



Berlin May Get Its Own Domain By Mark Beard

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A German entrepreneur sometime next year hopes he will be able to boast, "Ich bin ein dot-Berliner."

The businessman, Dirk Krischenowski, is bidding to make his city the first in the world with its own domain name: .berlin. Berlin's businesses and citizens will flock to the domain because millions of people regard the hip European city as a part of their identities, he believes.

Krischenowski and his business partner, Alexander Schubert, will be shopping the idea at the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers' [annual public meeting](#) in Vancouver, British Columbia, at the end of the month, and they hope to make a formal proposal to ICANN next year. ICANN is the international nonprofit corporation that will eventually decide the fate of the .berlin proposal.

The two men started [dotBerlin](#), a company that will earn revenues managing registrations of the new domain -- if it's approved.

The .berlin idea had been around for a while, but it fizzled out about five years ago, "at the time of the dot-com bust," said Krischenowski. But the prospects for city top-level domains, or TLDs, look much brighter these days.

ICANN recently green-lighted TLDs for geographical regions (.eu and .asia, as well as .cat, established to promote the culture of the Catalonia region of Spain).

"Cities are the next logical step," said Krischenowski, who added that .berlin is just "the tip of the iceberg." (A similar effort is under way in New York, to create .nyc.)

The .berlin campaign has a few things going for it. For one, "It's spelled the same in both English and German, and has no accents over its letters," said Krischenowski.

The domain should also be good for tourism, because it will make it easy to identify local businesses online, said Krischenowski. Rather than

something like "hotels-berlin.de," the new domain could simply be, "hotels.berlin."

Krischenowski still has to sell the idea to the Berlin and German governments, and then to a notoriously finicky ICANN board. It's not an easy sell, according to lawyers who have worked on domain-name proposals in the past.

"ICANN has said in the past that geographic TLDs need the support of relevant government agencies," said [Bret Fausett](#), a lawyer who has represented groups proposing new TLDs to ICANN.

Krischenowski said he is in "close contact" with Berlin government decision makers.

Another lawyer familiar with ICANN's TLD-review process cast doubt on the chances for .berlin. It's not the people with the best ideas, but those with close ties to ICANN staff and board members who get their ideas approved, said Michael Froomkin, professor of law at the [University of Miami School of Law](#) and editor of [ICANNWatch](#).

"The insiders always win," said Froomkin.



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