

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION**

Confédération Nationale du Crédit Mutuel v. Frederic Barnes  
Case No. D2024-3196

### **1. The Parties**

The Complainant is Confédération Nationale du Crédit Mutuel, France, represented by MEYER & Partenaires, France.

The Respondent is Frederic Barnes, France.

### **2. The disputed domain name and Registrar**

The disputed domain name <credit-mutuel-connexions.com> is registered with Wild West Domains, LLC (the "Registrar").

### **3. Procedural History**

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on August 5, 2024. On August 5, 2024, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On August 6, 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 (Domains By Proxy, LLC) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on August 12, 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 August 12, 2024.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the 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 August 16, 2024. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was September 5, 2024. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on September 12, 2024.

The Center appointed Elise Dufour as the sole panelist in this matter on September 17, 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 one of the largest French banking and insurance services group with 3,178 offices in France, providing services to 12 million clients for more than a century.

The Complainant is the owner, amongst others, of the following trademark registrations consisting of the words "Credit Mutuel":

- CREDIT MUTUEL, French trademark No. 1646012 registered on July 26, 1991 in classes 16, 35, 36, 38, and 41; and
- CRÉDIT MUTUEL, European Union Trademark No. 018130616 registered on September 2, 2020 in classes 7, 9, 16, 35, 36, 38, 41, and 45;

The Complainant has also registered several domain names including the trademark CRÉDIT MUTUEL and notably <creditmutuel.com> registered on October 28, 1995, <creditmutuel.org> registered on June 3, 2002, and <creditmutuel.info> registered on September 13, 2001.

The disputed domain name was registered on July 3, 2024. It does not resolve to any active web page.

#### **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.

The Complainant contends that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's well-known CREDIT MUTUEL trademarks and domain names. Indeed, for the Complainant the mere addition of the word "connexions" does not prevent finding of confusing similarity as the Complainant's well-known trademark CREDIT MUTUEL is recognizable in the disputed domain name, as the sole distinctive part of the disputed domain name.

The Complainant argues that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name because it did not grant any license or authorization to use its mark in the disputed domain name. Further, the Respondent is not commonly known under the name "Credit Mutuel Connexions" and has not acquired a trademark or service mark under that name.

Finally, for the Complainant, the Complainant alleges that the disputed domain name has been registered and used in bad faith by the Respondent because the notoriety of the Complainant's mark creates a presumption of bad faith registration of the disputed domain name. Even though passively held, says the Complainant, the disputed domain name is used in bad faith in as much:

- the Complainant's trademark, which is entirely reproduced in the disputed domain name, has a strong reputation and is well-known;
- the Respondent has provided no evidence whatsoever of any actual or contemplated good faith use by it of the domain name;
- the contact details of the registrant are anonymous, the Respondent did so in order to avoid condemnations.

The Complainant concludes that the Respondent is undoubtedly not making any good faith use of the disputed domain name.

## **B. Respondent**

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

## **6. Discussion and Findings**

### **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.

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 the entirety of the CREDIT MUTUEL trademark is reproduced within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the trademark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.7.

The Panel also finds that the CREDIT MUTUEL trademark 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.

Although the addition of other terms, here "connexions", may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such term 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.

The addition of a generic Top-Level Domain ("TLD"), ".com" in the disputed domain name is typically disregarded under the first element confusing similarity test. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.11.

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 Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although 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 difficult 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 (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). 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.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds Complainant has established a prima facie case that Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. Respondent has not rebutted 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.

The composition of the disputed domain name is such to carry a risk of implied affiliation to the Complainant, which cannot constitute fair use. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.5.1.

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

### **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.

In the present case, the Panel notes that the composition of the disputed domain name indicates that Respondent was aware of the CREDIT MUTUEL trademark prior to registration of the disputed domain name.

Panels have found that the non-use of a domain name (including a blank or inactive webpage) would not prevent a finding of bad faith under the doctrine of passive holding. Having reviewed the available 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. Although 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, and (iii) the respondent's concealing its identity or use of false contact details (noted to be in breach of its registration agreement). [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.3.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel notes the distinctiveness or reputation of the Complainant's trademark, the composition of the disputed domain name, the fact that the contact details of the Respondent were masked by the use of a privacy service on the publicly-available WhoIs and that the information ultimately disclosed for the Respondent by the Registrar appears fictitious or incomplete given the inability for delivery by the courier of the Center's written notice of this proceeding, 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.

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

## **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 <credit-mutuel-connexions.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

*/Elise Dufour/*

**Elise Dufour**

Sole Panelist

Date: October 1, 2024