

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Equinor ASA v. equinorex organization

Case No. D2023-4284

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Equinor ASA, Norway, represented by Valea AB trading as Rouse AB, Sweden.

The Respondent is equinorex organization, Norway.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <equinorex.org> (the “Domain Name”) is registered with HOSTINGER operations, UAB (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on October 16, 2023. On October 16, 2023, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the Domain Name. On October 16, 2023, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the Domain Name which differed from the named Respondent (REDACTED FOR PRIVACY, Privacy Protect, LLC (PrivacyProtect.org)) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on October 17, 2023 providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amendment to the Complaint on October 18, 2023.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amendment to the Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on October 20, 2023. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was November 9, 2023. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent’s default on November 10, 2023.

The Center appointed Mathias Lilleengen as the sole panelist in this matter on November 23, 2023. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is an international energy company with operations in more than 30 countries around the world developing oil, gas, wind, and solar energy. The Complainant was founded as The Norwegian State Oil Company (Statoil) in 1972 and the Norwegian State holds 67 percent of the shares. The Complainant changed its company name to Equinor in 2018. The name change was announced worldwide. In parallel to the name change, EQUINOR filed trademark applications worldwide, such as Norwegian trademark registration No. 298811 (registered on June 12, 2018).

The Complainant owns more than 100 domain name registrations throughout the world containing the EQUINOR mark.

The Domain Name was registered on October 15, 2023. The Complainant has documented that the Domain Name has resolved to a website connected to crypto currency services. On the website the Respondent purports to be connected to the Complainant as it lists the following information: "NORWAY REGISTERED COMPANY: EQUINOR #923 609 016". The Respondent has also falsely listed the address of the Complainant in the contact information behind the privacy service. At the time of drafting the Decision, the Domain Name resolved to an inactive page.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant provides evidence of trademark registrations and contends that the Domain Name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's trademark EQUINOR as the Domain Name incorporates the entire trademark. The additional word/letters "ex" does not prevent confusing similarity.

The Complainant argues that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Domain Name. The Complainant asserts that the Respondent is not affiliated with the Complainant. The Respondent has not been granted any license to use the EQUINOR trademark nor was the Respondent otherwise authorized by the Complainant to use the trademark. There is no evidence of the Respondent's use of, or preparations to use, the Domain Name or a name corresponding to the Domain Name in connection with a *bona fide* offering of goods or services.

The Complainant believes it is evident that the Respondent was fully aware of the fact that it incorporated a well-recognized and distinctive trademark in which the Respondent had absolutely no prior rights. The Respondent is trying to take advantage of the Complainant reputation by establishing a website featuring crypto currency in order to damage the Complainant's reputation. Moreover, Mail exchange ("MX records") are activated for the Domain Name, which may indicate that the Respondent registered the Domain Name to confuse Internet users. Finally, the use of a privacy service may also under the circumstances be an indication of bad faith.

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

The first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the Domain Name. Where a domain name incorporates the entirety of a trademark, or where at least a dominant feature of the relevant mark is recognizable in the domain name, the domain name will normally be considered confusingly similar to that mark for purposes of UDRP standing. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition, ("[WIPO Overview 3.0](#)"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has established that it has rights in the trademark EQUINOR. In this case, the Domain Name incorporates the Complainant's trademark with the addition of "ex". The addition does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the Domain Name and the trademark. For the purpose of assessing under paragraph 4(a)(i) of the Policy, the Panel may ignore the generic Top-Level Domain ("gTLD"); [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.11.1.

The Panel finds that the Domain Name is confusingly similar to a trademark in which the Complainant has rights in accordance with paragraph 4(a)(i) of the Policy.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which a respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

While the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the often impossible task of "proving a negative", requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a *prima facie* case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name. If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.1.

Based on the evidence, the Respondent is not affiliated or related to the Complainant in any way. There is no evidence that the Respondent has registered the Domain Name as a trademark or acquired trademark rights. There is no evidence of the Respondent's use of, or demonstrable preparations to use, the Domain Name or a name corresponding to the Domain Name in connection with a *bona fide* offering of goods or services. The Panel finds that the composition of the Domain Name, carries a risk of implied affiliation with the Complainant.

The Panel finds that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Domain Name in accordance with paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular but without limitation, that if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

The Respondent knew of the Complainant when the Respondent registered the Domain Name. It is evident from the composition and use of the Domain Name, but also the contact details for the Domain Name registration listed by the Respondent. The Respondent has not offered any explanation to why it registered a Domain Name confusingly similar to the Complainant's trademark. The Respondent has tried to pass off

as the Complainant in an attempt to attract Internet users by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant. The record of this case does not entail any plausible legitimate reason for the Respondent to have registered the Domain Name without any association with or authorization from the Complainant. The activated MX-records and use of the false contact details also point to bad faith. In addition, the current non-use of the disputed domain name does not prevent a finding of bad faith under the doctrine of passive holding. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.3.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders the Domain Name <equinorex.org> transferred to the Complainant.

/Mathias Lilleengen/

Mathias Lilleengen

Sole Panelist

Date: November 30, 2023