

New gTLD Report

Q3 2024



Table of Contents

1 **Letter From the Editor**

3 **Registry Service Providers: In the Spotlight** An interview with Kroopa Shah, Senior Director, Registry Support and Management at Identity Digital

10 **New gTLDs 101** Registries and Reserved Domain Names

14 **Joie de Vivre** Geographic TLDs in France

Fly, Fly Away: Letter from the Editor

In the past 18 months I've flown on more airplanes and flown more miles than at any time in my life. With that said, air travel is clearly one of the things front and center for me so we're going to go with that theme for this report.

But before we begin, did you know that:

- Total air traffic in 2023 (measured in revenue passenger kilometers or RPKs) rose 36.9% compared to 2022. Globally, full year 2023 traffic was at 94.1% of pre-pandemic (2019) levels.¹
- The 2023 winner of the Global Traveler Tested Reader Survey for Best Overall Airline in the World was Singapore Airlines for the third consecutive year.²
- United Airline's most frequent flyer is Tom Stuker, who became a 24 million mile flyer earlier this year. He's averaging over a million miles per year, so at this rate, he should become a 25 million mile flyer in early 2025.³

With that said, let's get buckled in and ready for takeoff.

Air Traffic Control of the Domain World?

In our first story, please join us in welcoming Identity Digital to our first ever Registry Service Provider (RSP) Spotlight. Join Kroopa Shah as she tells us all about how a RSP is like Air Traffic Control at an airport — read on to find out how.

Reserved Names and First Class Tickets

In our second article, we look at Reserved Names in a gTLD and how the rules around them work; they are kind of like that upgrade to First Class that you don't ever quite get.

Our Final Destination

Any flight needs somewhere to go, so what better place than France? With the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and Tour de France both happening this summer, it made sense to check in on the four French geographic gTLDs.

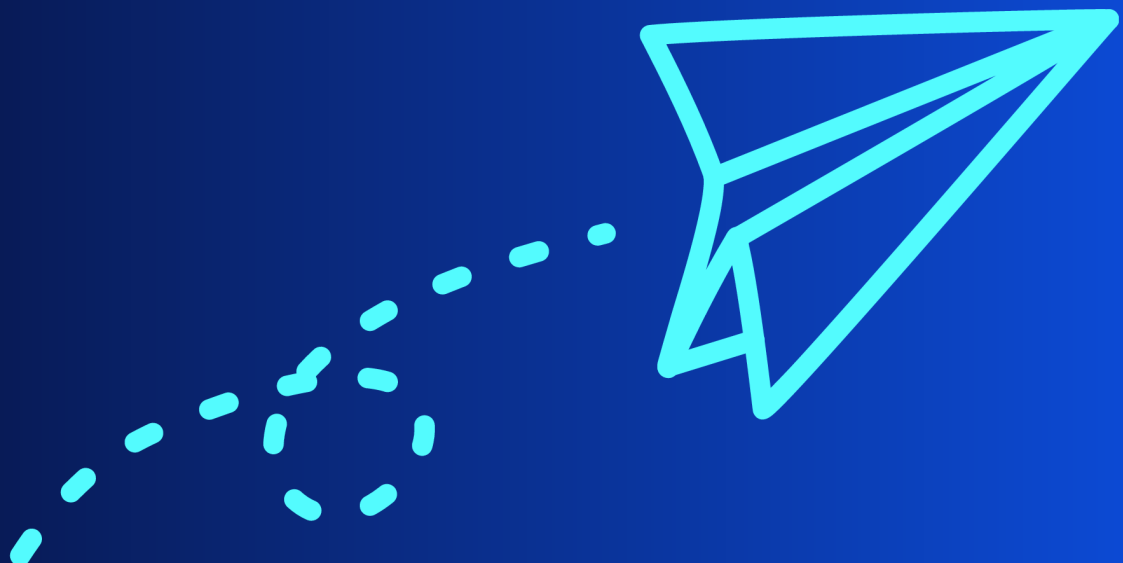
So put your seat back in the fully upright position and stow your tray table, we're off on another flight on gTLD Airlines!

For more information on how Markmonitor can assist you in learning more about New gTLDs or other parts of the domain industry, please reach out to us⁴ or to your Domain Portfolio Advisor.

Chris Niemi

Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Markmonitor

1. iata.org/en/pressroom/2024-releases/2024-01-31-02
2. globaltravelerusa.com/global-traveler-celebrates-the-winners-of-the-20th-annual-gt-tested-reader-survey-awards
3. onemileatatime.com/news/tom-stuker-united-airlines
4. markmonitor.com/contact-us



Registry Service Providers: In the Spotlight



Chris Niemi
Manager, Strategic Initiatives
Markmonitor



Kroopa Shah
Senior Director, Registry
Support & Management
Identity Digital

The domain industry has a number of members who perform different functions in respect to Top-Level Domains (TLDs). One of these important parties is the Registry Service Provider (RSP), also sometimes known as the BackEnd Registry Operator (BERO). In our new RSP Spotlight series we'll introduce you to some of these key industry players over the coming quarters.

In today's spotlight: **Identity Digital**.

RSP Definition

In the RSP Handbook,¹ a 'Main RSP' is defined as:

A Main RSP is responsible for the registrations of domain names and the reporting functions associated with domain registration. A Main RSP will operate a domain registration database, conduct data escrow and reporting operations regarding those registrations, operate Extensible Provisioning Protocol (EPP) and Registration Data Access Protocol (RDAP) services, and conduct other functions as required by ROs through their agreements with ICANN.²

[Editor's Note: For our purposes, we are referring to RSPs in this 'main RSP' context only; there are other RSP types: DNSSEC, DNS, and Proxy — but those are outside of the initial scope of this series — unless you tell us otherwise.]

So that definition is a mouthful; what better person to help us unwind it today than our guest, Kroopa Shah?

◇ Chris Niemi (CN): Hi Kroopa, thank you for joining me today. What is your role and how long have you been in the domain industry?

◇ Kroopa Shah (KS): Thanks for inviting me, Chris. I lead the Registry Services and Management teams at Identity Digital, where I am responsible for overseeing service delivery, technical support, and account management for all of Identity Digital's registrar partners and TLD operators who trust us to manage their Top-Level Domains (TLDs).

In my role, I drive strategic initiatives and ensure operational excellence, while delivering high-quality support services that are essential to the success of our registrar and registry partners. I've had the privilege of working in the domain industry for over 20 years, and during that time, I've witnessed the remarkable growth from just 22 generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) to over 1,200 gTLDs, particularly with the introduction of the new gTLD program in 2012. It's been an exciting journey, and I'm proud to contribute to this dynamic and ever-evolving space.

◇ CN: How long has Identity Digital been active in the domain industry?

◇ KS: Identity Digital (formerly Afilias and Donuts) has a 23-year history of leadership and innovation in domain registry technology and domain management. Identity Digital launched the first-ever new gTLD: .info. Identity Digital then quickly rose to become the second-largest registry operator globally, acquiring over 270 new gTLDs such as .live and .digital through the ICANN gTLD expansion program in 2012.

Headquartered in Bellevue, Washington, Identity Digital is also a world-leading registry service provider powering over 460 TLDs (dotBrand TLDs, ccTLDs, gTLDs), making up over 28 million domains under management.

Over the years, Identity Digital has enhanced its registry service offering to include innovative solutions such as a patented Drop Zone to effectively manage dropping names, an award-winning Domains Protected Marks List (DPML), Domain Engine, realtime homoglyph protection, DNS abuse mitigation

with our Dynamic Defense™, domain hijacking protection with Registry Lock, IDN support in 35 languages and many others. Our global DNS network over 80 global locations resolves over 60.4 billion queries per day with 100% guaranteed uptime.

◇ CN: Now that we know a bit about you and your company, let's get down to it. You've seen the definition above of BERO/RSP, do you have your own definition or a simple way to communicate the concept?

◇ KS: As a Registry Services Provider (RSP), Identity Digital is an internet infrastructure company that empowers brands and individuals to regain ownership of their digital identities and online presence with descriptive domains such as .org, .info, .pro, .world, .au, .java.

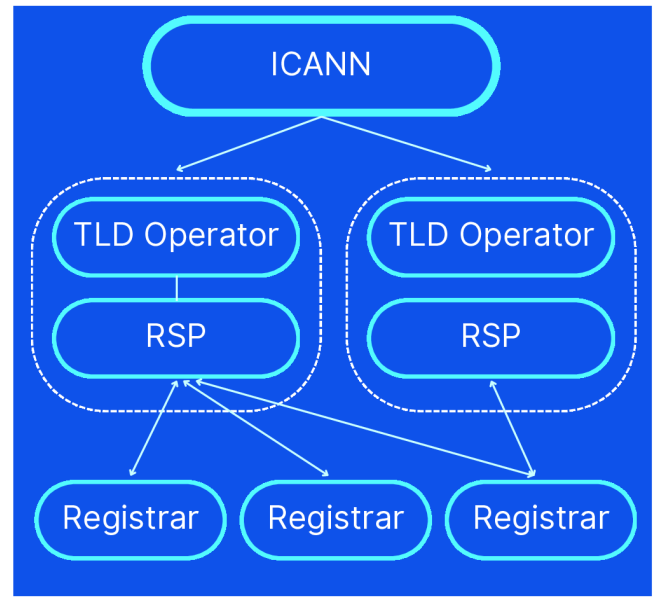
Let's think about the internet as an airspace where all the planes (domain names) travel. Imagine each domain name (like "identity.digital") is a plane that needs to reach a destination (a website). Each plane has a specific flight path (the IP address) it needs to follow to arrive as expected.

Identity Digital, the RSP, acts as the air traffic control and ensures that every domain name is directed to the correct destination (IP address) without confusion. RSPs keep the system organized, preventing any issues.

◇ CN: Where does the BERO/RSP fit into the domain industry ecosystem?

◇ KS: In the domain industry ecosystem, RSPs such as Identity Digital, play a key role in the safe, secure and stable operation of a


TLD. RSPs manage and maintain the technical infrastructure and the master database of names in TLDs that we operate on behalf of other registry operators, ensuring these names can be found on the internet quickly, reliably, and securely.




gTLD operators such as Public Interest Registry (for .org) oversee the policies, management, pricing and business operations of a TLD. gTLD operators are designated by ICANN to operate the gTLD. The agreements between ICANN and TLD operators outline certain responsibilities for each party, including service level requirements for the TLD. RSPs, such as Identity Digital, manage the complex technical infrastructure that is critical to running the domain name system for that TLD in alignment with the service-level agreements (SLAs) in the Registry Agreement between the TLD operator and ICANN.

Domain owners must register their domain names through an ICANN accredited registrar like Markmonitor. ICANN accredits and monitors these registrars who facilitate

the sale of domains to the public. An RSP, like Identity Digital, provides the technical infrastructure and interface required for registrars to create and manage their sponsored domain names on behalf of the domain owners.


 **CN:** What does a BERO/RSP actually do?

 **KS:** As an RSP, Identity Digital:

- Delivers a standards-compliant, turnkey registry solution that meets both industry standards and ICANN's requirements for all aspects of registry support. Identity Digital operates the registry from a modern cloud-based registry platform, though other RSPs may offer these services from a traditional data-center model. We believe that environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors shape our business practices, industry, and the communities we serve. Therefore, our RSP services are built upon sustainable practices, inclusive governance initiatives and environmentally friendly practices.
- Provisions global DNS infrastructure that provides 100% DNS uptime to ensure that names resolve every minute of every day without any issues.
- Enables accredited registrars, like Markmonitor, to register domain names in a TLD by providing technical systems and necessary support.
- Implements security measures for the secure and reliable operation of a TLD including provisioning DNSSEC for all the TLDs in our care and implementing domain name abuse mitigation procedures to keep the TLD safe from cybercrime activities.

- Helps organizations and individuals reduce risk, maintain business continuity and avoid reputational challenges with built-in security features and cutting-edge technology such as, risk management, [IWF](#), law enforcement agency support, Domain Engine, RSP, Artificial Intelligence, Web 3.0 and others.
- Provides comprehensive reporting and business analytics to TLD operators and their accredited registrars on the activity in the TLD including daily, weekly, and monthly reports.
- Provisions 24 x 7 support to all accredited registrars for a TLD on a variety of topics including technical connectivity to the registry system and account funding inquiries. Identity Digital is connected to over 1,800 ICANN-accredited registrars, who account for over 95% of the world's volume.
- Keeps abreast of changing legal and policy environments which have an impact on the operation of the TLD, such as GDPR and the Registration Data Policy, and informs TLD operator partners of potential impact to the operation of their TLD.


 **CN: Why is a BERO/RSP important to a TLD applicant or registry operator?**

 **KS:** An RSP, like Identity Digital, ensures that the technical and operational aspects of running a TLD are handled efficiently, securely, and in compliance with ICANN standards, allowing the applicant to focus on the business aspects of managing their new TLD.

If an organization or individual decides to

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If an organization or individual decides to

apply for a TLD, they need to partner with an RSP to manage the technical and operational aspects of operating the TLD.

An applicant could become their own RSP, however, they could face some challenges:

1. Technical Complexity and increased costs - Operating a TLD involves setting up a robust, scalable, and secure infrastructure for domain name system (DNS) management, domain registration, and other technical services. Without an RSP, the applicant would need to build this infrastructure from scratch – including hardware and software – while implementing security measures, 24 x 7 monitoring and customer service - all which require specialized expertise, significant resources, and time.
2. ICANN Compliance Risks - ICANN has stringent technical and operational requirements for TLD operators, including uptime guarantees, DNS stability, and compliance with security protocols like DNSSEC. Without an experienced RSP, the TLD applicant may have challenges meeting these requirements, potentially risking penalties, delays in launching the TLD, or even losing the TLD.
3. Operational Instability - Without the operational support provided by an RSP, issues such as system outages, DNS failures, and security breaches (e.g., DDoS attacks, DNS hijacking) would be harder to manage. This could lead to frequent downtime and reputational damage for the brand.

 **CN: Do you have any advice for our readers who want to operate their own TLD?**

 **KS:** Yes, I do! If you're considering applying for a new Top-Level Domain (TLD), the next application window is anticipated in 2026, so: *start planning now.*

To increase your chances of success, begin aligning stakeholders within your organization. Ensure everyone understands the strategic benefits of owning a custom TLD, including:

- Brand Strengthening: Reinforces your organization's identity and online presence.
- Security: Provides greater control over your digital ecosystem.
- Community Building: Fosters a sense of belonging and connection among your stakeholders.

Ensure that you have an experienced partner such as Markmonitor to advise you on next steps and research your options for a Registry Services Provider for your TLD. Here are a few tips for selecting your Registry Services Provider:

- Ensure that they have experience launching and supporting brand TLDs.
- Check the provider's references! You may be astonished at the large variety in service quality and responsiveness!
- Ask the provider for a record of technical compliance with all SLAs.
- Prioritize DNS uptime for your TLD. Your TLD will be an important asset for your brand and 100% uptime will be key to its success.

 **CN: Before we sign off, is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?**

KS: For our readers, here are a few important takeaways:

1. Registry Service Providers (RSPs) are key to ensuring the safe, secure, and reliable operation of a TLD and its registered domains on the internet.
2. Selecting a trusted RSP who has demonstrated experience in launching and operating brand TLDs in compliance with all SLAs is critical to the reputation and credibility of a brand.
3. The next opportunity to apply for a new TLD is in 2026 and brands who want to apply for a TLD then should ensure that they have an experienced partner to assist them with the application process.

CN: Thank you, Kroopa, for your time and for participating in our first RSP Spotlight; we and our readers surely appreciate it!

With that we're on to the rest of the report but you can be sure we'll provide another RSP to put in the spotlight soon.



1. newgtdprogram.icann.org/en/application-rounds/round2/rsp/handbook

2. newgtdprogram.icann.org/sites/default/files/documents/rsp-handbook-03jun24-en.pdf; Section 1.3.1, p.7

New gTLDs 101: Reserved Domain Name

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) ecosystem and community have a wealth of associated acronyms and terminology.

In our New gTLDs 101 series we review some of these key terms to get you caught up on their meaning and how they affect the New gTLD space.

Time to Get Some R&R: Registries and Reserved Domain Names

This report's terminology is: Reserved Domain Name. Also known as: Registry Reserved Domain Name or Reserved Name.

Origin

A GNSO Report from 2007¹ refers to the following history:

Justification for ICANN reserved names

The words reserved by ICANN are mostly acronyms that basically relate to the organization structures (bodies) and functions, as it has evolved, and the justification for reservation is equally obvious.

The "schedule of reserved names" was born with the new TLD registry agreements in early 2001. A consultation with ICANN officials yielded the same result: no one recalls any record of any public or private document that describes the rationale for having a scheduled names list, or that describes the reasons why particular strings were included (or excluded).

Justification for IANA's reserved names
There has been little need in the past to justify decisions about some reserved names, some of which must date from the days of John Postel.

The IANA-reserved names relate to functions and institutions within the purview of IANA: subordinate

nameservers, IANA's regional nodes, the request for comment editor, and so forth.²

Current List

In the 2012 New gTLD Program, the list of reserved names was formally codified in Specification 5 of the Registry Agreement³: Registry Operator shall reserve the following labels from initial (i.e., other than renewal) registration within the TLD.

The labels and/or list of reserved labels include⁴:

- The single label: EXAMPLE
- Two-character Labels: may be released to the extent that Registry Operator reaches agreement with the related government and country-code manager of the string
- Labels for Registry Operations:
 - The four labels: WWW, RDDS, WHOIS, and NIC
 - a language-specific translation or transliteration of the label: NIC
 - Up to 100 labels necessary for the operation or the promotion of the TLD (these may be activated and not reserved entirely)
 - Other labels at the Registry Operator's discretion
- Country and Territory Names
 - These are tied to the ISO 3166-1 list, the European Union, and the United Nations
- International Olympic Committee; International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
- Intergovernmental Organizations

Why Does This Matter to Me?

If you are a registry operator, functionally you have nearly unlimited access to labels to choose from in making registrations in your TLD, but there is still a small subset of labels (above) that are not available for use or require special action to release.

Likewise, if you are considering applying for a TLD in the 2026 New gTLD Program application window, you should be aware that reserved names can have effects on what TLD you can apply for, as shown below.

Reserved Names and the Next Round

In early 2024 ICANN released the first wave of 'Proposed Language for Draft Sections of the Next Round Applicant Guidebook' which had been worked on by the community. This included a section on *Reserved and Blocked Names*.⁵ In this updated context, blocked names are unavailable to submit as TLD applications and are pulled from the following groups:

- Special-Use Domain Names (e.g., IANA Special-Use Domain Names Registry)
- Technical Standards (e.g., domains with a '-' in the 3rd and 4th position for IDN labels)
- Country or Territory Names in relation to Geographic Names (from the Applicant Guidebook)
- Three letter ASCII country codes (e.g., ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 standard)
- ICANN-related and other entities in the DNS ecosystem (e.g., Supporting Organizations (SOs) and others)

The following reserved names have an Exemption Process:

- Limited International IGO-INGOs (e.g., Red Cross Red Crescent, International Olympic Committee, and others)

The exemption process will be handled in Initial Evaluation when the documentation that was submitted as part of the application will be verified.

Regarding Initial Evaluation (Section 2.2 of the Applicant Guidebook⁶), string reviews are performed, including:

Applied-for gTLD strings against existing TLDs and reserved names⁷

Similarity to Existing TLDs or Reserved Names⁸ – This review involves cross-checking between each applied-for string and the lists of existing TLD strings and Reserved Names to determine whether two strings are so similar to one another that they create a probability of user confusion. In the simple case in which an applied-for gTLD string is identical to an existing TLD or reserved name, the online application system will not allow the application to be submitted.

In addition, applied-for gTLD strings are reviewed during the String Similarity review to determine whether they are similar to a Reserved Name. An application for a gTLD string that is identified as too similar to a Reserved Name will not pass this review.⁹

Why Does This Matter to Me?

If you are considering applying for a TLD in the 2026 New gTLD Program application

window, you should be aware of the reserved names that will not be available for application or could require a special exemption to access.

Bonus Section – Unavailable Strings for the Next Round

As noted in the previous section, strings that match the ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 standard are not available for application.

In reviewing the list of these short-form names,¹⁰ there are a number of three-character words in the English language which will not be available to register:

- .ago
- .arm
- .ben
- .bra
- .can
- .cod
- .cog
- .cub
- .gab
- .gum
- .gin
- .guy
- .jam
- .ken
- .lie
- .mar
- .nor
- .pan
- .pry
- .per
- .ton

Why Does This Matter to Me?

If you are considering applying for a TLD in the 2026 New gTLD Program application window, you should be aware of all of the reserved names that will not be available for application so you can make sure that your intended string(s) will be available and eligible for application.

Conclusion

And with that we've learned about another term in our New gTLDs 101 series, this time on reserved names. Join us next time to learn more information about the domain industry, and don't hesitate to reach out and let us know if there is a word or phrase you're excited to learn about!

1. gnso.icann.org/sites/default/files/filefield_6441/icannandiana-reserved-names-v.12.pdf

2. [Ibid.](#)

3. icann.org/en/registry-agreements/base-agreement

4. icann.org/reserved-names-en

5. itp.cdn.icann.org/en/files/generic-names-supporting-organization-council-gnso-council/reserved-blocked-names-topic-21-01-02-2024-en.pdf

6. newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb

7. [Ibid., p.2-5](#)

8. [Ibid., p.2-6](#)

9. [Ibid., p.2-9 and 2-10](#)

10. iso.org/iso-3166-country-codes.html

Joie de Vivre: Geographic Domains in France



France was in the headlines this past summer as the host of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games as well as the primary location of the Tour de France. With a global spotlight on L'hexagone (the country is called 'the hexagon' given its roughly six-sided shape¹), we figured we should check out the local gTLDs.

What is a 'geoTLD?'

But first a refresher on what a geographic TLD is, in the broadest sense:

As the international not-for-profit membership association, geoTLD.group, calls them: “geoTLDs are a type of TLDs that are intended to serve a geographic place, language or culture.”²

In the 2012 Applicant Guidebook,³ a Geographic Names Review was undertaken on all applications for gTLD strings to “ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the interests of governments or public authorities in geographic names.” Specific strings would fall under the category Geographic Names Requiring Government Support which included⁴:

- A capital city name
- A city name
- A sub-national place name
- A UNESCO region OR a name appearing on the “Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings” list

These applications had to be “accompanied by documentation of support or non-objection from the relevant governments or public authorities.”⁵

Why France?

France is member of the European Union with a population of just over 68 million people.⁶ The French populace has a high rate of internet usage (85% of individuals have internet access⁷) and the ‘home’

country code Top-Level Domain (ccTLD) for the country – .fr – is the seventh largest ccTLD by domains registered, with 4.1 million.⁸ Amid this backdrop of high internet literacy, it makes sense that 49 gTLD applications in the 2012 application round were from entities located in France.⁹ And of those 49 gTLD applications, four were geoTLDs that were successfully delegated and continue to be in use today.

Les quatre Français ('The French Four')

gTLD: .paris

Geographic Area: City of Paris

Registry Operator: City of Paris

Backend Registry Operator: AFNIC

Registered Domains: 19,743

gTLD: .bzh

Geographic Area: Region of Brittany

Registry Operator: Association www.bzh

Backend Registry Operator: AFNIC

Registered Domains: 12,852

gTLD: .bzh

Geographic Area: Region of Brittany

Registry Operator: Association www.bzh

Backend Registry Operator: AFNIC

Registered Domains: 12,852

gTLD: .bzh

Geographic Area: Region of Brittany

Registry Operator: Association www.bzh

Backend Registry Operator: AFNIC

Registered Domains: 12,852

.paris

Paris is the capital of France with the city population of approximately 2.2 million people (around 11.2 million people in the greater metropolitan area).¹⁰ Websites of note in .paris include: [neso.paris](#) which is for the restaurant NESO, which has one Michelin star, and [hoba.paris](#) which is for the Hoba Project, an effort toward sustainability in cooking.

.bzh

Brittany is a maritime region in the west of France with a population of 3.3 million people that draws 2.8 million tourists annually to visit.¹¹ Websites of notes in .bzh include: [solide.bzh](#) which is a zero waste cleaning product provider, and [bretagnemusees.bzh](#) which is a site dedicated to the museums of Brittany.

.alsace

Alsace, also known as the ‘Grand Est,’ has a population of approximately 5.5 million people and is the only region in France to be bordered by four countries: Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland.¹² Websites of note in .alsace include: [orh.alsace](#) which is the website for the Roger Holm Orchestra that plays traditional Alsatian music, and [lamerise.alsace](#) which is for the two star Michelin restaurant, La Merise in Laubach, France.

.corsica

Corsica has a population of approximately 350,000¹³ and is a “mountainous island offering an incomparable quality of life, over

a thousand kilometers of coastline, four airports and six seaports spread across the region.”¹⁴ Websites of note in .corsica include: [emploi.corsica](#) which is an employment website for jobs on the island, and [cyber.corsica](#) which is for the Cyber Security Center which is “a center for advice, prevention and response to cybersecurity incidents” on the island.

Conclusion

New gTLDs continue to be used, although in relatively small numbers. However, in specific geographic areas they can be a good alternative to .com or to the local ccTLD — in this case .fr — for entrepreneurs and small businesses to use to communicate with their customers and communities. France is a good example of this, with these four geoTLDs that are serving its largest city and three of its regions, respectively. In the 2026 New gTLD application window it will be interesting to see which new cities and regions come to the fore. Until then let us know if there are any other types of gTLDs or topics you’d like us to research.

1. thelocal.fr/20220509/french-expression-of-the-day-hexagone
2. geotld.group/geotld
3. newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb/guidebook-full-04jun12-en.pdf, p. 2-16
4. newgtlds.icann.org/en/applicants/agb/guidebook-full-04jun12-en.pdf, p. 2-17 through 2-18
5. Ibid.
6. european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-countries/france_en
7. data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=FR
8. research.domaintools.com/statistics/tld-counts
9. gtldresult.icann.org/applicationstatus/viewstatus_search_for_FR
10. worldpopulationreview.com/cities/france/paris
11. welcometofrance.com/en/region/bretagne
12. grandest.fr/en/presentation-of-the-region
13. worldpopulationreview.com/regions/corsica
14. welcometofrance.com/en/region/corsica



Should you need any further information or assistance, please contact your Domain Portfolio Advisor (DPA) or email customer.service@markmonitor.com

Markmonitor provides strategic domain management solutions that help protect the revenue and reputation of the world's leading brands.

Since 1999, Markmonitor has served the domain portfolio needs of businesses around the globe, including many of the most visited websites in the world. An ICANN accredited domain registrar since its establishment, Markmonitor leverages its extensive industry relationships, innovative technology, and broad expertise to manage and protect company domain portfolios, all with data-driven, white-glove consultation designed to maximize domain portfolio value.