

MARQUES is the European Association of Trade Mark Owners, representing the interests of intellectual property owners and the communities that identify with and trust their marks across a region that has over 600 million inhabitants.

MARQUES members feature over 750 trade mark professionals. The goal of the Association is to assist brand owners in the management of their trade marks and to provide an effective platform for the representation of their interests.

MARQUES members spend many hours dealing with domain name matters. MARQUES has estimated that its members together own upwards of 3 million domain names.

For further information, please see www.marques.org.

MARQUES supports Nominet's initiative to release two letter, one character and other reserved .uk domain names.

MARQUES policy is to restrict its comments to intellectual property issues rather than registry policy. Therefore we would like to limit our comments to the following points:

There are significant numbers of European trade mark owners with short trade marks who would welcome the release of two letter and one character domains provided the release is handled in a controlled, careful manner. As Nominet has perhaps the highest reputation in the ccTLD world for the management of IP related issues, then MARQUES trusts Nominet to exercise its customary judgement and to balance the needs of trade mark owners and the consumers that depend on these trade marks – meaning internet users across the UK and elsewhere – against the wishes of some in the registrar community who want to be able to exploit a valuable property.

We believe that the controlled release of short domain names should feature a priority registration period for trade mark owners whose applications are validated to ensure that they are based on current, registered trade marks whose date of grant pre-dates the opening of discussions within Nominet on this topic. We recommend that priority is given to the owners of UK trade marks and European Community Trade Marks equally.

If there are multiple, competing applications for a domain from eligible trade mark owners that have passed validation, then we accept that an auction is a fair means of allocation. We prefer a sealed bid auction with the prices paid being kept confidential. We believe that domains allocated in this way should have a bar placed on their sale or transfer for at least three years unless the express consent of Nominet is obtained in order to deter speculation.

Nick Wood
Chair, MARQUES CyberSpace Team