to September 4 2012 - during this phase, priority will be given to entities based in Sint Maarten. Firstly, only legal entities will be able to apply for '.sx' domain names, which will need to correspond to their name (shortened versions will be accepted). Then, from August 6 2012, private individuals will also be able to apply for the '.sx' domain names that correspond to their name.
- Landrush period: September 5 to October 4 2012 - during this period, domain name registrations under '.sx' will be open to everyone with no restrictions (local and foreign entities, companies and private individuals). Again, auctions will take place when several applications are made for the same domain names.
- General availability - from October 5 2012 onwards, domain name registrations under '.sx' will be open to everyone on a first-come, first-served basis.

Even if the '.sx' registry is not marketing itself as an extension with a double meaning like other registries (eg, Tuvalu with '.tv', Montenegro with '.me' and Colombia with '.co'), the closeness to the word 'sex' can hardly be ignored and is likely to raise interest in the '.sx' extension. Judging by the high volume of adult content on the internet and the recent launch of the sponsored top-level domain '.xxx', aimed specifically at the adult entertainment industry, there is definitely a market for such extensions.

The fact that domain name registrations under '.sx' will be totally unrestricted (contrary to '.cw', as explained below) is also likely to attract cybersquatters. However, rights protection mechanisms have been put in place to enable IP rights holders to seek redress in the case of cybersquatting - namely, the [Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy](#), via the Czech Arbitration Court, and the Uniform Rapid Suspension System (URS). The URS is a new rights protection mechanism that was devised by the Implementation Recommendation Team (IRT) which advised ICANN on trademark protection issues linked to new generic top-level domains (gTLDs).

The registry running the '.cw' ccTLD is the University of the Netherlands Antilles, which used to run '.an'. Domain name registrations under '.cw' have been open since February 1 2012. The rules that used to apply to '.an' now apply to '.cw', that is to say that only local entities are entitled to register domain names

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directly at the second level '.cw'. Foreign entities can however register domain names at the third level under extensions such as '.com.cw' and '.net.cw'. In addition, holders of existing '.an' domain names can secure the corresponding domain names under '.cw' and they have until August 31 2012 to do so.

Finally, the ccTLD for the BES Islands, '.bq' has not been delegated by ICANN yet and, therefore, domain name registrations under this extension are currently not possible.

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