

## Managing Top Level Domain Names and Countries' Branding on the Internet

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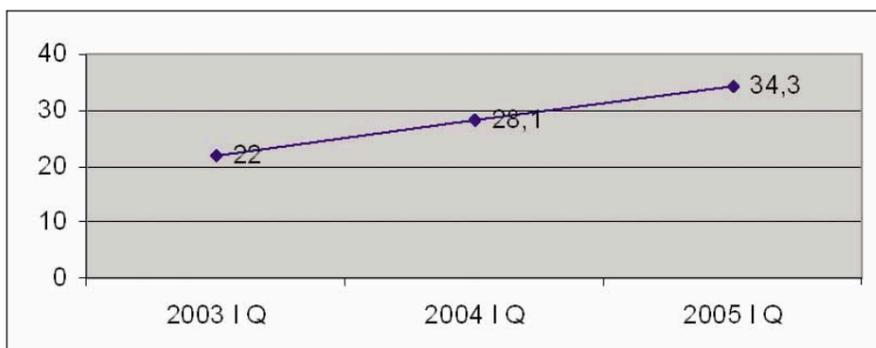
*Global use of the Internet is constantly increasing, because the Internet is one of the fundamental infrastructures of the world. Until the very end of the 1990s, however, most of the world's governments more or less ignored the Internet, including the management of their country's top level domain.*

Wolfgang Kleinwächter, professor for international communications policy and regulation at the University of Aarhus in Denmark, says that the global Internet system grew up under the shadow of inter-governmental policy. He argues that when governments talked about the subject of the "New World Information and Communication Order" at UNESCO, no one mentioned the Internet at all. When the European Commission published a "White Book" on employment and economic development in 1993, the word "Internet" did not appear anywhere in the report's 250 pages.<sup>1</sup> The issue first appeared on an agenda in 1994, when the European Commission initiated its new Information Society Programme. Governance of the Internet since then has become a very controversial issue, and it is discussed by various stakeholders all over the world.

Internet governance was considered by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at Tunis in November 2005. World leaders discussed various aspects of the Information Society, but no final solutions were determined. A document was approved in accordance with a joint agreement, and it says that Internet management must be based on the closest possible co-operation among countries that are involved. A univer-

sal policy of Internet management must involve oversight and co-ordination of critical Internet resources. The model for co-operation in this field should be created by the end of Q1 2006.

An Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is another tool which makes it possible for countries to deal with issues such as the internationalisation of Internet governance. The first inaugural Internet Governance Forum will be organised this year in Athens. The Tunis documents did not focus on how the processes are to be implemented, and the first consultations, which took place in February, showed that lengthy negotiations can be expected with respect to internationalisation of Internet management and to organisational issues related to the IGF.



*Figure 1. Dynamic of Internet usage in Lithuania (2003-2005)*  
Source: Department of Statistics

Lithuania is also going to have to set up a commission to co-ordinate the various aspects of Internet governance, because the sector of E-communications is developing so rapidly that there is a need to ensure the effective use of the Internet as a fundamental tool for the development of the Information Society and for the most effective co-ordination of solutions for various aspects of Internet governance. Similar structures exist in other countries already, and their aim is to improve the co-ordination of issues concerning Internet development and governance.

### REGISTRATION OF TOP LEVEL DOMAIN NAMES

Lithuania's Statistics Department says that at this point, 34.3% of the country's residents in the 16-74 age group used the Internet in 2005 (up from 29% in 2004). This is behind the EU average, but Lithuanians have for some time been buying PCs with the necessary software for Internet communications. This allows us to assume that the number of Internet users will continue to expand. And now, according to Lithuanian media survey company TNS Gallup, 37% of population used the Internet in winter of 2005-2006.

Positive developments in Internet use in Lithuania can be seen in the number of Top Level Domain names in the country. The level is quite high when judged in

the context of the countries that have been registered in the .lt zone. A rapid increase in the number of these domain names has been seen since 2003. The administrator of .lt Internet domain, the Institute of Information Technology Development at Kaunas Technological University, and it reports that 100,000 domain names were registered in 2006 (as opposed to 50,000 in 2005). Over the last year, the number of domain names registered in the .lt zone has doubled. This means that companies, organisations and individuals better understand the benefits and opportunities of the Internet. In future, we can expect a very promising project, even more rapid in growth rate.

At the worldwide level, there are 85.6 million Top Level Domain names that were registered in 2005. Verisign says that there is a rapid growth in terms of domain names that are registered. The largest share of names is in the .com zone. Next on the list are German-registered domain names (.de). Other countries that are in the top four places – Britain, France, and the UK. Domain names (.uk) are also registered.

Increases in the number of Top Level Domain names in Lithuania are at a level of 25% per year. It is important to note that the number of registered domain names in countries such as the UK, Argentina, the Netherlands, Italy, the United States, Brazil, Japan and South Korea is 43% of these names. Germany and the US are also high.

### A COUNTRY'S BRAND ON THE INTERNET

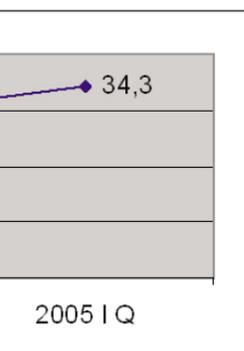
One problem in Internet governance at this time is the branding of a country's name on the Internet. Top Level Domain names are administered, and opinions differ as to whether registration of such names should be administered, and whether it is worth looking at whether such

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the context of the domain names that have been registered in the .lt zone. A rapid increase in the number of these domain names has been seen since 2003. The administrator of .lt Internet addresses is the Institute of Information Technology Development at Kaunas Technological University, and it reports that 31,116 domain names were registered in March 2006 (as opposed to 25,500 in 2005). Over the last several years, the number domain names registered in the .lt zone has nearly doubled. This means that companies, organisations and local residents better understand the benefits and opportunities of the Internet. In future, various highly promising projects will cause an even more rapid increase in the rate.

At the worldwide level, there are 85.6 million Top Level Domain names that were registered in 2005. Verisign says that annual growth in terms of the domain names that are registered has achieved a level of 29%. The largest share of names is in the .com zone. Next on the list are German-registered Top Level Domain names (.de), then those that are in the .net zone, and in fourth place – British Top Level Domain names (.uk).

Increases in the number of Top Level Domain names have been at a level of 25% per year or so. It is important to note that 70% of all registered domain names are in countries such as Germany, the UK, Argentina, the Netherlands, Italy, the United States, China, Brazil, Japan and Switzerland. 43% of these names are found in Germany and the UK alone.

**A COUNTRY'S BRANDING ON THE INTERNET**

One problem in Internet governance at this time is the branding of a country's name in the general Top Level Domain field (gTLD). Opinions differ as to how the registration of such names should be administered, and specialists are looking at whether steps should be

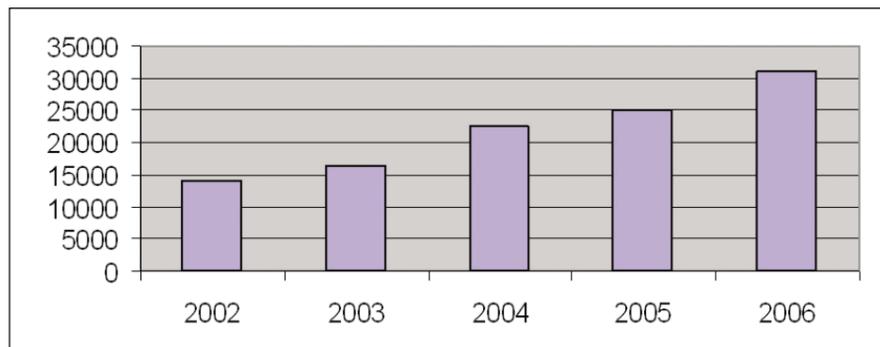


Figure 2. The dynamic of domain name registration in .lt  
 Source: Institute of Information Technology Development, Kaunas Technological University

taken to return purchased names. The *Sunday Times*, a newspaper in South Africa, has launched a petition in support of the government's attempt to recover the southafrica.com name from a private company in Seattle that is called Virtual Countries, Inc. South Africa's director general for communications, Andile Ngcaba, has said that Virtual Countries, which is run by an American lawyer called Greg Paley, wants between USD 5 and 10 million for the name. Virtual Countries controls

more than 30 Internet domain names, including the .com domain names of Belgium, Russia, Scotland, Sweden, Turkey and Ukraine. It used to own the .com names for Korea, Switzerland and New Zealand. The government of the latter country reportedly paid USD 1 million for the name after an abortive attempt to challenge the registration under the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy. The debate goes on.<sup>2</sup>

Generic Top Level Domain names such as .com, .biz, .info,

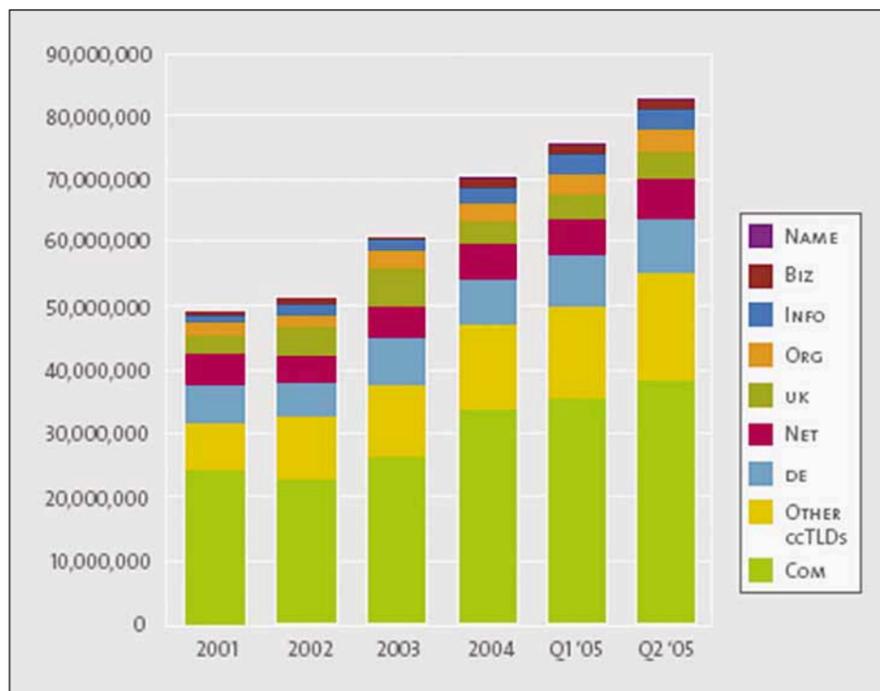


Figure 3. Total Domain Name Registrations  
 Source: Zooknic, October 2005, VeriSign, October 2005

.net and .org play an important role in country branding on the Internet. The names for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the .com, .biz, .info, .net and .org zones are owned privately, and these companies undertake no responsibility for information that is posted on Web sites with the names of these countries.

On the other hand, there are plenty of registered domain names in which the word "Lithuania" appears – 104 versions in all. The price for such a domain name ranges from tens to thousands of US dollars. The names of Latvia and Estonia are less popular – 88 and 79 domain names respectively.

If a country seeks to create a good image for itself in the E-environment, then the content of information provided on relevant homepages is quite important. An Internet address can essentially facilitate access to information resources, but the fact is that Web sites with no serious content will not receive too many visitors. Particular attention, therefore, must be focused on the content of the Web site.

### LITHUANIAN TOURIST INFORMATION

The Lithuanian government's Information Society Development Committee has conducted a study to find out the kind of information about Lithuania on the Internet that was the most popular in 2005. TNS Gallup and a private company called NS Technologijos found that tourist information about Lithuania is the most popular in search engines. The history of the country also attracts significant attention. The study focused on three major search engines – Google, Yahoo and MSN. The search was for terms such as Lithuania, hotel Lithuania, history Lithuania, flights to Lithuania, Vilnius Lithuania, map of Lithuania, capital of Lithuania, pictures of Lithuania, and Lithuania flag. Information about how frequent are searches focused on these keywords

When there is a search for concepts such as Lithuania weather, Lithuania adoption and Lithuania news, most of the Web sites that are determined are foreign in origin. Web sites in Lithuania itself tend to be sufficiently specific and informational, but they do not appear at the top of the list in most search systems.

When there is an information search in accordance with the criterion "towns", the Web sites of various towns and cities are found, as are informational foreign Web sites with information about Lithuania. The Web sites of travel agencies appear when the search is for the word "tourism". There are lots of Web sites with a great deal of information. Most of these are the Web sites of specific travel agencies, airports and hotels. Researchers found, however, that there was a shortage of systematised information.

The research found that it is very easy to find information about Lithuania's national flag. Various foreign Web sites offer information and a chance to buy a flag. No Lithuanian Web site is among the 30 most popular sites in this regard, and those that are available involve private attempts to provide information.

The research helped us to understand that there is a lack of informational Web sites about Lithuania, its culture, history, tourism, etc. Much of the information that is presented is exclusively in Lithuanian, and that is an obstacle for plenty of people who would like to know more about the country.

### IMPROVING THE COUNTRY'S IMAGE

Lithuania's government is preparing a new programme aimed at improving Lithuania's image on the Internet and better co-ordination of information about the country that is provided on the Web. This suggests that the government sees the Internet as important not only in terms of economic development, but also of

a chance to distribute information. Like similar countries, Lithuania finds it hard to attract the global society's ongoing attention, and appropriate measures are needed. Objective information about various aspects of the country and its activities, its values, its interests, and its domestic and foreign policy trends must be presented. Lithuania's informational forces must focus on the analysis, drafting and distribution of information that is important for the country. The world must see Lithuania as a modern country which has preserved and which seeks to promote its national traditions and unique culture.

All of this information must be made available on the Internet, because it offers the most effective means for presenting actual and specific information. It is also easily accessed from any place in the world. Creating a good image for a country in the E-environment, in other words, requires consideration on expanding the availability of information which, although increasing, is still restricted by the relatively small number of Web sites. The shortage of high-quality and complete information is another problem.

Given that it is not easy for Lithuania to compete in the E-environment in terms of how much information is presented, the fact is that we must focus on increasing the quality of electronic content in the world. A general programme of steps to be taken by the state must be instituted so as to ensure the implementation of various measures related to the distribution of country-based information, content and Internet governance. □

<sup>1</sup> Kleinwächter, W. "Beyond ICANN vs. ITU: How WSIS Tries to Enter the New Territory of Internet Governance," 2004.

<sup>2</sup> "Who Rules the Internet? Understanding ICANN", Panos Media Toolkit on ICTs, No. 1, 2005.

## Creating WiFi Areas

Veljo Haamer, *WiFi.ee*

Rain Rannu, *founder,*

*Two years ago, this joint effort [1], continuing the theme of creating attractive WiFi services.*

### WIRELESS INTERNET GROWTH

In 2005, there were 100 hotspots in Estonia. In 2006, by comparison, there were more than 700 areas in which high-speed wireless Internet is provided to the public. Most of these areas are in city squares, pubs, airports, etc. The rate of growth can be seen in the case of Lithuania, too. The good news is that the number of WiFi hotspots in the three Baltic countries is showing a sign of slowing down.

It is not remarkable that the newsletter of the Ministry of Information in the United Kingdom says this to say: "There is a revolution brewing along the ancient stone streets of the charming Gothic buildings. It is not political, it is wireless. Wireless net access is quickly becoming the exception. Cafés throughout the Internet access are young professionals, e-mail, surfing the net, signing PowerPoint presentations. This is exactly what it is all about." For professionals, this has meant that they do not necessarily need to be in an office – if one is equipped with a wireless device, it has a place to do on.

Many business travellers and foreign journalists visited Estonia over the last few years have found that the spread use of wireless services is one of