

THE DOMAIN NAME INDUSTRY IN 2025

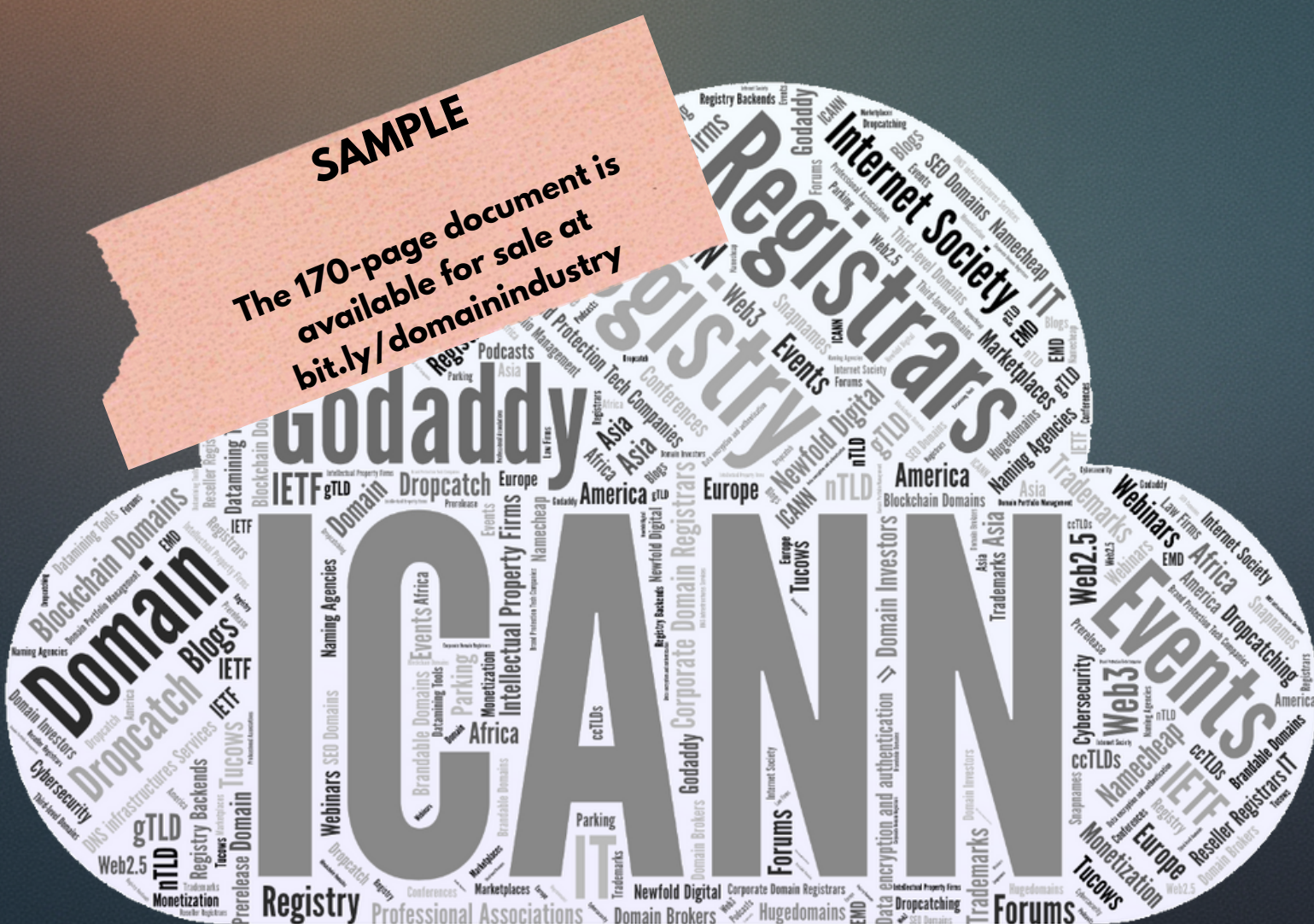
KEY PLAYERS, SERVICES AND RESOURCES

FULL VERSION WITH 500+ ENTRIES

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The 170-page document is available for sale at bit.ly/domainindustry



OCTOBER 2025

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Despite its size and turnover, the domain names sector is seldom covered by the media, academic courses, and market studies.

Who are the main players in the sector? What are their strategies? What are the best practices? The purpose of this document is to provide answers to these questions, especially for registrars, registries, intellectual property consultants, lawyers, SEO specialists, brand creators and domain investors.

The first part describes the organizations which are essential for the operation of the domain name system. Initially simple technical objects, domain names have gained importance with the rapid development of the web, both for practical life and for business. Many services, especially in the fields of IT, marketing and law, have naturally emerged to meet these new needs. These services are provided by actors from various specialties and sizes, which are analyzed in the second and third parts of this report. Events, online media, social networks and other initiatives have been carried out by individuals who have contributed to shaping a domain name industry. Their prominent figures are presented in the fourth and final part of the study.

Disclaimer

This eBook provides an up-to-date ¹ overview of more than 500 most prominent key players in the domain name sector. For those seeking a more exhaustive resource, a listing of 1,000 entries ² is available as a pdf file or Excel database.

Definitions and basic concepts are only briefly covered. Readers interested in exploring the technical, historical, or commercial context of the sector in greater depth are encouraged to consult our website www.onlinestrat.com.

Written from a European perspective, this study seeks to offer a global view of the sector, though not all regions of the world are covered with the same level of detail.

¹ It does not include organizations or individuals who are no longer active.

² onlinestrat.com/resources/onlinestrat/domain-name-market-study.html

Part One. The Domain Name System and its Institutions

This first part provides an overview of the main organizations responsible for the operation of the Domain Name System. **The current situation is marked by the domination of large organizations and multinational companies**, mostly originating from the United States of America, and differs significantly from the original conception of the Internet as a public good. **The threats of fragmentation of the Internet are growing**, both technically and geographically.

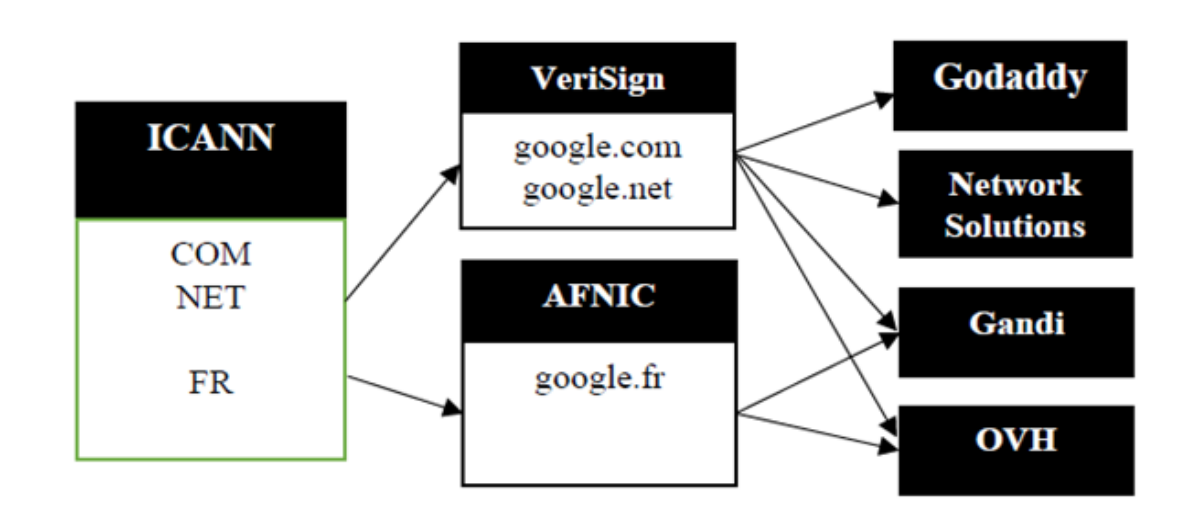
The Technical Ecosystem

Centralizing Bodies

ICANN

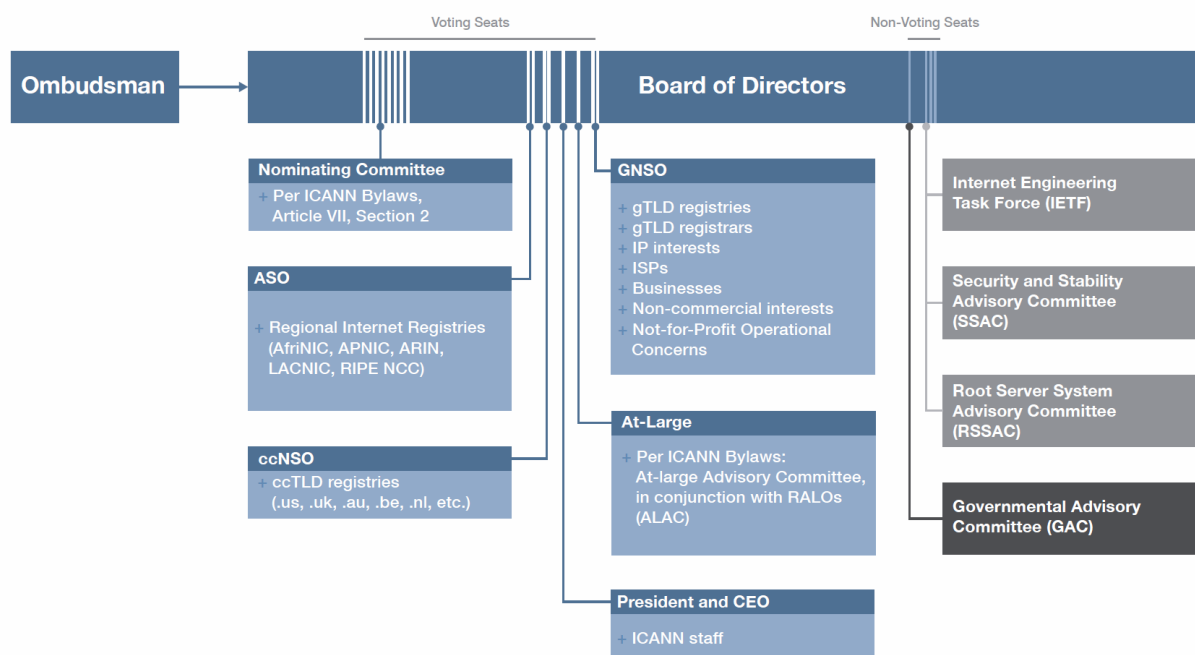
ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) is the organization that manages the Internet. It is an international nonprofit organization, headquartered in San Diego, California. The uniqueness of domain names is guaranteed by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), an authority integrated within ICANN. The management of operations is entrusted to the American company Verisign. **ICANN entrusts by contract the management of domain name extensions to entities called registries.** Domain names are generally not marketed by the registries themselves, but by companies specializing in this field, known as registrars.

Figure 1 From the Root to the Registrars



One of the unique features of ICANN is its highly participatory functioning, based on a "multi-stakeholder" model. Its main players are the countries (within the GAC), some international organizations such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), professional Internet experts and representatives of civil society and business bodies. However, the distribution of participants leads to a situation where **powerful for-profit organizations have been able to gain more control over the decisions than the other stakeholders.**

Illustration 1. Organizational structure of ICANN



Supposed to guarantee the neutrality of the Internet, ICANN has increasingly been the scene of financial and political maneuvers that overshadow the general interest. In what some consider a shocking conflict of interests, Fadi Chehade and Akram Atallah, two former ICANN leaders, who joined in 2016 and 2018 respectively Donuts (now Identity Digital), known for its acquisition of hundreds of new TLDs, and owned by the private equity fund Ethos Capital.

As a nonprofit organization, ICANN cannot make a profit but spends a lot of money, with an annual budget of around one hundred fifty million dollars, largely made possible by the launch of new extensions in 2014. With an application review cost set at \$185,000 for each project, and nearly 250 auctions to decide the winners between two or more applicants, **ICANN has achieved a significant financial coup. This process will be repeated in 2026, with the second round of nTLDs.**

ICANN Communities Overview

ICANN's multistakeholder model brings together various communities to ensure that Internet governance decisions reflect the interests of all affected parties, including governments, users, technical experts, and the domain name industry stakeholders.

Among these groups, the most influential are the GNSO, GAC, ccNSO, and ALAC, as they shape domain name policies, represent national and public interests, coordinate country-code domains, and give voice to individual Internet users. Each of these groups is composed of constituencies that organize specific interests. Within the GNSO, the most important constituencies are the Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG) and the Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG).

ICANN	ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) is the non-profit organization that manages the Internet.	icann.org
ASO	The ASO (Address Supporting Organization) of ICANN was established in 1999. It is responsible for global policy development related to IP address allocation. The ASO works with the five Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) and represents their interests within ICANN.	aso.icann.org
At-Large Community (ALAC)	At-Large is the name for the community of individual Internet users who participate in the policy development work of ICANN. The At-Large Community is structured into five regional sections. Among them, EURALO (Europe) and NARALO (North America) are the most active and influential, with stronger participation and greater impact on ICANN policy discussions.	atlarge.icann.org
CCNSO	The Country Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO) is a body within the ICANN structure created for and by ccTLD managers. The ccNSO brings together managers of ccTLDs to discuss and create policies that affect the operation and management of these domains. The ccNSO ensures that the interests of national and regional domain registries are represented within ICANN's decision-making processes.	ccnsso.icann.org
GAC	The GAC (Governmental Advisory Committee) is part of ICANN, established in 1999. It provides advice on public policy issues related to the domain name system, especially where national laws or international agreements may be affected. The GAC includes representatives from over 170 governments and intergovernmental organizations.	gac.icann.org
GNSO	The GNSO (Generic Names Supporting Organization) was formed in 2003. It develops and recommends policies related to generic top-level domains (gTLDs) within ICANN. The GNSO includes various stakeholder groups such as registries, registrars, businesses, and non-commercial users. It is the most influential ICANN Community.	gnsso.icann.org/en

Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG)	The Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG) is one of the main constituencies within ICANN's Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO). Its members include hundreds of registrars worldwide.	rrsg.org
Registries Stakeholder Group	The Registries Stakeholder Group (RySG) is a major constituency within ICANN's Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO). It represents operators of generic top-level domains (gTLDs). Its members include both legacy registries and newer gTLD providers	rysg.info
ICANN RSSAC	The Root Server System Advisory Committee is an ICANN advisory body focused on the stability and security of the DNS root server system. It brings together Root Server Operators and technical experts to study operations at Internet scale and to advise the ICANN Board and community. Its mission is technical guidance, not policy making.	icann.org/en/rssac
ICANN Nominating Committee (NomCom)	The ICANN Nominating Committee (NomCom) is an independent body responsible for selecting individuals to serve in key leadership positions within ICANN. NomCom appoints members to the ICANN Board of Directors, the Public Technical Identifiers (PTI) Board, and leadership roles in supporting organizations and advisory committees.	icann.org/nomcom
Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA)	IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority) is an organization that manages key elements of the Internet's technical infrastructure. It is responsible for allocating IP numbers, managing country codes, port numbers for network protocols and Internet protocol parameters.	iana.org
Public Technical Identifiers (PTI)	Public Technical Identifiers (PTI) is a non-profit affiliate of ICANN, created in 2016 to perform the IANA functions independently. PTI manages key Internet resources such as the DNS root zone, IP address allocations, and protocol parameter registries. It ensures the technical stability and operational security of the Internet's core systems, operating under ICANN's oversight but with a distinct legal and operational identity to reinforce accountability after the IANA stewardship transition.	pti.icann.org

Internet Society

An American legal association created in 1992 by Internet pioneers, **the Internet Society (ISOC) is the most influential technical authority in the Internet sector**. It aims to promote and coordinate the development of the network and provides organizational and financial support to the IETF.

It brings together several tens of thousands of members around the world, in over 100 local branches called “chapters” and controls several organizations, among them the Public Interest Registry (PIR) which is responsible for managing the .ORG extension registry, its controversial sale to Ethos Capital having been invalidated by ICANN ³.

Internet Society organizes the annual Internet Governance Forum.

IETF

Funded by the Internet Society (ISOC), **the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) is an organization whose mission is to produce and promote Internet standards**, particularly those of the Internet protocol suite TCP/IP.

Its participants are researchers, academics, and engineers who **develop the well-known RFC (Request for Comments) specification documents**. They act within the IETF with a status of volunteers. This atypical and self-organized body operates informally, without either a statutory framework, a board of directors, or even members.

Within the IETF, the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) is a committee whose mission is to oversee the standards and protocols of the Internet.

International Internet-Related Organizations

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is a specialized agency of the United Nations for information and communication technologies whose mission is to facilitate international connectivity of communication networks, as well as the development of technical standards.

A United Nations agency too, **WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) is the global authority responsible for intellectual property issues**. It notably resolves disputes related to domain names.

³ In 2019, under obvious conflict of interest conditions, ISOC had agreed to sell the .ORG extension to an investment fund co-founded by the former President of ICANN, Fadi Chehadé.

Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)	IEEE is the world's largest technical professional organization and is a public charity dedicated to advancing technology for humanity.	ieee.org
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	As the United Nations' specialised agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs), the ITU's mission is to facilitate the international connectivity of communication networks through the allocation of radio frequencies and satellite orbits, and the development of technical standards.	uit.int
Internet Architecture Board	The Internet Architecture Board is an international body operating under the Internet Society. It provides technical oversight for the architecture of the Internet. Its members are selected by the IETF Nominating Committee.	iab.org
Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)	The Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) is the premier Internet standards body, developing open standards through open processes. It is a large open international community of network designers, operators, vendors, and researchers concerned with the evolution of the Internet architecture and the smooth operation of the Internet.	ietf.org
Internet Research Task Force (IRTF)	The Internet Research Task Force is an international group focused on long-term research related to Internet protocols, architecture, and technology. It operates alongside the IETF but with a more exploratory and academic approach. The IRTF is also under the umbrella of the Internet Society and is overseen by the Internet Architecture Board. Its work is organized into research groups that study emerging or foundational topics, without the pressure to produce immediate standards.	irtf.org
Internet Society (ISOC)	The Internet Society (ISOC) is an association under American law, founded in 1992 by Internet pioneers, and is the most influential moral and technical authority in the Internet sector. It aims to promote and coordinate the development of the network worldwide, and provides the IETF with organizational and financial support. It has tens of thousands of members worldwide and oversees a number of organizations, including the Public Interest Registry (PIR), which is responsible for managing the ORG TLD registry. It organizes the annual Internet Governance Forum.	Internetsociety.org

Packet Clearing House

Founded in 1994 and based in the USA, Packet Clearing House (PCH) is an intergovernmental treaty organization that provides operational support and security to critical Internet infrastructure, including Internet exchange points (IXPs) and the core systems of the domain name system (DNS). It is also a leading authority on Internet traffic exchange, routing economics, and global network development.

pch.net

W3C

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international community that develops open standards to ensure the long-term growth of the Web. It was founded in 1994 by Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web. The W3C is funded by membership fees, research grants, and sponsorships from public and private organizations.

w3.org

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is a United Nations agency responsible for global intellectual property issues. It plays a central role in resolving domain name disputes through its Arbitration and Mediation Center, particularly under the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP). WIPO has become the leading forum for handling cybersquatting and trademark-related conflicts involving domain names.

wipo.int/amc/en/domains



ICANN Meeting in Hamburg (Germany), 2023

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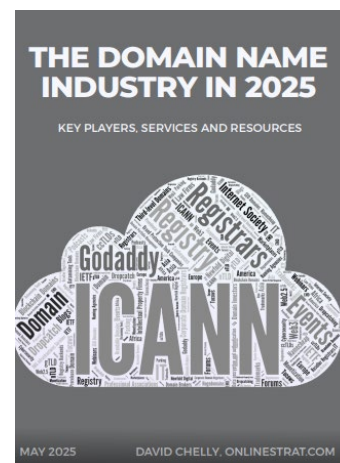
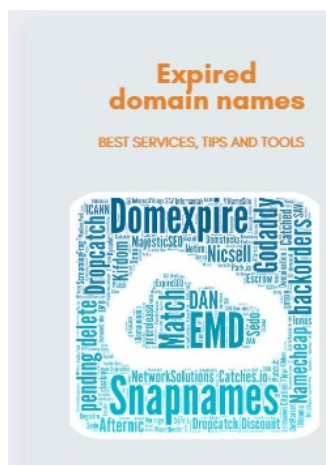
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