

SIDN releases 2014 growth rate figures for '.nl' domain names Netherlands - Hogan Lovells LLP

Domain names

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SIDN, the country-code top-level domain (ccTLD) registry responsible for '.nl', the ccTLD for the Netherlands, has announced that it had seen increased growth in 2014, with 5,531,186 domain names under management at the end of the year. This represented an increase of 2.7% compared to the figures from 2013.

During 2014, nearly 900,000 new '.nl' domain names were registered. This rate of growth is slightly down compared to the figures from 2013, which saw 971,304 new domain name registrations.

One of the contributing factors to the slowdown in net growth under '.nl' has been the increase in the number of cancelled domain names. During 2014 the number of domain name cancellations increased by 9% compared to 2013. SIDN speculate that this may be due to owners of large domain name portfolios looking to rationalise their portfolios and cancelling unwanted domain names.

Despite the slower rate of growth, '.nl' remains by far the most popular extension in The Netherlands with a market share of 73.7%. However, SIDN point out that growth of 2.7% is a respectable figure when compared to other large ccTLDs. By way of example, '.de' (the ccTLD for Germany) only saw growth of 1.1% during 2014.

Also of interest are the figures concerning the level of uptake of DNSSEC in the '.nl' domain name space. DNSSEC was designed and implemented as a response to address the inherent security vulnerabilities in the way that the Domain Name System operates. Due to these inherent vulnerabilities, it is possible to divert internet users away from their intended website destinations and to redirect them to third-party websites without their knowledge. This can result in the dissemination of computer viruses, malware and even theft of sensitive financial and personal data.

DNSSEC seeks to mitigate this situation by introducing an additional level of security at the level of the domain name servers which will ensure that internet users will be alerted to any possible re-direction to a third-party website that is not their intended destination.

The purpose of this additional layer of security is to protect websites associated with domain names from online attacks. These online attacks can take the form of 'DNS spoofing', where a hacker gains access to the domain name servers (DNS) where a domain name is hosted in order to redirect visitors to a website of the hacker's choosing, or 'DNS hijacking', where a hacker can modify DNS data to gain control of the complete DNS information of the domain name.

Over 40% of '.nl' domain names are signed using DNSSEC. This represents 2,251,993 domain names. As a result of this, the '.nl' domain name space has more DNSSEC-signed domain names than any other TLD in the world.

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