

News Release

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EURid APPOINTS PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS TO TAKE ON ROLE AS VALIDATION AGENT FOR .eu TOP LEVEL DOMAIN

Today, EURid, the not-for-profit organisation appointed by the European Commission to manage the .eu Top Level Domain (TLD), has awarded a high-profile assignment to PricewaterhouseCoopers Belgium, involving the validation of “prior right” claims invoked by domain name applicants during the so called “Sunrise Period” at the launch of .eu.

The creation of the .eu TLD is seen as an important step in accelerating electronic commerce in Europe, the promotion of the European identity and creating higher visibility of the internal market.

In order to protect those with rights to a name and to prevent abusive registrations by cybersquatters, EURid will launch .eu with a period of phased registration or “sunrise”. During this 4-month period, only public bodies and holders of rights, such as trademarks and company names, will be entitled to register the corresponding name in the .eu TLD. After the sunrise period, general registrations will begin on a first-come-first-served basis.

“Offering holders of prior rights a genuine opportunity to protect their names is an essential step to building trust in the electronic market place and in particular the .eu TLD.” says EURid General Manager, Marc Van Wesemael. “In order to minimise abusive registrations and avoid disputes over names, it is essential to have robust sunrise procedures and a reputable body with the appropriate expertise to verify the rights claimed”.

Today, EURid has signed an agreement with PwC Belgium, who will take up the ambitious role to validate the documentary evidence to be provided by domain name applicants during the Sunrise Period.

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Says Dirk Vermussche, partner with PwC: "The appointment of PwC to validate the prior rights claimed by domain name applicants is a confirmation of the recognition of our knowledge and expertise in the field of intellectual property rights, processing efficiency, project management skills, risk management, as well as the truly impressive nature of our EU-wide network."

Bart Lieben, legal counsel with PwC adds: "At this stage, EURid and PricewaterhouseCoopers are working closely together in finalising the rules and procedures which will apply during the Sunrise Period. These rules and procedures will be finally adopted following consultation with interested stakeholders, which is to be held in the months to come, followed by the approval of the European Commission."

"As from the launch of the Sunrise Period, an expert team drawn from all 25 EU countries will commence validating the documentary evidence provided by the domain name applicants in accordance with these rules. Furthermore, PwC will deploy a state-of-the-art technological infrastructure which will be able to support our mission as validation agent for EURid."

The actual validation of prior rights by applicants will start shortly after the launch of the .eu Top Level Domain, which is expected before the end of 2005.

Important remark: As all rules and procedures are not yet finalised and the Sunrise Period has not been launched, neither EURid, nor PwC will accept, archive or validate any alleged documentary evidence of prior rights for the time being.

More information can be found on the launch of the .eu Top Level Domain can be found on the web site of EURid: <http://www.eurid.org>; further information on the appointment of PwC and its role as validation agent can be found at <http://www.validation.pwc.be>. E-mail: validation@pwc.be.

Notes to editors

1. EURid is the not-for-profit body selected by the European Commission to operate the .eu top level domain registry. It is a collaboration between the Belgian, Italian and Swedish country code top level domain registries who are the founding members of the organisation. Registry expertise is further enhanced by the membership of the Slovenian and Czech registries. Further information about EURid can be found on their web site at: <http://www.eurid.org>;
2. PricewaterhouseCoopers (<http://www.pwc.com>) provides industry-focused assurance, tax and advisory services for public and private clients. More than 120,000 people in 144 countries connect their thinking, experience and solutions to build public trust and enhance value for clients and their stakeholders.

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