

.eu – Do you get the point?

By Viviane Reding

Twelve yellow stars forming a circle on a blue background - the European flag is a symbol well known throughout the world. Under this banner European businesses and citizens profit from a wide range of benefits – from the single European market and hassle-free international travel to EU-wide access to health benefits. As of December 7, Europeans have another European symbol representing them on the world wide web: .eu – your European meeting point!

We all know that email and internet communication traffic have long ago overtaken traditional print communication. Every day, millions of emails are written and tens of thousands of websites created. In this era of digital communication, the EU decided, at its Lisbon summit in 2000, to launch the new, European Top Level Domain (TLD) “.eu”. As European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, I am proud that this political promise has become a reality.

The advantages of switching on to “.eu” – especially for businesses – are obvious: first, “.eu” gives businesses a visible European identity and extends their marketing reach to more of Europe’s 450 million citizens. Any business, whether a flower shop in the Netherlands, a chocolate producer in Belgium or a party goods manufacturer in the Czech Republic can use a “.eu” domain name to show potential customers immediately that they can deliver their products all over Europe. A “.eu” address identifies your company as “European” in outlook, with international ambitions.

“.eu” is also – particularly for smaller businesses and citizens – a golden opportunity to smarten up their web presence with a shorter, more attractive web and email address. On the individual level, take the example of a John Smith from the UK, who may well have found that “.uk” and “.com” addresses using variants of his name are already taken. John will now have another opportunity to register a web or email address that is easy to read and to remember, such as www.john-smith.eu or www.jsmith.eu.

Legal certainty is yet another reason for switching on to “.eu”: the new European TLD gives greater certainty as to the law, since everybody registered with a “.eu” domain name will exchange information, or trade goods and services, under European standards of protection and the jurisdiction of European courts. This includes the privacy and the protection of personal data. The result: a safer place in cyberspace!

I want to stress that the “.eu” TLD will not replace the existing national country code TLDs in the EU – such as “.uk”, “.fr” or “.de”, but will complement them. Worldwide, “.eu” will be the EU’s new counterpart to the US-managed TLDs, such as “.com” and “.org”. And it will come at very competitive rates, since EURid, the body responsible for managing “.eu”, must by law remain a non-profit organisation.

Registration of a “.eu” domain name will be possible through one of the accredited registrars. A list of the registrars in all European countries can be found on the EURid web site: www.eurid.eu. Registration is taking place in two phases: from 7 December 2005 until 6 April 2006, the so-called “sunrise period” first allows owners of “prior rights”, such as trademark holders and public bodies, to register their names as domain names. The purpose of the “sunrise period” is to prevent so-called “cybersquatters”, from speculatively registering others’ names and trademarks and then trying to sell them to the right holder for a profit. This precautionary measure has been widely welcomed. As of 7 April 2006, registration will be open to the wider public.

I am convinced that “.eu” will be a world success and will soon be widely used by businesses and citizens alike, to express their European outlook or market presence.

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The European Commission’s “.eu” Website can be found at:
http://europa.eu.int/information_society/policy/doteu/index_en.htm

A “.eu” factsheet can be downloaded at:
http://europa.eu.int/information_society/policy/doteu/doc/017-doteu-sunrise.pdf

Registration will be possible with the officially accredited registrars. A list can be found at:
<http://list.eurid.eu/registrars/ListRegistrars.htm?lang=en>

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