

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION**

Banque Palatine v. antoine forille  
Case No. D2024-2404

### **1. The Parties**

The Complainant is Banque Palatine, France, represented by DBK Law Firm, France.

The Respondent is antoine forille, France.

### **2. The Domain Name and Registrar**

The disputed domain name <palatine-assetmanagement.com> 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 June 12, 2024. On June 13, 2024, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On June 14, 2024, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Not mentioned) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on June 17, 2024, 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 amended Complaint on June 17, 2024.

The Center verified that the Complaint together amended 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 June 20, 2024. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was July 10, 2024. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on July 15, 2024.

The Center appointed Louis-Bernard Buchman as the sole panelist in this matter on July 24, 2024. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

#### **4. Factual Background**

The Complainant is a French bank, founded in 1780, serving its client base of 13.000 small and medium-sized companies and 48.000 senior managers, offering them private banking and financial services and, through its subsidiary Palatine Asset Management, asset management services. The Complainant operates 30 branches in France, with nearly 1.000 employees in 2023. It is wholly owned by BPCE, one of the largest banking groups in France.

The Complainant owns several registered trademarks containing the term “palatine”, including, inter alia, French trademark No. 3314051, registered on September 22, 2004 (hereinafter referred to as: the “Mark”).

The Complainant owns the <palatine.fr> domain name, registered on October 13, 2004, which resolves to its official corporate website.

The disputed domain name was registered on March 23, 2024.

The disputed domain name resolved to an error page, and at the time of the Decision, it does not resolve to an active website.

#### **5. Parties' Contentions**

##### **A. Complainant**

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

Notably, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain name reproduces the Mark, in which it has rights, and is confusingly similar to the Mark insofar as the disputed domain name contains the Mark and that the English words “asset” and “management” after the Mark and a hyphen are not capable of dispelling the confusing similarity, as the Mark remains recognizable in the disputed domain name.

The Complainant also contends that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name and never had any affiliation with the Complainant (which never authorized the Respondent to use the Mark in any manner).

Furthermore, the Complainant contends that the Respondent had knowledge of the Mark and registered the disputed domain name in bad faith, and is also using it in bad faith under the passive holding doctrine.

##### **B. Respondent**

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

#### **6. Discussion and Findings**

##### **6.1. Procedural Aspects – Failure to Respond**

As aforementioned, no Response was received from the Respondent.

Under the Rules, Paragraphs 5(f) and 14(a), the effect of a default by the Respondent is that, in the absence of exceptional circumstances, the Panel shall proceed to a decision on the basis of the Complaint.

The Panel does not find any exceptional circumstance in this case which would cause the Panel to proceed differently.

Under Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy, it is the Complainant's burden to establish that all three of the required criteria for a transfer of the disputed domain name have been met, even in the event of a default.

Under Paragraph 14(b) of the Rules, the Panel is empowered to draw such inferences from the Respondent's default as it considers appropriate under the circumstances.

In this case, the Panel finds that as a result of the default, the Respondent has failed to rebut any of the reasonable factual assertions that are made and supported by evidence submitted by the Complainant. In particular, by defaulting and failing to respond, the Respondent has failed to offer the Panel any of the types of evidence set forth in Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy or otherwise, from which the Panel might conclude that the Respondent has any rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name, such as making legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name.

## **6.2. Requirements of Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy**

### **A. Identical or Confusingly Similar**

It is well accepted that 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 disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition, ("[WIPO Overview 3.0](#)"), section 1.7.

Based on the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.2.1.

The Panel finds that the Mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name.

Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.7.

While the addition of other terms here, such as "asset" and "management" (preceded by a hyphen), may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such terms does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the Mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.8.

Regarding the generic Top-Level Domain ("gTLD") ".com" in the disputed domain name, it is well established that a gTLD does not generally affect the assessment of a domain name for the purpose of determining identity or confusingly similarity. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.11.1.

Based on the available record, the Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

### **B. Rights or Legitimate Interests**

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the 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.

The Panel notes that for the registration of the disputed domain name, the name “antoine forille” was provided. The Panel is not aware, and no evidence has been brought forward, of the existence of a person or entity with such a name.

Having reviewed the record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant’s prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

Based on the available record, the Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

### **C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith**

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy sets out a list of non-exhaustive circumstances that may indicate that a domain name was registered and used in bad faith, but other circumstances may be relevant in assessing whether a respondent’s registration and use of a domain name is in bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.2.1.

Panels have found that the non-use of a domain name (including a blank or “coming soon” page) would not prevent a finding of bad faith under the doctrine of passive holding. Having reviewed the record, the Panel finds the non-use of the disputed domain name does not prevent a finding of bad faith in the circumstances of this proceeding. While panelists will look at the totality of the circumstances in each case, factors that have been considered relevant in applying the passive holding doctrine include: (i) the degree of distinctiveness or reputation of the complainant’s mark, (ii) the failure of the respondent to submit a response or to provide any evidence of actual or contemplated good-faith use, (iii) the respondent’s concealing its identity or use of false contact details (noted to be in breach of its registration agreement), and (iv) the implausibility of any good faith use to which the domain name may be put. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.3.

Having reviewed the record, the Panel notes the composition of the disputed domain name, which is confusingly similar to the Complainant’s Mark and prior domain name <palatine.fr>, both in use since 2004, and finds that in the circumstances of this case the passive holding of the disputed domain name does not prevent a finding of bad faith under the Policy.

Furthermore, it is well-established in prior UDRP decisions that where the respondent knew or should have known of a trademark prior to registering the disputed domain name, such conduct may be, in certain circumstances, evidence of bad faith registration. See *Weetabix Limited v. Mr. J. Clarke*, WIPO Case No. [D2001-0775](#).

A prior UDRP panel has confirmed that the Mark is well known (see *Banque Palatine v. ENP Multimedia & Art Production, ENP Multimedia & Art Production Ltd*, WIPO Case No. [D2023-2815](#)). Accordingly, the Panel finds it implausible that the Respondent chose to register the disputed domain name randomly with no knowledge of the Mark. See *Barney’s Inc. v. BNY Bulletin Board*, WIPO Case No. [D2000-0059](#); *Kate Spade, LLC v. Darmstadter Designs*, WIPO Case No. [D2001-1384](#), citing *Cellular One Group v. Paul Brien*, WIPO Case No. [D2000-0028](#); and *Semcorp Industries Limited v. Hu Huan Xin*, WIPO Case No. [D2001-1092](#).

In the present case, the Panel also notes that the Respondent has failed to provide any exculpatory information or persuasive reasoning that might have led the Panel to question the Complainant's arguments that the Respondent acted in bad faith by creating confusion to the detriment of the Complainant by registering the disputed domain name which is confusingly similar to the Mark.

In addition, considering the banking activity of the Complainant and the fact that banking is a highly regulated industry in France, the Panel finds it impossible to imagine any good faith use to which the disputed domain name could be put by the Respondent.

As a consequence, the Panel finds that the registration and use of the disputed domain name by the Respondent, who in appears moreover to be located in France where the Complainant is headquartered, constitutes bad faith under the Policy.

Based on the available record, the Panel finds the third element of the Policy has been established.

## **7. Decision**

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <palatine-assetmanagement.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

*/Louis-Bernard Buchman/*

**Louis-Bernard Buchman**

Sole Panelist

Date: August 6, 2024