



Telecommunication Newsletter Switzerland

Federal Office of Communications is reviewing Separation of Functions in Relation to .ch Internet Addresses

1 SWITCH as Registry

Within the Ordinance on addressing resources in the telecommunication sector, the Federal Council delegated the administration of .ch internet addresses to the SWITCH Foundation. SWITCH assumed these functions since 2003 and its mandate will expire in 2015.

Currently, SWITCH is acting as *registry* on the one hand, i.e. coordinating the .ch internet address with the global system of domain names (DNS) and, through a subsidiary, as *registrar* on the other hand, i.e. giving the possibility to the users to acquire a .ch domain name at regulated prices.

2 SWICH as Registrar

In the function of registrar, SWITCH's subsidiary enters into direct competition with other service providers. Due to its official mandate, SWITCH thereby impedes healthy competition in the market.

SWITCH even used its registry platform to promote its services as registrar and created some confusion with customers by providing its official registry services under the domain name www.nic.ch while using its well-known name SWITCH for providing its registrar services under www.switch.ch.

This led the Federal Office of Communication to lodge a supervision claim against SWITCH, which was largely upheld by the courts.

3 Separation of Registry and Registrar Functions

Since the registry mandate ends by 2015, Federal Office of Communications takes the opportunity to assess a separation of the functions of registry and of registrar.

The main focus for service providers will be the transfer of about 450'000 SWITCH customers or about 1.2 million .ch domain names to providers active in the market. The office has therefore organized consultation procedure and information sessions; the outcome will be the draft of a revised Ordinance on addressing resources.

4 Comment

Opening the registration of the customers to the private sector only is certainly a step in the right direction. The lessons learned from the past, in particular with regard to telecommunications services, showed that a company offering public and private services usually leads to distortion of competition that should be avoided.

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