


THE “INTERNATIONALIZATION” OF THE .AD DOMAIN NAME

The position of AUGÉ LEGAL FISCAL in the .ad domain name registration scene and its intent for presence is anything but coincidental.

The business and economic attractiveness of the Principality has led to an exponential evolution in e-commerce and the digital economy. The digital realm encompasses everything related to digital technologies and electronic media, including the Internet, websites, digital devices, software, applications, social networks, cybersecurity, e-commerce, digital education, and technological innovation. It is a highly dynamic world, constantly evolving, transforming the way we interact, work, learn, and entertain ourselves. Generally, the digital domain tends to transform human relations, primarily allowing rapid action and execution while ensuring some security. The development of domain names follows this dynamic.



It all began in the 1980s (1980-1989), when Paul Mockapetris developed the Domain Name System (DNS) as part of the Internet protocol. From 1985 onwards, the first domain names were registered, signaling a desire for expansion and commercialization. It was only from the year 2000 that the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) began approving new top-level domain extensions (TLDs) beyond the traditional .com, .net, and .org. A first wave of new TLDs such as .info, .biz, .name, .us, .es was launched, and finally, the .ad domain name began to be regulated in Andorra.

Domain names make it easier to remember and access websites and other online services without having to memorize long sequences of numbers. These digital addresses are subject to registration, renewal, and extinction, and thus fall under a specific legal regime. Following the entry into force of the Law on the Use of State Signs for the Use of ".ad" as an element of a domain name, dated September 13, 2000, as well as Law 42/2022 of December 1, on the digital economy, entrepreneurship, and innovation, which assigns various functions to the public company Andorra Telecom, SAU in the management of ".ad" domain names, the will and necessity to establish a new, more modern, secure, and efficient domain name registration system in the Principality have become apparent. This system aims to ensure legal security in the criteria for assigning .ad domain names, necessary for developing e-commerce and other electronic services, as well as the proactivity and flexibility required to respond to the demand for .ad domain name assignments, thus contributing to the development of the Principality's digital economy.

Decree 114/2024, dated March 20, 2024, which approves the Regulation on the Registration of ".ad" Domain Names, came into force on May 22, 2024, and has restructured the Andorran system to adapt it to the current situation.

The new Andorran regulation on ".ad" domain name registration is characterized by a temporal criterion and based on the type of rights held by ".ad" domain name applicants (in particular, an Andorran trademark or trade name): the system is governed by the provisions of Decree 113/2024, dated March 20, 2024, which approves the Transitional and Opening Regulation of ".ad" Domain Name Registration (which can be further developed in another article).

Within the framework of the ".ad" domain name registration process, the main actors are the registry operator (Andorra Telecom, SAU), responsible for the operation of the ".ad" domain name, as well as the validation and general control of registration requests. However, although Andorra Telecom, SAU, has the exclusive competence to accept or reject a ".ad" domain name registration request, it is not possible for the applicant to directly request the registration from the operator. The applicant, whether a natural or legal person, after accepting the General Registration Regulation (GRR), must obligatorily request the registration of a ".ad" domain name through an accredited registrar by the registry operator via a contractual relationship. Once the request is submitted by the accredited registrar to the registry operator and accepted, the applicant becomes the holder of the registered domain name.



Once registered, the ".ad" domain name has a duration of one to ten years and is automatically renewed each year through the accredited registrar, unless a deletion request is sent by the registrar. The new regulation also provides for a grace period to "recover" ".ad" domain names that have been deleted due to non-renewal.

This progressive territorial opening of the ".ad" domain name registration is an integral part of Andorra's digital presence, reflecting the country's identity on the international Internet scene. Although the registration process may be more rigorous than in other domains, this rigor ensures that ".ad" domains are authentically linked to Andorra. The continuous digitization and support for technological innovation indicate Andorra's commitment to a digital and connected future. However, the possibility for foreign registrars to apply for ".ad" domain names does not constitute an advantage as it does on the international scene for Andorran registrars.

Finally, it can be said that this dilemma regarding Andorra's opening on the international stage illustrates the current national issues concerning ".ad" domain names or other key topics of the national economy in general.



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