

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Equinor ASA v. Gustav Witzoe
Case No. D2024-3467

1. The Parties

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

The Respondent is Name Redacted¹.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <propertyequinor.com> (the “Domain Name”) is registered with NameCheap, Inc. (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on August 26, 2024. On August 26, 2024, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the Domain Name. On August 26, 2024, 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 service provided by Withheld for Privacy ehf) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on August 30, 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 amendment to the Complaint on August 30, 2024.

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”).

¹ The Respondent appears to have used the name of a third party when registering the Domain Name. In light of the potential identity theft, the Panel has redacted the Respondent’s name from this decision. However, the Panel has attached as Annex 1 to this decision an instruction to the Registrar regarding transfer of the Domain Name, which includes the name of the Respondent. The Panel has authorized the Center to transmit Annex 1 to the Registrar as part of the order in this proceeding, and has indicated Annex 1 to this decision shall not be published due to the exceptional circumstances of this case. See *Banco Bradesco S.A. v. FAST-12785241 Attn. Bradescourgente.net / Name Redacted*, WIPO Case No. [D2009-1788](#).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on September 9, 2024. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was September 29, 2024. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on September 30, 2024.

The Center appointed Mathias Lilleengen as the sole panelist in this matter on October 14, 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 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, the Complainant filed trademark applications worldwide for EQUINOR, 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, such as <equinor.com>.

The Domain Name was registered on August 20, 2024. At the time of the Complaint, the Domain Name resolved to an error page. At the time of drafting the Decision, the Domain Name redirected to the Complainant's webpage.

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 widespread trademark EQUINOR as the Domain Name incorporates the entire trademark. The additional term "property" does not prevent confusing similarity between the Domain Name and the trademark.

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 the Respondent knew it incorporated a well-recognized and distinctive trademark in which the Respondent had no prior rights. The non-use of the Domain Name does not prevent a finding of bad faith under the doctrine of passive holding. The EQUINOR trademark is well-known and distinctive. The Respondent's contact information is hidden through a privacy service, and the Respondent has listed false contact details behind the privacy service. The Mail Exchange ("MX") records have been activated for the Domain Name with the potential for fraudulent emails.

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. 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 "property". 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; see [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. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.5.1.

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 most likely knew of the Complainant when it registered the Domain Name. It follows from the fame of the Complainant. The use of the Domain Name does not prevent a finding of bad faith. The Complainant's trademark is distinctive and well-known. The Respondent has not offered any explanation to why it registered a domain name confusingly similar to the Complainant's trademark, nor provided any evidence of actual or contemplated good faith use of the Domain Name. It is implausible that the Respondent may put the Domain Name into any good faith use. The composition of the Domain Name, the

activation of the MX-records with potential for fraudulent emails, current redirection to the Complainant's website, and the false contact details, further point to bad faith.

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 the Domain Name <propertyequinor.com> transferred to the Complainant.

/Mathias Lilleengen/

Mathias Lilleengen

Sole Panelist

Date: October 18, 2024