

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Ministerium für Inneres, Bau und Digitalisierung, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
v. Deshaun White
Case No. D2023-0370

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Ministerium für Inneres, Bau und Digitalisierung, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany, represented by Nesselhauf Rechtsanwälte, Germany.

The Respondent is Deshaun White, United States of America.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <mv-regierung.com> is registered with Hosting Concepts B.V. d/b/a Registrar.eu. (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on January 26, 2023. On January 27, 2023, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On January 30, 2023, 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 February 1, 2023, 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 February 3, 2023.

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 8, 2023. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was February 28, 2023. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent’s default on March 9, 2023.

The Center appointed Edoardo Fano as the sole panelist in this matter on March 15, 2023. 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.

The Panel has not received any requests from the Complainant or the Respondent regarding further submissions, waivers or extensions of deadlines, and the Panel has not found it necessary to request any further information from the Parties.

Having reviewed the communication records in the case file provided by the Center, the Panel finds that the Center has discharged its responsibility under the Rules, paragraph 2(a), “to employ reasonably available means calculated to achieve actual notice to Respondent”. Therefore, the Panel shall issue its Decision based upon the Complaint, the Policy, the Rules, and the Supplemental Rules, and without the benefit of a response from the Respondent.

The language of the proceeding is English, being the language of the Registration Agreement, as per paragraph 11(a) of the Rules.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, a German Federal State represented by Ministerium für Inneres, Bau und Digitalisierung (Ministry of Interior, Construction and Digitization), owning the following trademark registration for MV (standing for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern):

- European Union Trademark Registration No. 018351769 for MV and design, registered on May 5, 2021.

The Complainant also operates on the Internet, its official website being “www.regierung-mv.de”.

The Complainant provided evidence in support of the above.

According to the Whois records, the disputed domain name was registered on April 14, 2022, and it resolves to a parking page.

5. Parties’ Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant states that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to its trademark MV, as the disputed domain name wholly incorporates the Complainant’s trademark, as well as to its official website “www.regierung-mv.de”.

Moreover, the Complainant asserts that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name since there is no plausible legitimate interest for a third party to use a domain that will inevitably be understood as a reference to the Complainant. The disputed domain name is used by the Respondent to direct Internet users to a parking page with advertisement links to other websites.

The Complainant submits that the Respondent has registered the disputed domain name in bad faith, since the Complainant’s trademark MV was targeted by the Respondent as it was registered within the disputed domain name in combination with the term “regierung” (meaning “government” in German), therefore sharing the same elements of the address of the Complainant’s official website, although in a different sequence. The Complainant contends that the only plausible use of the disputed domain name is to create confusion with the Complainant’s trademark and official website, qualifying as bad faith registration and use.

B. Respondent

The Respondent has made no reply to the Complainant's contentions and is in default. In reference to paragraphs 5(f) and 14 of the Rules, no exceptional circumstances explaining the default have been put forward or are apparent from the record.

A respondent is not obliged to participate in a proceeding under the Policy, but if it fails to do so, reasonable facts asserted by a complainant may be taken as true, and appropriate inferences, in accordance with paragraph 14(b) of the Rules, may be drawn. See WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition ("[WIPO Overview 3.0](#)"), section 4.3.

6. Discussion and Findings

Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy lists three elements, which the Complainant must satisfy in order to succeed:

- (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 of the disputed domain name; and
- (iii) the disputed domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

The Panel finds that the Complainant is the owner of the trademark MV and that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar thereto.

Regarding the addition of the term "regierung" (meaning "government" in German), the Panel notes that it is now well established that the addition of other terms (whether descriptive, geographical terms, letters, or otherwise) to a domain name does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the trademark. The addition of the term "regierung" does not therefore prevent the disputed domain name from being confusingly similar to the Complainant's trademark. See [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.8.

It is also well accepted that a generic Top-Level Domain ("gTLD"), in this case ".com", is typically ignored when assessing the similarity between a trademark and a domain name. See [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.11.1.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has therefore met its burden of proving that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's trademark, pursuant to the Policy, paragraph 4(a)(i).

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy requires the Complainant to prove that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name.

The Respondent may establish rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name by demonstrating in accordance with paragraph 4(c) of the Policy any of the following circumstances, in particular but without limitation:

"(i) before any notice to you of the dispute, your 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; or

- (ii) you (as an individual, business, or other organization) have been commonly known by the domain name, even if you have acquired no trademark or service mark rights; or
- (iii) you are making a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the domain name, without intent for commercial gain to misleadingly divert consumers or to tarnish the trademark or service mark at issue.”

According to paragraph 4(a) of the Policy, the Complainant has the burden of proving the three elements of the Policy. However, satisfying the burden of proving a lack of the Respondent’s rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name according to paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy is potentially quite difficult, since proving a negative circumstance is generally more complicated than establishing a positive one. As such, it is well accepted that it is sufficient for the Complainant to make a *prima facie* case that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name in order to shift the burden of production of evidence to the Respondent. If the Respondent fails to demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name in accordance with paragraph 4(c) of the Policy or on any other basis, the Complainant is deemed to have satisfied paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy.

The Complainant in its Complaint, and as set out above, has established a *prima facie* case that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. It asserts that the Respondent, who is not associated with the Complainant in any way, is not commonly known by the disputed domain name, and is not making a *bona fide* offering of goods or services or a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name: the disputed domain name is used by the Respondent to direct Internet users to a parking page. The use of the disputed domain name to host a parked page comprising pay-per-click (“PPC”) links does not represent a *bona fide* offering where such links compete with or capitalize on the reputation and goodwill of the Complainant’s trademarks. See [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.9.

The *prima facie* case presented by the Complainant is enough to shift the burden of production to the Respondent to demonstrate that it has rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. However, the Respondent has not presented any evidence of any rights or legitimate interests it may have in the disputed domain name.

The Panel therefore finds that paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy has been satisfied.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy provides that “[f]or the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, the following circumstances, in particular but without limitation, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith:

- (i) circumstances indicating that [the respondent has] registered or [has] acquired the domain name primarily for the purpose of selling, renting, or otherwise transferring the domain name registration to the complainant who is the owner of the trademark or service mark or to a competitor of the complainant, for valuable consideration in excess of [its] documented out-of-pocket costs directly related to the domain name; or
- (ii) [the respondent has] registered the domain name in order to prevent the owner of the trademark or service mark from reflecting the mark in a corresponding domain name, provided that [the respondent has] engaged in a pattern of such conduct; or
- (iii) [the respondent has] registered the domain name primarily for the purpose of disrupting the business of a competitor; or
- (iv) by using the domain name, [the respondent has] intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to [the respondent’s] website or other on-line location, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the complainant’s mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of

[the respondent's] web site or location or of a product or service on [the respondent's] web site or location.

Regarding the registration in bad faith of the disputed domain name, the reputation of the Complainant's trademark MV and official website "www.regierung-mv.de" for providing information about the German Federal State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is clearly established and the Panel finds that the Respondent likely knew of the Complainant and its trademark and website, and deliberately registered and used the disputed domain name in bad faith, especially because of the composition of the disputed domain name, almost identical to the domain name used by the Complainant for its official website, and the content of the parking page to which the disputed domain name resolves, which consists of PPC links, including links to the same information services as the Complainant offers, without the Respondent providing any explanation for the registration of the disputed domain name.

In fact, the Panel finds that the disputed domain name is also used in bad faith since in the relevant parking page there are PPC links, even in the case where they are automatically generated, referring to some of the same information services as those of the Complainant, and the Respondent cannot disclaim responsibility for the parking page content. See [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.5.

The above suggests to the Panel that the Respondent intentionally registered and is using the disputed domain name in order to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to its parking page in accordance with paragraph 4(b)(iv) of the Policy.

Furthermore, the Panel considers that the nature of the inherently misleading disputed domain name, which includes the Complainant's trademark in its entirety with the addition of the term "regierung", as in the address of the Complainant's official website, further supports a finding of bad faith. See [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.2.1.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has presented evidence to satisfy its burden of proof with respect to the issue of whether the Respondent has registered and is using the disputed domain name in bad faith.

The Panel therefore finds that paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy has been satisfied.

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 <mv-regierung.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Edoardo Fano/

Edoardo Fano

Sole Panelist

Date: March 29, 2023