.eu Illustrated

POWERED BY **EURid**

## Fostering a safer online space and supporting SMEs

In this edition of .eu Illustrated, we bring you the latest on EURid's innovations and ongoing commitment to excellence. This year, we've rolled out three transformative services—Webclass, Help Centre, and EURidity—advancing our efforts to improve registry compliance and data quality in order to address domain name abuse.

We also explore why a .eu domain is a must-have for European businesses and share key tips on protecting your brand with a trademark. With the holiday season just around the corner, discover wonderful gift ideas from .eu users across Europe to inspire your creativity.
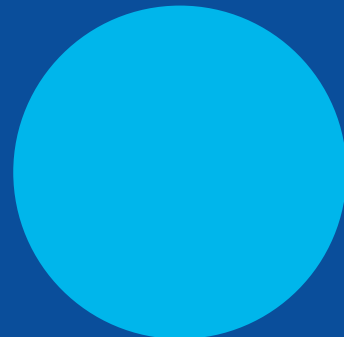
Enjoy the read!

Reelika Kirna
Communications Manager
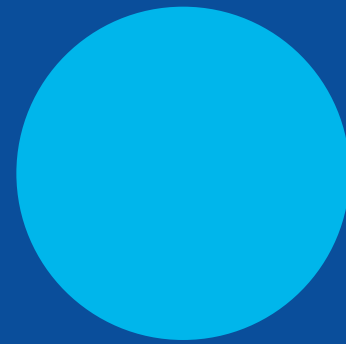
EURid unveils new solutions to strengthen .eu domain name security

By Alastair Gill

This year EURid launched three innovative new services, **WebClass**, **Help Centre** and **EURidity**, taking another huge step towards meeting its contractual obligations and ensuring registrar compliance, while enhancing the quality of the data at our disposal in the fight against domain name abuse. Read on to find out how these platforms uphold our caommitment to high standards in domain registration and management, as well as customer support.

WebClass

WebClass is a web crawler that uses machine learning to classify web pages in any European language into different predefined classes quickly and accurately. It analyses .eu websites containing rich content (functional content as opposed to default parking pages, pay-per-click, etc.) and automatically classifies them into DIT (Domain Industry Taxonomy) categories based on the kind of economic activity the webpage is engaged in, i.e. Transportation, Education, Health, etc. This type of categorisation is based on standard industry classifications as agreed upon by different European ccTLDs.

"**Based on the content of the web page, the system gives you the probability of that web page belonging to each one of the classes**", explains Jordi Iparraguirre, EURid's Innovation Manager. "Then we use the first and the second most relevant classes to try to get a view of how people are using the .eu domain name".

The .eu registry traditionally relied on manual processing when it came to web categorisation. **WebClass, however, gives EURid an automated solution that is more cost-effective, consistent and efficient, and has proven itself in testing against humans.**

"We saw that the results were valid. We were much faster and didn't depend on how tired people were", says Iparraguirre, whose team has been working on the project on and off for about six years.

Initially released as a prototype in 2019, WebClass has undergone continuous improvement. Testing has shown it is now 10% more accurate on average than human classifiers – a real improvement in performance. This allows EURid to gain a better understanding of how the .eu domain is used and provides valuable business intelligence we can share with our partners.

"This data also offers our registrars valuable insights into how domain names are being used, allowing them to tailor their marketing activities to effectively target specific markets across different countries"

**Jordi Iparraguirre,
Innovation Manager**

Beyond its basic categorisation capabilities, WebClass is a data gathering tool that can be used to analyse registrants and the type or language of the websites that are registered by that particular domain name holder. And as Iparraguirre explains, that is just the beginning of the possibilities the tool offers, including potentially opening it up for use by other TLDs.

WebClass is a valuable addition to EURid's toolbox and demonstrates the organisation's commitment to developing cutting-edge technology to create innovative solutions that enhance the value of the .eu domain for users and businesses alike.

Help Centre

Designed to provide a more organised and efficient support experience, this new platform includes answers to questions on registering a .eu domain name, validating registration data, and resolving general issues with your domain name.

"It's an external-facing page where end users can find the answers to their queries and fill in a request form if they still have questions",

explains Asta Mineike, EURid's Support and Operations Manager. "We want customers to visit our website and the Help Centre to find answers on their own".

In recent years, we switched our backend support handling to the Zendesk Support platform to consolidate our efforts and provide all our customers with an efficient and responsive service. Launching the Help Centre page was the next step in making this transition externally visible and accessible.

The new platform also offers the ability to integrate additional functionalities, such as a seamlessly embedded chat service for registrars that makes it easier to follow up on inquiries via email. "Zendesk Support allows us to be more efficient and provides a better overview of the tickets", says Mineike. "The addition of statistics and reporting tools is particularly valuable, as this wasn't easily accessible in our previous system".

The Help Centre offers a range of articles designed to address common concerns, with the enhanced search functionality making it even easier to find relevant information – users can explore FAQs in all official European languages. If a customer still can't find what they need, they can fill out a predefined request form to get personalised assistance.

Early data is promising. The general number of requests submitted decreased in the month following the launch of the Help Centre, while statistics show that users are clicking through to the articles to find the answers they're looking for. "More and more of the requests we do get are coming in using this request form", says Mineike.

"Now we can see what our customers are searching for, the Help Centre gives us much more data that could be used to improve the information we provide", she adds. **"This is a project for next year – to focus on analysing the usage of the Help Centre to identify recurring support tickets that could be turned into an FAQ. We'll also explore the potential for adding a chatbot and other improvements to enhance user experience and support efficiency"**

**Asta Mineike,
Support and Operations Manager**

EURidity

In June, EURid launched the EURidity system, taking a major step toward meeting contractual obligations, improving registrar compliance, and enhancing the quality of data available in the fight against domain name abuse.

Designed to streamline domain name verification and suspension, the automated system minimises the risk of withdrawing legitimate domain names without sufficient proof. **It also features Know Your Customer (KYC) validation to strengthen security and complianc**e. EURidity is directly linked to APEWS (Abuse Prevention Early Warning System), EURid's in-house threat intelligence feed.

"It's an assembly line we built to handle very large volumes in the future, reducing human error, a common bottleneck in any process, while helping law enforcement track down cybercriminals. Together, these elements make the .eu domain zone a safer place to be" says Business Operations Manager Hans Seeuws.

Every day, EURidity automatically processes a list of domain names flagged by APEWS as potentially suspicious, prioritising each case for investigation. The system includes a wide range of adjustable parameters to maintain control over the workflow and limit human error.

In 2023, over 37,000 domain names were flagged as suspicious. By mid-2024, this figure had already reached 34,000 – an increase of almost 90%. In 2023, 27,000 domain names were withdrawn following unsuccessful identity verification requests, indicating that most flagged domain names were indeed suspicious.

"This process in the past relied heavily on manual clicks by our team, which worked for a few hundred cases monthly, but in 2023, we started over 13,000 validations – that's more than a thousand per month – leading to nearly 25,000 domain suspensions, as some domain holders have multiple domains"

Hans Seeuws,
Business Operations Manager

The increased workload – partially due to EURid's improved systems – necessitated a solution to reduce manual work. The stricter requirements introduced with NIS2 in October also made it essential for EURid to enhance its anti-abuse capabilities. With no suitable solutions on the market, EURid decided to build EURidity in-house.

"We built EURidity over nearly two years, knowing NIS2 was coming and recognising the limitations in our current system", says Seeuws. "We aimed to design a scalable system to handle increasing cases efficiently".

Previously, verification agents flagged domain names and took appropriate actions manually, risking backlogs if an agent was unavailable. EURidity now automates verification but retains a manual review option. "Verifying every case manually is time-consuming", explains Seeuws, "so we needed a streamlined process that begins from the moment a domain is flagged, leading to an identity verification request sent to the domain holder".

APEWS uses AI to flag suspicious domains at registration before they go live, preventing cybercriminals from attaching a name server or mailbox to a non-functioning domain. EURidity provides an extra security layer in cases where a domain goes live before detection, with all EURidity data feeding back into APEWS to continuously improve detection.

EURidity also integrates with EURid's support platform, allowing domain holders to address support questions on the my.eurid.eu platform during verification. This ensures prompt issue resolution, benefiting both registrars and domain holders, while providing EURid with detailed insights on support trends.

Looking ahead, EURid may link EURidity to other trusted sources, such as managed service providers (MSPs), to enhance intelligence-sharing capabilities. "The more sources we connect, the better – provided they're trusted"

Hans Seeuws,
Business Operations Manager
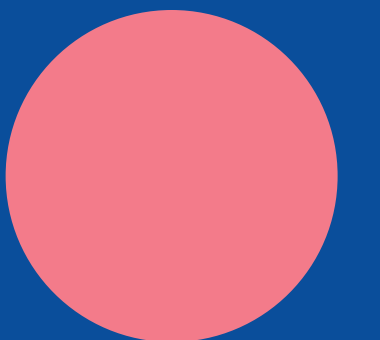
Why a .eu domain name is the key to European expansion

For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), expanding into new markets can be a daunting challenge. A .eu domain, however, provides a powerful solution for establishing a credible and unified online presence across Europe. With its pan-European appeal and reputation for trustworthiness, a .eu domain enables SMEs to reach diverse customers, enhance brand recognition, and improve online visibility.

What makes .eu unique is its ability to transcend national boundaries, offering businesses a single, Europe-wide domain name that resonates with customers across the continent. It symbolizes reliability and shared European values, making it an ideal choice for SMEs looking to grow beyond their home markets. From local startups to established businesses, the .eu domain is increasingly becoming the go-to option for companies aiming to expand and thrive across Europe.

In today's digital world, having a strong online presence is essential as more consumers rely on the internet to compare products and make purchasing decisions. At .eu, we're here to help your business stand out with these valuable insights.

6 essential tips to help you reach your customers online:

1 Keep it simple

A cluttered website can overwhelm visitors. Ensure your site is **easy to navigate** with minimal clicks to access key information. Aim for clear, intuitive design that reflects your customers' needs, using familiar language and terms.

2 Optimize for search

Incorporate **relevant keywords** and your branding into your domain and homepage to **boost search engine visibility.** With .eu, many domain names are still available, making it a fresh, modern choice for your online identity.

3 Mind your language

Tailor your language to your audience. Use your native language if you're targeting a local market or consider multilingual options for broader reach. With .eu and its Cyrillic (.ею) and Greek (.ευ) counterparts, you can appeal to customers in their preferred language across Europe.

4 Focus your efforts

Rather than trying to be active on all social platforms, identify where your customers are most engaged. Whether it's Instagram, Facebook, or YouTube, **select the platforms that best suit your business goals.**

5 Engage visitors

Invite interaction on your website through reviews, comments, or a blog. **Building a two-way conversation** fosters customer loyalty and provides valuable feedback for your business.

6 Make your website the hub

Centralize your communication by making your website the focal point of all marketing efforts. Ensure it aligns with your offline campaigns and use analytics to track traffic and optimize user experience.
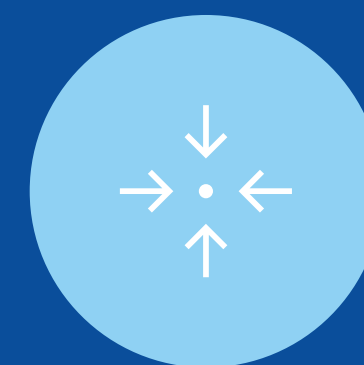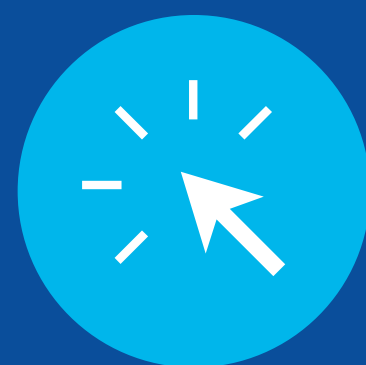
Collaboration with the EUIPO to support European SMEs in protecting their Intellectual Property

EURid is working closely with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and is part of the Ideas Powered for Business network and its working groups, dedicated to assisting European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in safeguarding their intellectual property (IP). The Ideas Powered for business network aims to empower EU startups and SMEs by helping them access centralised, clear, relevant and reliable information about IP during their business journey. It also promotes the importance of IP rights in protecting and enforcing their competitive advantage. By collaborating with the EUIPO and with the Ideas Powered for business network on initiatives like domain name and trademark protection, EURid is helping businesses understand the importance of securing their online presence and strengthening their brand.

Choosing the right Intellectual Property Protection

For businesses navigating the digital space, selecting the appropriate IP protection is essential. EURid offers tools and guidance to help you understand the connection between domain names and trademarks, ensuring your business stays secure and compliant. By aligning your domain name with trademark availability, you can protect both your online identity and your business activities.

European Trademark availability check

Through EURid's WHOIS search, you can verify whether a European trademark with the same name as your desired domain is already registered. If the trademark is available, a direct link will take you to the EUIPO's registration page, allowing you to proceed with trademark registration and protection. If the trademark is already taken, the tool provides access to information about the trademark holder and registration details.

This feature helps you make informed decisions about branding, ensuring your domain name stands out and complies with legal standards, protecting your business's identity and reputation in the process.

Notifications to
European Trademark Holders

EURid has implemented a notification system that alerts European trademark holders when a .eu domain name is registered that matches their existing trademark. EUIPO sends these alerts to holders or applicants who have enabled this feature in their accounts, allowing them to act swiftly against potential trademark infringements. This system is vital in protecting the integrity of intellectual property rights in the digital landscape.

To learn more about *Ideas Powered for Business* and its IP support services, trainings, tools and funding opportunities for SMEs, please visit **their website** and check out the dedicated **LinkedIn** and **X** accounts.

Why Intellectual Property Protection is crucial

Intellectual property refers to human creations – everything from artwork and inventions to computer programs and commercial signs. In today's digital age, protecting your intellectual property is vital to safeguard your business against unauthorized use or copying of your unique ideas, products, or services. IP can also be a source of direct income through IP owners selling or licensing their IP rights, as well as providing additional business advantages, such as improving the likelihood of a startup receiving funding or investment. The SME Fund offers financial assistance to help SMEs secure their intellectual property, offering grants for various IP-related activities.

Who can Benefit

The SME Fund is available to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) based in the European Union. Applications can be submitted by the business owner, an employee, or an authorized representative. Grants are provided in the form of vouchers, which can be used to claim reimbursements, transferred directly to the SME's bank account.

Available Grants and Services

The SME Fund offers four types of vouchers that can be used to reimburse costs related to trademark, design, patent, and plant variety applications, as well as IP Scan services. SMEs can save up to 75% on IP rights applications and up to 90% on IP Scan services, depending on their location.

Holiday gift ideas

As the holiday season approaches, we'd love to share few fantastic gift ideas for your family, friends and colleagues - brought to you by companies using the .eu extension!

greengiving.eu – Ecofriendly gifts

With more than a decade of experience Greengiving from Netherlands is of Europe's leading promotional green gift suppliers, specializing in eco-friendly business gifts which literally brings the best of nature to their customer's doorstep, whilst simultaneously planting the seeds for a better, cleaner, corporate future.

greengiving.eu

seses.eu – Leather products

Founded by two sisters in 2012, Seses is a Lithuanian brand that offers genuine leather bags, backpacks, wallets, and other accessories. Their goal is to create fashionable, high quality products that make women feel beautiful each and every day.

seses.eu

Bajo.eu – Wooden toys

BAJO is a family-based Polish design and manufacturing company founded in 1993 by Wojciech Bajor, an architect and set designer. The factory – located at the foot of the Polish Carpathian Mountains – introduces sustainable solutions to the toy creation process.

bajo.eu

That's a wrap
for this edition,
thank you for reading!

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