# 01. URL structure

## Purpose

URLs help users to navigate, to understand what content they can expect, but it also structures the domain. For this reason, the EC, Parliament and the Council agreed on common rules on URLs in 2005.

A coherent common structure enhances the user experience by its transparency and reinforces the trust in the sites under it. The web address is a guarantee of trustworthiness and reliability.

## Rules

According to Europa domain and subdomains rules, websites owned by DGs and executive agencies must be hosted on the europa.eu domain.

As part of the Europa.eu domain, the websites' URLs must follow the below rules:

- URLs must always be lower case (to avoid incompatibility between Unix and Windows, respectively case-sensitive and case-insensitive)
- URLs must always be in English, even when they contain a page in another language (see also *Language indicator*)
- multiple words contained in a URL must be separated by a dash/hyphen (-), though the underscore (_) is also accepted
- URLs must not contain chained multiple words (e. g. *europeancommission* is wrong, *european-commission* is correct)
- URLs must not contain acronyms, as they are not understood by a broader audience. Exceptions can only be granted for existing URLs already approved in the past.

- Language Indicator:

Translated pages must have exactly the same URL of the original page, with the addition of suffix at the end of the page name.

For example:
ec.europa.eu/info/my-page  points to the English page
ec.europa.eu/info/my-page_en  English page
ec.europa.eu/info/my-page_de  German page
ec.europa.eu/info/my-page_sl  Slovenian page

The permitted suffixes for Eu-languages are the following (taken from [alpha-3/ISO 639-2 Code](#))

Bulgarian: bg
Spanish: es
Czech: cs
Danish: da
German: de
Estonian: et
Greek: el
English: en
French: fr
Gaelic: ga
Italian: it
Latvian: lv
Lithuanian: lt
Croatian: hr
Hungarian: hu
Maltese: mt
Dutch: nl
Polish: pl
Portuguese: pt
Romanian: ro
Slovakia: sk
Slovenian: sl
Finland; fi
Swedish: sv

When listing the available languages, Spanish comes directly after Bulgarian (because of *castillian spanish*). Nevertheless the prefix is _es and not _cs

For non-EU languages, the following suffixes must be used:

Arabic: ar
Chinese (simplified): zh-hans
Chinese (traditional): zh-hant

For other languages, see the file DGT-languages

Note: URLs  of the European Commission's websites can be structured in two different ways depending on the hosting:

- if the website is hosted in DIGIT cloud servers: https://name-of-site.ec.europa.eu
- if the website is hosted in DIGIT Data Centre: https://ec.europa.eu/name-of-website.

## Guidelines

Some elements used in brand names could negatively impact how search engines work and how people perceive your domain name.

Therefore, we recommend while defining the URL to:

- avoid using **stop words**. Stop words are the most common words that many search engines avoid, for the purposes of saving space and time in processing of large data during crawling or indexing. e.g. "and", "or", "but".
- avoid using **numbers for words** (e.g. "meant2be") as this is a risk for misunderstandings for audiences that use many different languages
- avoid **funny spellings or words that can be spelled different ways** (e.g. "two" instead of "too"). This may make your site hard to find
- try to satisfy users who expect to see the site name in the URL. **Reflect your website title in the URL.**

## Printing URLs

In case you need to print or advertise or publish URLs, always use lower case (e. g. ec.europa.eu and not Ec.europa.eu nor EC.EUROPA.EU.

## Drupal Instances

Urls containing the *node* keyword should rewrite to the human-readable version of the url. For example:

ec.europa.eu/drupalInstance/folder1/node_en  ec.europa.eu/drupalInstance/folder1/title-of-the-page_en

## Procedure

- Request procedures for domains and sites names (EU Login required)
- Request procedures for revamps and new websites (EU Login required).

The Commission services requesting for a URL/site name must always complete the necessary copyright checks on the names or association of words they intend to use before sending their request. For more information, contact the Intellectual Property Office (EC-IPR@ec.europa.eu).

## Contact and support

If you require further assistance on this topic? Please contact the team in charge of Europa Domain Management (EU Login required).