

Entering the post-Brexit domain

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In a recent statement, the European Commission has confirmed that institutions and individuals based in the UK will no longer be able to register domains using the .eu TLD, as of the UK's withdrawal date from the EU (which currently stands at 29th March 2019*). For those institutions or individuals who currently own such a domain, they will not be permitted to renew.

Plenty of larger brands, which may benefit from additional European bases of commerce and the ability to meet geographical requirements, will not lose their domains to this development. Small to medium sized brands, however, which cannot demonstrate such a base in one of the 27 remaining member states will stand to lose their domains. This presents an interesting situation, however, since there will almost certainly be parties waiting for the conclusion of the transition period, with countless snap backs in place, hoping to catch the .eu domains of brand owners who are no longer permitted to renew. Whilst there are domain dispute mechanisms which may assist these parties, these processes carry with them a further administrative and financial burden.

The company responsible for management and administration of the .eu TLD is EURID, who appear to have been caught unawares in much the same manner as the general public, as they received the communication with no prior warning or consultation. As a company based in an EU27 member state (Belgium), this lack of consultation or prior warning highlights the degree of uncertainty overseas, as well as the UK, due to the pending extrication of the UK from the EU.

This development is somewhat reminiscent of the doomsday scenario presented by the Commission at the tail end of 2017, whereby they highlighted possible ramifications for the UK leaving the EU with *no deal*. Certainly the negotiations governing the exit process, whilst involved and convoluted, are vital in order that the interests of brand owners both domestic and community based remain protected.

* at 11pm GMT, if you must know.