

# **SaudiNIC Experiences in Managing the Saudi ccTLD (.sa)**

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# About KACST

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- **An independent scientific organization administratively belonging to the Prime Minister - established in 1979**
- **Played a pioneering role in establishing GULFNET, and linking it to the BITNET at the end of 1980's**
- **Played a fundamental and positive role in the introduction of the Internet to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the end of 1998 by establishing Internet Services Unit (ISU)**
- **Managed the domain name registration under the country code (ccTLD) of Saudi Arabia (.SA) since 1995**
- **After establishing ISU in 1998, the task of domain name registration has been handled by the Saudi Network Information Center (SaudiNIC) of ISU**



# About SaudiNIC

- **SaudiNIC is the entity that is responsible for the administration of the domain name space for the country code (ccTLD) of Saudi Arabia (.SA).**
  - This includes the operation of the DNS root servers for .SA domains as well as the registration and maintenance of all third-level .SA domain names.
- **SaudiNIC is also a Local Internet Registry (LIR) authorized by RIPE-NCC, which is responsible for allocating blocks of IP addresses to universities and local ISPs in Saudi Arabia.**
- **Mission Statement:**
  - The mission of SaudiNIC is to provide an equitable, just and competent technical and administrative management of domain name registrations and IP address allocations for Internet community in Saudi Arabia.



# About SaudiNIC

## Main Tasks

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- **Setting up policies regulating domain name registrations and IP address allocations.**
- **Domain name registrations**
- **Provide databases for the registered domain names**
- **IP address allocations**
- **Coordinating with other GCC, Arab, and International ccTLDs.**
- **Participating in international events supervised by ICANN, RIPE, ISOC, ITU, WIPO, and any other activities that are related to domain names and IP numbers.**



# About SaudiNIC

## History

- **05.1994** delegation by IANA
- **10.1995** registering the first domain name
- **01.1997** publishing 1st domain name registration form and regulation
- **07.1998** publishing version 1.0 of the regulation
- **11.1998** open “net.sa” for local ISPs
- **07.1999** publishing version 1.1 of the regulation
- **07.1999** SaudiNIC workshop for ISPs
- **02.2000** publishing version 1.2 of the regulation
- **11.2001** publishing version 1.3 of the regulation



# Organization Structure

## Staffing

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- **SaudiNIC started with two persons and now it has 4 people:**
  - manager, database administrator, registrar (clerk), and webmaster.
- **The technical support and operation of the DNS servers are provided by the Network Operation Center of ISU.**



# Organization Structure

## Operation Groups

- **Regulations Development**
  - The responsibility of SaudiNIC manager.
  - Done regularly once every 1-2 years.
  - Group effort.
  - Consultation with local community such as universities and service providers as well as individual groups.
  - Reviewed by the legal department of KACST
  - Approved by the VP of KACST
- **Registration**
  - Registration procedures are defined and drafted by SaudiNIC staff and approved by the SaudiNIC manager.
  - Two levels of helpdesk support are provided. First level covers most of all support provided to SaudiNIC's customers. The second level provides mostly technical supports.
  - Day-to-day registration activities (add new, modify, and delete domain names).
  - Workshop to ISPs regarding domain name registration policies and registration procedures.
- **Database and Software Development**
  - Administering and monitoring the SaudiNIC database server
  - Performing backups
  - Developing and maintaining in-house software applications for automating domain name registrations and generating reports.
- **Technical Support**
  - Operating and monitoring the DNS servers
  - Securing the DNS and database server.
  - Providing 24x7 connectivity to the DNS and database server.
  - Coordinating with our secondary DNS servers around the world.
  - Updating the information records of .sa with ICANN/IANA
  - These tasks are provided by ISU-NOC.
- **Web Development**
  - Create and maintain up to date web site in dual language (Arabic and English)
  - Create web applications





# **SaudiNIC**

## **Financial**

- **SaudiNIC has been funded by KACST since its establishment.**
- **Operation and staffing cost are part of KACST budget.**
- **Domain name registrations are provided free of charge for the purpose of encouraging the local community to use and utilize the Internet for e-businesses and other applications.**



# Regulations Development

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- **Registration regulations have gone through a number of major revisions.**
  - The current version was written on the 17th of November, 2001.
- **Regulation developments were done through group efforts**
  - SaudiNIC
  - ISU staff
  - consultation of interested parties such as
    - universities, Internet service providers, private sectors, Ministry of Commerce, and individuals.
- **They get reviewed by the legal department of KACST.**
- **Approved by the senior management of KACST**



# Regulations Applicability

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- **The "Domain Name Registration Regulation in Saudi Arabia" is the guideline for the registration procedure followed by SaudiNIC staff.**
- **All registrations without exceptions are done according to this regulation on first come, first served basis.**
- **The regulation is applied equally over all different type of entities (governmental, educational, private, non for profit, and individuals).**



# Regulations

## Major Points

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- **First come first served**
- **Applicant bears the responsibility of obtaining legal permission to use the domain name**
  - the use or registration of a domain name does not interfere with or infringe upon the right of any third party
- **Generic names (e.g., www, internet) and famous people will not be registered under any domain**
- **Domain names are NOT for sale!**
- **Registering a domain name does not confer any legal rights to that name**
- **"pub.sa" is open for personal names**
  - if the requested name represents a single personal name (e.g. Ahmad, Ali, Alfulani) then it should be followed by at least 2 digits, e.g.,  
[ahmad72.pub.sa](#),  
[alfulani01.pub.sa](#).



# Regulations Applicant

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- **The Applicant must be:**
  - physically in KSA,
  - belong to an entity registered in KSA, or
  - belong to an entity that provides goods or services in KSA.
- **Domain contacts:**
  - Administrative contact must be located in KSA and from the entity requesting the domain name
  - Technical contact should be the one who are looking after the primary DNS server
- **The Applicant agrees that:**
  - information submitted is true
  - domain name does not violate the right of a third-party
  - it will not be used for any activity not permitted in KSA
  - will inform SaudiNIC for any changes in the information
  - will not register domain names for the purpose of selling them



# Regulation Requirements

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- **A domain name application form**
- **A letter requesting the domain name registration**
  - It must be on an official letterhead from the owner
- **For commercial entities, legal documents (CR, TM, License, ...) are required**
- **At least two operational DNS servers hosting the domain name in question**
- **Applications are kept in a pending state**
  - for three weeks until required documents are received
  - then a warning message is sent
  - if nothing is received within a week, SaudiNIC will reject the request



# Domain Name Dispute Policy

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- **SaudiNIC is reviewing and monitoring the UDRP**
  - Problem: most legal experts (law offices, judges, lawyers, ...) in KSA lack the experience and the knowledge that are related to IT legal issues particularly with respect to domain name disputes.
  - Solution: awareness is the main recommendation of the new ongoing national IT plan
- **Any disputes between parties over the rights to use a particular domain name are to be settled between the contending parties using normal legal methods.**
  - SaudiNIC exempts itself from all responsibility for the verification of rights to a name. SaudiNIC cannot act as arbiter of disputes arising out of this kind of conflict.



# Domain Name Dispute Cases

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- **Only two dispute cases so far**
  - One was handled by SaudiNIC and it was resolved in approximately 2 months.
  - While the other it took about 2-2.5 years. It settled through the legal system including also lawsuit against SaudiNIC (from the losing party).





# Registration Procedure

## Subdomains

- **com.sa:** Dedicated only for entities that provide commercial services with valid Commercial Registrations from Ministry of Commerce (MOC) or any equivalent documents. Also, registered trade names and marks with MOC can be registered as domain names under com.sa.
- **edu.sa:** Dedicated only for educational and training institutions, e.g., universities, training institutes, etc., with valid licenses from official government offices.
- **sch.sa:** Dedicated only for Kindergartens, elementary schools, secondary schools, and high schools with valid licenses from Ministry of Education.
- **med.sa:** Dedicated only for entities that provides health services such as hospitals, medical clinics, pharmacies, etc., with valid licenses from Ministry of Health.
- **gov.sa:** Dedicated only for Governmental entities including ministries, authorities and government organizations.
- **net.sa:** Dedicated only for entities that provide Internet-related services, e.g., ISPs, web hosting, portal sites, etc.
- **org.sa:** Dedicated only for non-profit organizations including societies, charities, clubs and public organizations.
- **pub.sa:** Dedicated only for entities or individuals that do not fit with any of the above definitions, including personal names.



# Registration Procedure Customer (Five Steps)

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## 1. Check the availability of the domain name

- SaudiNIC whois: <http://www.saudinic.net.sa/cgi-bin/whois.cgi>

## 2. Configure at least two DNS servers

- One is a primary DNS; others are secondaries (should be active and responsive)

## 3. Fill the form and send it to SaudiNIC

- Online: <http://www.saudinic.net.sa/cgi-bin/online.cgi>

## 4. Mail or fax the following documents (customer):

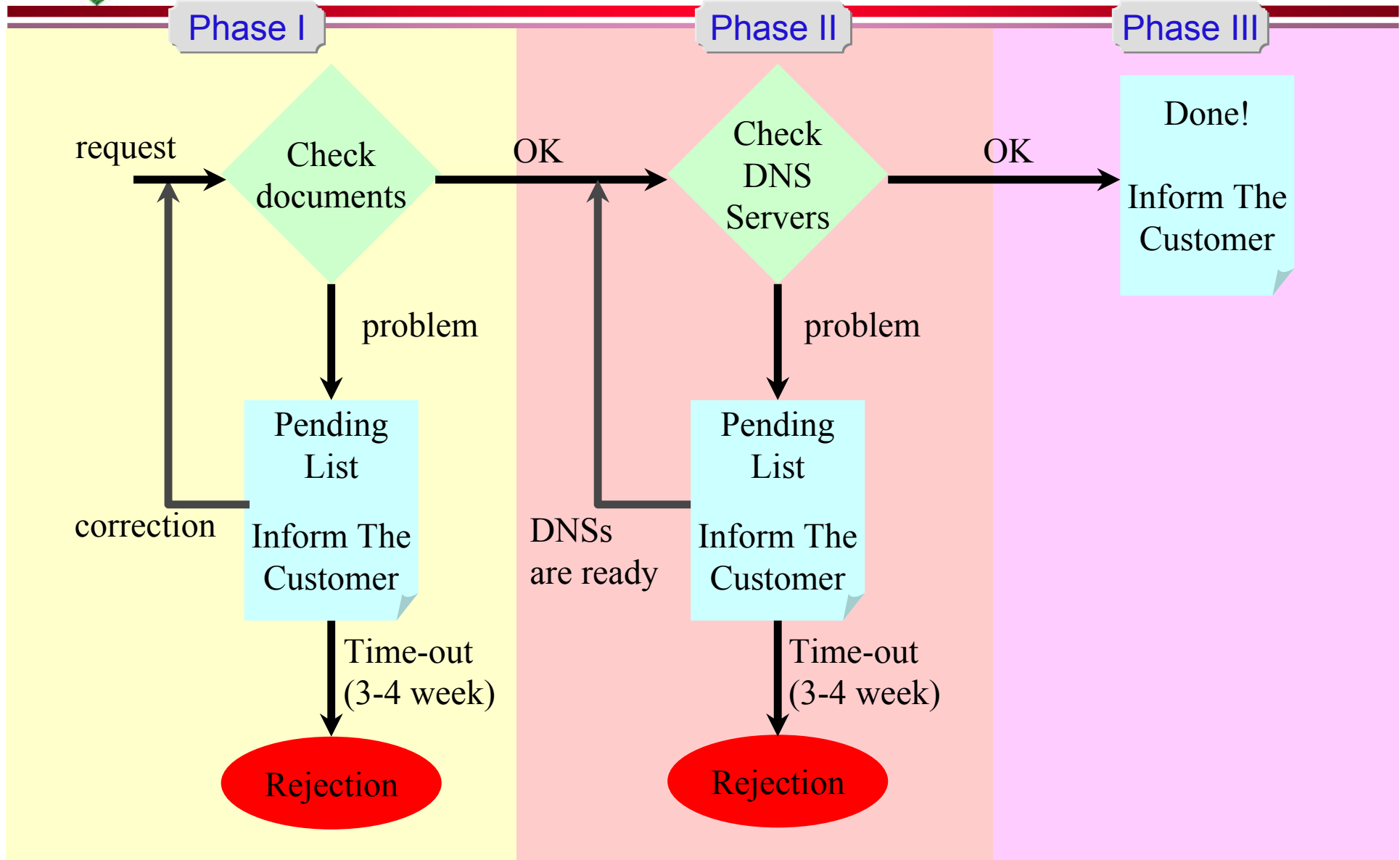
- A letter requesting the domain name
- Legal documents (e.g., Commercial registration, Trade mark, Membership of Chamber of Commerce, License, etc.)

## 5. Follow up the registration

- check incoming email from SaudiNIC ([domreg@saudinic.net.sa](mailto:domreg@saudinic.net.sa))
- check SaudiNIC whois
- Contact SaudiNIC if not received anything within 2 working days



# Registration Procedure Internal





# Registration Procedure

## Internal - Step One

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- **Receiving and Checking the Request**
  - Providing user support and helpdesk
  - Receiving requests: email, fax, postal/hand, Web
  - Inserting the new request into the SaudiNIC database
  - Check the request:
    - domain name availability
    - completeness of required documents
    - validity of the request
  - Contact ISP/customer for any missing information or problems
    - a warning message will be sent after **3 weeks** if no response is received
    - The request will be rejected if nothing is received within a week



# Registration Procedure

## Internal - Step Two

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- **Checking DNS servers**
  - At least two DNS servers (Primary + Secondary)
  - Accessible through the Internet
  - Hosting the new domain name
- **Contacting ISP/Customer for any problems**
- **Updating database**



# Registration Procedure

## Internal - Step Three

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- **Registration**
  - Adding the domain name to our zone file
  - Updating the database
  - Informing the ISP/Customer



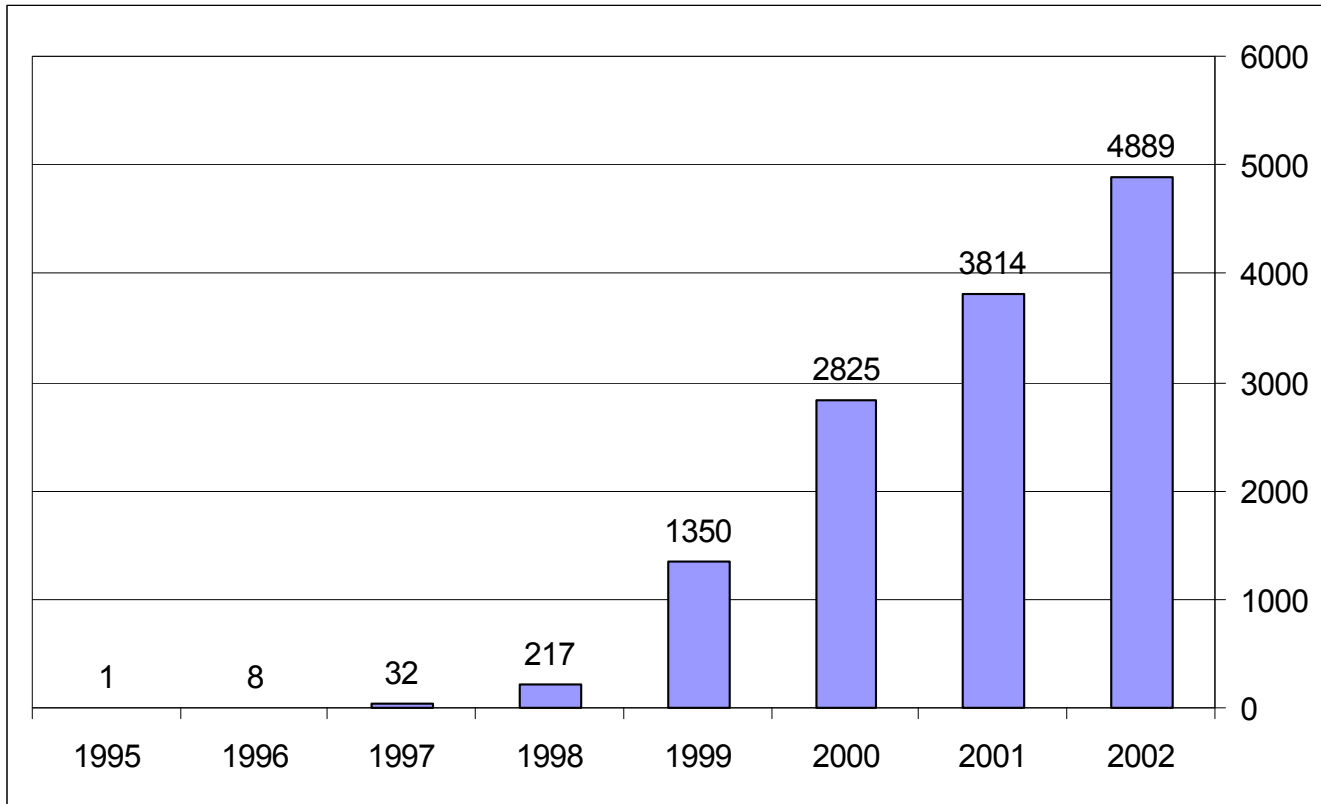
# Information Online

- **All of its information into its web site:**
  - [www.saudinic.net.sa](http://www.saudinic.net.sa)
  - since 1997
  - In both languages Arabic and English.
  - It consists of:
    - Regulations
    - Registration procedure and online forms
    - Tools
    - Whois
    - Documentations, how-to, and FAQs
    - Description of all SaudiNIC error and warning registration Messages
    - Statistics



# Information Statistics

## Total number of registered domain names per year by the end of 2002

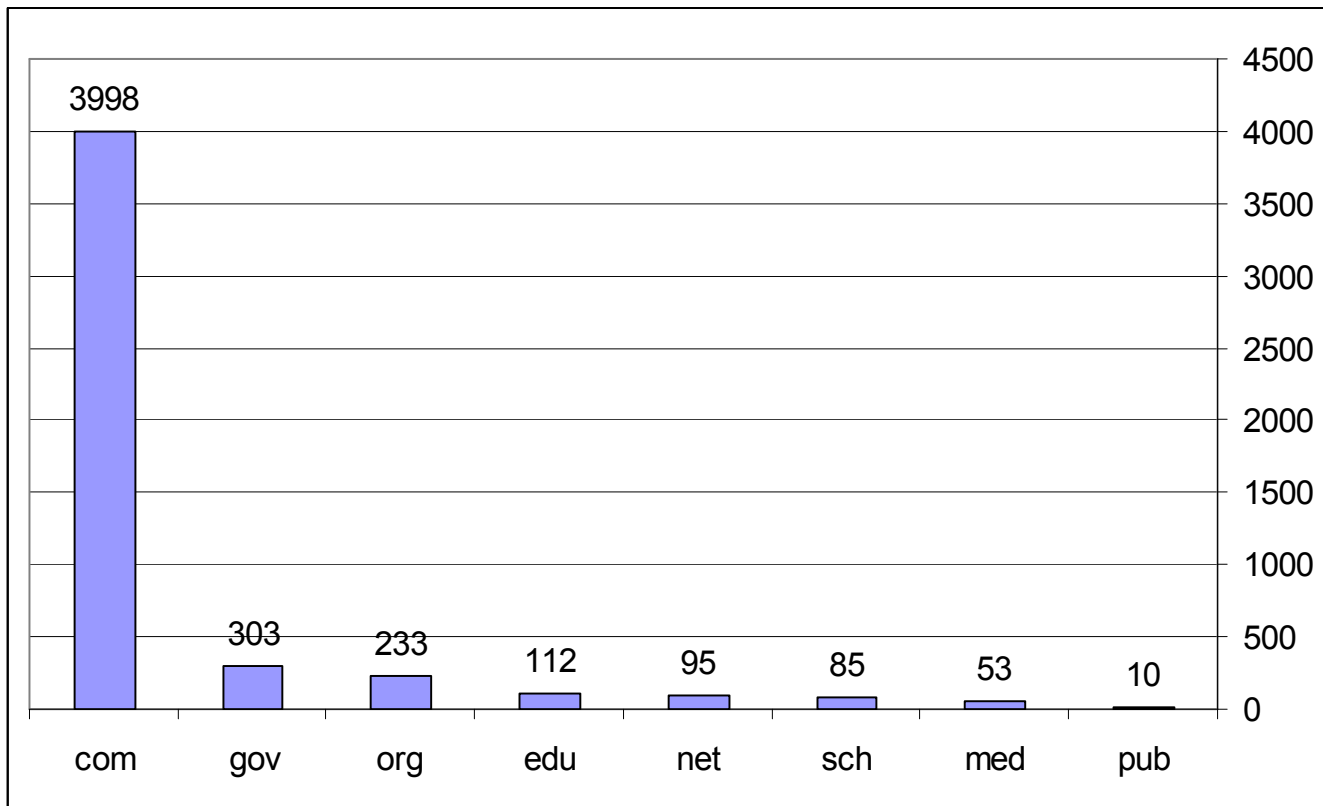






# Information Statistics

## Total number of registered domain names per sub-domain by the end of 2002





# **SaudiNIC Registration System**

## **What has been done so far?**

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- **Regulations**
- **Database**
- **Online information**
  - web site: [www.saudinic.net.sa](http://www.saudinic.net.sa)
  - online forms (text, web)
  - domain lookup (whois)
  - Tracking system
  - documents (FAQs, how-to, RFCs, Regulation)
- **Automation tools**
  - Internal procedure
  - Registration
  - DNS server checking



# Domain names in Arabic

## Supporting

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- **Current DNS system supports only 7-bit ASCII code**
- **Supporting multilingual characters in domain names is becoming very important**
  - ICANN - IDN
  - IETF - IDN
  - MINC
  - AINC
  - ...
- **A number of solutions and implementations have been introduced in the market but based on non-open standards**



# Domain names in Arabic

## AINC - Arabic Linguistic Committee

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- **One of the strategic tasks of AINC is to setup some linguistic guidelines to be used by technology providers.**
- **An Arabic Linguistic Committee was established during the formation of AINC in April 2000 to carry this task.**
  - The main goals, to define:
    - the accepted Arabic character set to be used for writing domain names in Arabic
    - the top-level domains of the Arabic domain name tree structure (i.e., Arabic gTLDs, and Arabic ccTLDs).
  - Mailing list: [AINC-ALC@ISU.NET.SA](mailto:AINC-ALC@ISU.NET.SA)
  - Web site:  
[www.saudinic.net.sa/arabicdomain/arabic\\_domains.htm](http://www.saudinic.net.sa/arabicdomain/arabic_domains.htm)



# SaudiNIC

## Future work

- **SaudiNIC keeps updating its regulations and procedures for the benefits of the local community. This includes some work that SaudiNIC is planning to achieve, such as:**
  - Increasing public awareness.
  - Open the registration process to be performed by other entities (e.g., private sector) and making SaudiNIC concentrates on the supervision, monitoring, and setting regulations.
  - Adapting fully automated registration system in dual languages (Arabic, English).
  - Build an index directory of all the registered domain names in dual languages (Arabic, English).



# SaudiNIC

## More information

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- **Domain names in Arabic language:**
  - [http://www.saudinic.net.sa/arabicdomain/arabic\\_domains.htm](http://www.saudinic.net.sa/arabicdomain/arabic_domains.htm)
- **Domain name registration regulation in Saudi Arabia:**
  - <http://www.saudinic.net.sa/terms/policies.htm>
- **SaudiNIC web site:**
  - <http://www.saudinic.net.sa>
- **ISU web site:**
  - <http://isu.net.sa>
- **KACST web site:**
  - <http://www.kacst.edu.sa>

# Thanks

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