

# World Trademark Review *Daily*

**'org' to release short domain names**  
**International - Hogan Lovells LLP**

**Domain names**

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**Public Interest Registry** (PIR), the not-for-profit corporation that operates the '.org' top-level domain (TLD), has announced that it would be releasing 94 previously reserved one and two-character domain names.

As far as one-character domain names are concerned, single-letter domain names such as 'e.org' will be made available, as well as single numbers such as '1.org'. Available two-character domain names may consist of two letters, such as 'ts.org', two numbers, such as '57.org', or a letter and a number combined, such as '9q.org'. The full list may be viewed at [www.project94.org](http://www.project94.org).

When the '.org' TLD was first introduced back in 1985, it was necessary for a number of domain names to be reserved in accordance with certain **ICANN** policies and recommendations. Amongst the reserved domain names were the one and two-character domain names that are now being made available to the general public, 26 years later, as a result of a review of those ICANN policies and public consultation by PIR.

Referred to as 'Project94', according to PIR the short domain names will be made available to registrants who not only reflect the core attributes of the '.org' domain, but also reinforce the trust and value of the '.org' brand. This requirement is linked to the nature of the '.org' TLD which, although unrestricted, is primarily intended to be used by non-profit or non-commercial organisations. The '.org' TLD (supposedly short for 'organisation') was one of the original generic top-level domains launched in 1985, along with '.com', '.edu', '.gov', '.mil' and '.net', and today it has over 10 million registrations. It is now commonly used by schools, communities and charities, as well as by non-profit organisations. Commercial organisations may also choose to use '.org' to publicise their educational, goodwill and fundraising initiatives by creating a dedicated '.org' website that is separate from the more day-to-day commercial activities typically found on their '.com' website(s).

Organisations interested in obtaining one of the short domain names on offer are required to submit an offer to one of PIR's selection auction providers, along with a description of how they intend to use the domain name. Auctions will then be held to decide who the domain names should be allocated to. PIR has stated that the proceeds from Project94 will be directed to programmes that enhance the open development and security of the internet, particularly in technologically under-served parts of the world. One specific programme is expected to be an initiative to drive the adoption of Domain Name System Security Extensions among the broader internet user community.

In its request to ICANN seeking permission to offer one and two-character domain names (with the exception of those representing existing country-code TLDs such as 'uk.org') last year, PIR stated that its evaluation criteria for selecting suitable auction platforms would take into account:

*"an auction plan with criteria for selecting registrants who are committed to building out the domain name with a sound marketing and branding strategy, including a strong focus on quality, creativity and the desire to launch the site in a timely manner."*

It will be interesting to see what projects are put forward and whether allocation will nevertheless go to those applicants with the deepest pockets.

In any event, it is expected that one and two-character '.org' domain names will not be cheap. In 2010 'poker.org' was reportedly sold for \$1 million. It is interesting to note that it currently points to a straightforward poker website which does not fall within the spirit of the non-profit making ethos of '.org'. However, this underlines the problem and the demand that exists for registrations in this extension.

*David Taylor and Jane Seager, Hogan Lovells LLP, Paris*

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