

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

voestalpine AG v. Name Redacted, voestalpine-group
Case No. D2026-3513

1. The Parties

The Complainant is voestalpine AG, Austria, represented by Jell Patent Attorney, Austria.

The Respondent is Name Redacted¹, voestalpine-group, United States of America.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <voestalpine-group.com> is registered with Tucows Domains Inc. (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on August 7, 2026. On August 10, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On the same date, 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 (Contact Privacy Inc. Customer 0178281654) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on August 11, 2026, 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 the same date.

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").

¹ The Respondent appears to have used the name of a senior accountant with the Complainant to register the disputed domain name. In light of the potential identity theft, the Panel has redacted this name from this Decision. However, the Panel has attached as Annex 1 to this Decision an instruction to the Registrar regarding transfer of the disputed domain name, which includes the name of this person. The Panel has authorized the Center to transmit Annex 1 to the Registrar as part of the order in this proceeding, and has indicated that Annex 1 to this Decision shall not be published due to the exceptional circumstances of this case.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 August 17, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was September 6, 2026. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on September 8, 2026.

The Center appointed Jane Lambert as the sole panelist in this matter on September 11, 2026. 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 a public company incorporated with limited liability in Austria which was founded in 1938. It is the holding company of a multinational group of companies in steelmaking, heavy engineering and capital goods manufacturing. The group employs 48,654 persons in Austria and other countries. According to its annual report and accounts for the year ended March 31, 2021, its total assets were EUR 14.9 billion, and its net income was EUR-31.7 million; its revenue for the year ended March 31, 2022, was EUR 14.9 billion.

The Complainant is the registered proprietor of the following international trade marks:

Mark	Number	Registration Date	Designations	Classes
VOEST-ALPINE	454942	April 17, 1980	AT, BA, BY, CH, DZ, EG, HR, KZ, LI, MD, MK, RS, RU, UA, VN	1, 4, 6-9, 11, 12, 17, 19, 20, 22, 35, 37, and 40-42
VOESTALPINE	1499567	January 11, 2019	AT, AU, EM, GB, IN, JP, KR, MX, NO, TR, US, CH, CN, IR, RU	1, 2, 6-12, 14, 15, 17, 19-21, 31, 32, 35-42, and 44
VOESTALPINE	1497510	February 21, 2019	EM, CN, US	1, 2, 6-12, 14, 15, 17, 19-21, 31, 32, 35-42, and 44

All that is known of the Respondent is the name and contact details disclosed by the Registrar and the Respondent's use of a privacy service.

The disputed domain name was registered on May 12, 2026. According to the Complaint, on the day it was registered, the disputed domain name was used as an email address to send emails purporting to come from the Complainant. The Respondent sent emails incorporating the disputed domain name to a supplier of welding and industrial products in the United Kingdom. Using the emails [...]@voestalpine-group.com and [...]@voestalpine-group.com, the Respondent pretended to be [...], a purported senior accountant with the Complainant and voestalpine Böhler Welding UK Ltd, one of its subsidiaries.

On the pretext of an annual account reconciliation, the Respondent requested a list of outstanding invoices and contact details of the person in charge of finance. The Respondent then sent that person a letter purporting to notify a change of bankers and requesting that all future payments be made exclusively to a newly designated HSBC account. That letter reproduced a figurative sign corresponding to the Complainant's figurative trade mark registrations together with the Complainant's corporate motto "ONE STEP AHEAD."

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each element required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name and requests that the disputed domain name be transferred to it.

Notably, the Complainant contends that it is the registered proprietor of the international and European Union trade marks VOESTALPINE and VOEST-ALPINE to which the disputed domain name is confusingly similar. The disputed domain name reproduces the VOESTALPINE mark in its entirety and without alteration. It also reproduces the VOEST-ALPINE mark except for the addition of a hyphen.

The Complainant submits that where the relevant trade mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name, the domain name is usually found to be confusingly similar for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(i) of the Policy. The VOESTALPINE mark is the dominant and only distinctive element of the disputed domain name. The same applies to the VOEST-ALPINE mark where the only difference is a hyphen which is aurally imperceptible and visually negligible.

Adding the term "-group" does not avoid a finding of confusing similarity. "Group" is a common English term denoting parent and subsidiary companies, including financial conglomerates, and is therefore purely descriptive of the Complainant itself. Indeed, the Complainant uses the very same term for its corporate group pages at ["/www.voestalpine.com/group/en/"](http://www.voestalpine.com/group/en/). Consequently, the additional term reinforces the impression that the disputed domain name emanates from the Complainant. The Complainant notes that UDRP panels have consistently held that the addition of descriptive or dictionary terms to a complainant's mark does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity.

The generic Top-Level Domain ".com" is a standard registration requirement and is disregarded in the assessment of confusing similarity.

Visually, phonetically and conceptually, the disputed domain name is almost identical to the Complainant's trade marks. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to a trade mark in which the Complainant has rights within the meaning of paragraph 4(a)(i) of the Policy.

The Complainant argues that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name.

First, the Complainant avers that it has never authorized, licensed, or permitted the Respondent to use its trade mark VOESTALPINE or to register any domain name incorporating it. There is no relationship or affiliation between the Respondent and the Complainant.

Secondly, there is no evidence that the Respondent has been commonly known by the disputed domain name or by any name corresponding to "VOESTALPINE" or "VOEST-ALPINE". Moreover, the Respondent does not hold any trade mark or other rights corresponding to the disputed domain name. The Respondent's entry of "voestalpine-group" as the registrant's organization name in the registration data is self-serving and does not establish the contrary.

Thirdly, the Respondent is not using the disputed domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services, nor for any legitimate noncommercial or fair use. The disputed domain name has been used only to impersonate a senior employee of the Complainant and of one of its subsidiaries in fraudulent email correspondence directed at a trading partner of a member of the Complainant's group. The Complainant further notes that panels have consistently held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity - including impersonation, phishing and other types of fraud - can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent.

Fourthly, the disputed domain name consists of the Complainant's trade mark VOESTALPINE in its entirety and merely adds the descriptive term "group", which the Complainant itself uses to designate its corporate group. Such a composition carries a high risk of implied affiliation and cannot constitute fair use, as it effectively suggests sponsorship or endorsement by the Complainant.

The Complainant argues that it has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The burden of production shifted to the Respondent. It follows that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name within the meaning of paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy.

The Complainant asserts that the disputed domain name was registered and is being used in bad faith.

It refers to the Respondent's attempt to impersonate Name Redacted, more particularly mentioned in the Factual Background, as part of a plot to persuade the Complainant's supplier to make payments due to voestalpine Böhler Welding UK Ltd. to a bank account that the Respondent had set up. The Complainant says that that attempt falls squarely within paragraph 4(b)(iv) of the Policy, since the Respondent used the disputed domain name to impersonate a senior employee of the Complainant and a member of its group in an attempt to obtain commercial gain by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's VOESTALPINE mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of its communications.

The Complainant adds that the Respondent's initial concealment of its identity behind a privacy service further supports its assertion of registration and use in bad faith. Also, the contact details that it gave to the Registrar are manifestly false and geographically impossible. Contact is possible only via a free webmail address at "[...].@gmx.us", which is irreconcilable with the claimed corporate identity.

B. Respondent

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

6. Discussion and Findings

The Respondent's agreement for the registration of the disputed domain name incorporated paragraph 4(a) of the Policy:

"Applicable Disputes. You are required to submit to a mandatory administrative proceeding in the event that a third party (a "complainant") asserts to the applicable Provider, in compliance with the Rules of Procedure, that

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

In the administrative proceeding, the complainant must prove that each of these three elements are present."

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 trade mark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("[WIPO Overview 3.1](#)"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of the VOESTALPINE and VOEST-ALPINE trade marks for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.2.1.

The entirety of the VOESTALPINE mark is reproduced within the disputed domain name. The Panel also finds that the VOEST-ALPINE mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the marks for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.7.

Although the addition of other terms, here “-group”, 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 marks for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.8.

The Panel therefore finds that 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 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 that 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 3.1](#), section 2.1.

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

Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity, here claimed as attempting to divert payments due to the Complainant’s subsidiary to a bogus bank account or other types of fraud, can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.13.1.

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. One of those circumstances is as follows:

“(iv) by using the domain name, you have intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to your web site 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 your web site or location or of a product or service on your web site or location.”

The Panel has already found the disputed domain name to be confusingly similar to the Complainant's marks. The Complainant's trade marks substantially predate the registration of the disputed domain name and are distinctive; together with the composition of the disputed domain name, these circumstances indicate that the Respondent targeted the Complainant when registering it, a conclusion confirmed by the Respondent's subsequent use of the disputed domain name for fraudulent purposes. The Respondent has used the disputed domain name intentionally to attract for commercial gain, future payments from a customer of one of the Complainant's subsidiaries, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark as to the location of the subsidiary's bank account.

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy also sets out a list of non-exhaustive circumstances that may indicate that a domain name was registered and used in bad faith, but other circumstances may be relevant in assessing whether a respondent's registration and use of a domain name is in bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.2.1.

Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity, here claimed as redirecting payments due to the Complainant's subsidiary, constitutes bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.4.

Having reviewed the record, the Panel finds the Respondent's registration and use of the disputed domain name constitutes bad faith under the Policy.

The Panel therefore 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 <voestalpine-group.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Jane Lambert/

Jane Lambert

Sole Panelist

Date: September 18, 2026