

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Equinor ASA v. Taylor Eq
Case No. D2025-0358

1. The Parties

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

The Respondent is Taylor Eq, United States of America.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <eqnr-energy.com> is registered with Gname.com Pte. Ltd. (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on January 29, 2025. On January 29, 2025, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On January 30, 2025, 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 (Redacted for Privacy) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on January 30, 2025, 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 the same date.

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 February 3, 2025. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was February 23, 2025. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent’s default on February 24, 2025.

The Center appointed Alvaro Loureiro Oliveira as the sole panelist in this matter on February 26, 2025. 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 Equinor ASA, 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 ASA in 2018. The name change was announced worldwide on different media platforms.

In parallel to the name change, EQUINOR trademark applications have been filed worldwide, among them Norwegian trademark registration No. 298811, registered on July 1, 2020. The Complainant presented a list of trademark applications and registrations worldwide (Annexes E and F to the Complaint).

The Complainant is the owner of more than 100 domain name registrations containing the EQUINOR mark distributed among generic Top-Level Domains (“gTLDs”) and country code Top-Level Domains (“ccTLDs”).

The disputed domain name was registered on July 29, 2024. Although the disputed domain name resolves to an inactive page, the Complainant has provided evidence that the subdomain <m. eqnr-energy.com> led to a page displaying a log in site and stating, in Portuguese, that they are an energy company based in Stavanger Norway, and included an image of the Complainant’s Oslo office.

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 provides evidence of trademark registrations and contends that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Complainant’s trademark EQUINOR, as it is formed by the first two letters “e” and “q” with the removal of the vowels “u”, “i” and “o.”..In addition, EQNR is the Complainant’s share ticker.

The Complainant argues that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed 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 clear evidence of the Respondent’s use of the disputed domain name in connection with an attempt to misguide consumers as to its origin. The Complainant argues that the Respondent has used the disputed domain name in connection with a website that offers investment opportunities using the Complainant’s EQNR share ticker and several images of oil platforms, as well as of the Complainant’s office, as if the Complainant would be endorsing the investments being offered by the Respondent.

The Complainant believes it is evident from the composition of the disputed domain name that the Respondent chose to register a name that is confusingly similar to the Complainant’s trademark. 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.

B. Respondent

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

6. Discussion and Findings

The Policy, in its paragraph 4(a), determines that three elements must be established by a complainant to obtain relief. These elements are:

- i. the disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark in which the complainant has rights; and
- ii. the respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect to the disputed domain name; and
- iii. the disputed domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

The Complainant must prove in this administrative proceeding that each of the aforementioned three elements is present in order to obtain the transfer of the disputed domain name.

In accordance with paragraph 14(a) of the Rules, if the Respondent does not submit a Response, in the absence of exceptional circumstances, the Panel shall decide the dispute based upon the Complaint.

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 disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the EQUINOR trademark.

The disputed domain name comprises a contraction of the mark EQUINOR, formed by the initial letter "e" and the consonants and without the vowels "u", "i" and "o". The Panel considers that the trademark remains recognizable within the disputed domain name and as such finds it to be confusingly similar to it. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.9.

The Complainant has presented consistent evidence of ownership of the trademark EQUINOR in jurisdictions throughout the world, by presenting International registrations for it, as well as comprehensive evidence of the use of the trademark. The addition of the term "energy" in the disputed domain name does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the Complainant's EQUINOR trademark.

The trademark is clearly recognizable in the disputed domain name, the addition of other terms (whether descriptive, geographical, pejorative, meaningless, or otherwise) would not prevent a finding of confusing similarity under the first element. See section 1.8 of the [WIPO Overview 3.0](#).

Lastly, the Panel notes that, in accordance with section 1.11.1 of the [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), the gTLD, in this case ".com", is typically disregarded under the first element.

Given the above, the Panel concludes that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the registered trademark of the Complainant.

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.

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.

Given the clear evidence that the trademark EQUINOR is registered in the name of the Complainant and is widely known as identifying the Complainant’s activities, that the expression “EQNR” is a clear contraction of this mark, that, based on the available record, the Complainant has not licensed this mark to the Respondent, and evidence that the Respondent is using the disputed domain name in connection with a web page that reproduces the contraction of the trademark and makes references to the Complainant’s activities and office, such as a photo of the Complainant’s Oslo office, while apparently offering investment opportunities, which can result in user confusion, the Panel finds that the Complainant has established prima facie case that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name.

In the absence of a Response, the Respondent has not rebutted such prima facie case.

The Panel, thus, finds for the Complainant under the second element 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.

In the present case, the Panel finds that the Respondent has more likely than not registered the disputed domain name with the purpose of taking unfair advantage of the Complainant’s mark.

The addition of the term “energy” in the disputed domain name points towards the Respondent’s likely intent to give the impression that the disputed domain name is associated with the Complainant. In the absence of any reasonable explanation for the selection of the disputed domain name by the Respondent, and in the circumstances of this case, the Panel finds that it is more likely than not, that the disputed domain name has been registered to take unfair advantage of the trademark owned by the Complainant.

The fact that the subdomain <m. eqnr-energy.com> resolves to a webpage displaying images of the Complainant’s Oslo office and oil platforms while offering investment opportunities using the contraction of the Complainant’s EQUINOR trademark suggests at least the intent of association with the Complainant. There is, thus, little doubt that the Respondent’s main goal is to profit from the confusion created with Internet users.

Hence, the Panel finds that the Respondent registered and used the disputed domain name deliberately in order to take advantage of the Complainant’s trademark and reputation and to give credibility to their apparent investment operations.

In the totality of the circumstances, the Panel finds the Respondent has registered and is using the disputed domain name in bad faith.

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 <eqnr-energy.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Alvaro Loureiro Oliveira/

Alvaro Loureiro Oliveira

Sole Panelist

Date: March 12, 2025