

HOTEL.EU

7 Years of Struggle for
One Domain Name

by Jan Carron



Some battles are not fought with weapons or in an arena, but behind a screen, where milliseconds make the difference, with endless paperwork and courtrooms far from home. My fight to secure hotel.eu was one of those. It lasted seven years. Seven long years filled with frustration, hope, and finally... triumph.

How It Began

To truly understand this story, we need to go back to 1985. That year, the distribution of .com domain names began. Almost immediately, American companies claimed nearly all of them. European entrepreneurs like me were left empty-handed. The internet was expanding at lightning speed, yet Europe had no digital identity of its own.

When the European Commission finally decided in 2006 to launch the .eu extension, it was historic. For the first time, European businesses had the chance to profile themselves with a truly European domain name. For me, already working on hotel.be, only one name mattered: hotel.eu.





The First Attempt – A Race Against the Clock

The procedure to claim a .eu domain name was strict. Only officially accredited registrars could participate. They all had to submit their clients' requests at the exact same moment. It was a digital lottery: whoever's request technically got through first, won.

I still remember the tension vividly. Everything was prepared. But when the message came in, disappointment hit hard. There were more than a hundred requests ahead of mine. My attempt was literally just a few hundredths of a second too late. **Hotel.eu slipped through my fingers.**

Something Wasn't Right...

Still, I couldn't let it go. How could so many companies have been faster? I dug deeper into the public ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) procedure, which was fully available online. There I discovered something that wouldn't let me rest: an Austrian company had set up no fewer than 28 shell companies, solely to increase their chances of securing valuable domain names.

That was not what the .eu project was meant to be. It was fraud. So, I filed a complaint with the European Commission.





Two Years of Proceedings ... and Finally Justice

What followed was a long digital legal process. I was given the chance to defend my case, and every time I presented my arguments, I felt justice was on my side. And yes: two years later, the Commission ruled in my favor. **Hotel.eu was officially awarded to me..**

I thought: Finally! *The battle is over.* But I had underestimated my opponent.

A New Frontline: The Courtroom in Salzburg

The Austrian company refused to accept the decision. Under the rules, they were entitled to continue the fight in their own country. And so I found myself— not once, but twice— in front of a judge in Salzburg.

The case dragged on. For five years. At times it felt endless. Something almost absurd happened during that time: the judge handling my case suffered a heart attack. Instead of handing the case over, he insisted on continuing to handle it himself. It delayed everything enormously, but in a strange way, it also made the outcome feel more personal.

After two years, the judge ruled in my favor. But of course, my opponent appealed. That appeal dragged on for another three years. All in all, it took seven years before I was finally, definitively recognized as the rightful owner of **hotel.eu**.



The Value of One Name

You might ask: why fight so hard for a single domain name?

The answer is simple. Hotel.eu was not just any name. It was the most sought-after .eu domain in the world, second only to s*x.eu. That says everything about the power and value of this digital key.

For me, it was more than prestige. It became a symbol of fairness and perseverance.

And Today...

Today, hotel.eu is far more than just a domain name. It is the foundation of our mission: building a fairer and more transparent online travel industry. Together with my business partners, we focus on **direct booking**, allowing hotels and travelers to connect directly—without exorbitant commissions.

With **AI search technology** and **tokenomics**, we are building a platform that inspires people to explore Europe. Because ultimately, that's what it's all about: traveling, experiencing, and connecting.

Every time I type in the name hotel.eu, I think back to those seven years of struggle. And every single time, I smile. Because I know: it was worth it.