

Language games

A range of national domains are available in Russia, with disputes between IP owners and domain name administrators played out in the courts

Domain names are fast growing in popularity. At present, the following national domains are assigned to Russia:

- '.ru';
- the Cyrillic domain '.рф';
- '.su';
- the third-level domains '.com.ru', '.org.ru', '.net.ru' and '.pp.ru'; and
- 49 geographical domains, including '.msk.ru', '.spb.ru' and '.sochi.su'.

The most popular domains are '.ru' and '.рф'.

The '.ru' national domain was established in 1994. Over 3 million domain names are now functioning in this zone.

The Cyrillic '.рф' country-code top-level domain (ccTLD) began operating in 2011. About 30,000 Cyrillic '.рф' domain names have been registered and approximately 500,000 websites are expected to start operating in this new domain space. Email under the '.рф' domain is scheduled to begin in approximately one to two years.

The '.su' domain was created to establish a domain name space in the territory of the Soviet Union. The '.su' zone has been a moderate but stable segment of the Internet for 20 years, and domain names can still be registered there.

The Coordination Centre for the TLD '.ru' is the administrator of the national TLDs '.ru' and '.рф'. It has a mandate to develop terms and conditions for the registration of domain names in the ccTLDs '.ru' and '.рф', the accreditation of registrars and the development of Russian TLDs. The Foundation for Internet Development administers the '.su' ccTLD. The administrator of third-level domains, as well as geographical domains, is ZAO Regional Network Information Centre (RU-CENTRE). There are 26 accredited registrars operating in the Russian segment of the Internet.

The rules for domain name registration are flexible. Natural persons are allowed to register domain names and there is no prohibition against registration by non-residents.

The registrant itself defines the rules and procedures for using the domain names. It is responsible for the choice of domain name and for the possible violation of third-party rights in connection with the choice and use of a domain name. It is also liable for the costs of such violations.

An application for the registration of a Russian domain name should meet the following requirements:

- Domain names must not contain words that are inconsistent with public interest, principles of humanity and public morals (in particular, obscenities and appeals of a violent nature that offend human dignity or religious feelings).
- Domain names should end in '.ru' or '.рф' characters.
- Domain names preceding part of a domain name must contain between two and 63 characters, beginning with and ending in a character from the Latin alphabet or a digit; letters, digits and hyphens may be used in other positions in between; and hyphens cannot be specified in the third and fourth positions simultaneously.
- Cyrillic domain names must begin and end with a Cyrillic letter or number. Intermediate characters may be Cyrillic characters, numbers or a hyphen; Cyrillic symbols allow UTF-8 characters from 'а' (Code 0430) to 'я' (Code 044F) and an auxiliary character 'ё' (Code 0451).

The registrar is entitled to reject an application for registration of a domain name if:

- the domain name does not meet the registration criteria;
- the information provided is not confirmed by the registrant and/or additional information is not provided within the term specified by the corresponding registrar in the respective request; or
- there is any doubt as to whether the registration of a domain is possible.

The domain space currently lacks special legal regulation. Neither Russian law nor subordinate acts in force in Russia define the legal status of domains, their methods of use or their protection.

Neither the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy nor any similar procedure applies to Russian domain names. Disputes between owners and domain name administrators are considered by the courts to be governed by the general rules of jurisdiction.

New gTLDs in Russia

On June 20 2011 the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) approved a new order for the creation of generic top-level domains (gTLDs). The new rules introduced a new regime for the registration of top-level domains by legal entities. The first stage for the acceptance of applications by ICANN runs from January 12 2012 until April 12 2012.

TLDs take the highest position in the hierarchy of domains after the root domain. TLDs may be recorded in either Latin or non-Latin symbols (Cyrillic in Russia).

In the near future, legal persons only will be entitled to submit an application for a new gTLD. ICANN is not planning to accept applications from natural persons or private entrepreneurs for the present. A company with its own gTLD may avail of the

opportunity to develop the relevant address space on the Internet in order to present information about its products or services. TLDs make it possible to create addresses such as 'goods.yourbrand' or 'service.yourbrand' in Latin and Cyrillic letters, which will be unambiguously associated with a specific company. Cities and regions may use gTLDs corresponding to their names for the development of tourist services.

The costs of creating and supporting a gTLD include a payment of \$185,000 to ICANN for consideration of the new gTLD application, as well as annual payments of \$25,000. The costs also include the expenses of technical and administrative support for the corresponding gTLD.

It is expected that all applications for recording a new gTLD will be published before the end of April 2012.

According to the general director of RU-CENTRE, Alexey Panov: "We are doing everything possible to be among the first applications were approved by ICANN and our application domains 'moscow' and 'москва' (Moscow in Cyrillic). Creating a metropolitan domain - this is a pilot project implemented in partnership with leading international experts, and giving the green light to the emergence of Russian geographical and commercial top-level domains."

According to the Coordination Centre for the ccTLD '.ru': "On March 5 2011 the Skolkovo Foundation (so-called the Russian Silicon valley), dispatched a letter to ICANN wherein it expressed its intension to register gTLD '.skolkovo'. Mr Rod Beckstrom, the ICANN CEO noted the Russian business community's keen interest in the new gTLD implementation programme, which provides for registration of new domain zones. While this programme has not yet been approved by the ICANN, Rod Beckstrom expressed confidence that the decision regarding this programme will be taken in the near future."

Taking into consideration the success of the new Cyrillic domain '.рф', it is possible to conclude that the ICANN initiative in respect of new gTLDs will be successful in Russia. [WTR](#)



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