

# ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION Case No. CN-2301582

**Complainant 1: PRODO Finance** 

**Complainant 2: PRODO Kaluga Poultry Farm** 

**Respondent: Xel Group** 

Domain Name: prodokaluga.com

Registrar: NameSilo LLC

## 1. Procedural History

On 3 November 2023, the Complainants submitted a Complaint in English to the Beijing Office of the Asian Domain Name Dispute Resolution Center (the ADNDRC Beijing Office) and elected this case to be dealt with by a one-person panel, in accordance with the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the Policy) and the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the Rules) approved by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and the ADNDRC Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the ADNDRC Supplemental Rules) approved by the ADNDRC.

On 9 November 2023, the ADNDRC Beijing Office sent to the Complainants by email an acknowledgement of the receipt of the Complaint and transmitted by email to ICANN and the Registrar, NameSilo LLC, a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name.

On 10 November 2023, the Registrar transmitted by email to the ADNDRC Beijing Office its verification response, confirming that the Respondent is listed as the registrant and providing the contact details. On the same day, the ADNDRC Beijing Office requested the Complainants to revise the Complaint.

On 17 November 2023, the Complainants submitted their revised Complaint.

On 20 November 2023, the ADNDRC Beijing Office notified the Complainants that the Complaint has been confirmed and transmitted to the Respondent and the case officially commenced. On the same day, the ADNDRC Beijing Office transmitted the Written Notice of the Complaint to the Respondent, which informed that the

Complainants had filed a Complaint against the disputed domain name and the ADNDRC Beijing Office had sent the Complaint and its attachments through email according to the Rules and the Supplemental Rules. On the same day, the ADNDRC Beijing Office notified ICANN and registrar, NameSilo LLC, of the commencement of the proceedings.

On 30 November 2023, ADNDRC Beijing Office received the Response from RODRICK NFINYOH, M., which stated that "I am not the owner of the domain name and rather operate a hosting service with domain purchase as an added service. I the have been trying get to owner of the domain via mail zdravstvuyte409@gmail.com and so far haven't received a response from the owner. As soon as I get a response I will let you know. In the meantime, you can proceed as you wish".

On 1 December 2023, ADNDRC Beijing Office forward the Response to the Complainants.

The Respondent failed to submit a Response within the specified time period. On 11 December 2023, the ADNDRC Beijing Office notified the Respondent's default. Since the Respondent did not mention the Panel selection in accordance with the time specified in the Rules, the ADNDRC Supplemental Rules, and the Notification, the ADNDRC Beijing Office informed the Complainants and the Respondent that the ADNDRC Beijing Office would appoint a one-person panel to proceed to render the decision.

Having received a Declaration of Impartiality and Independence and a Statement of Acceptance from Mr. ZHAO Yun, the ADNDRC Beijing Office notified the parties on 12 December 2023 that the Panel in this case had been selected, with Mr. ZHAO Yun acting as the sole panelist. The Panel determines that the appointment was made in accordance with Paragraph 6 of the Rules and Articles 8 and 9 of the Supplemental Rules.

On 12 December 2023, the Panel received the file from the ADNDRC Beijing Office and should render the Decision within 14 days, i.e., on or before 26 December 2023.

Pursuant to Paragraph 11 (a) of the Rules, unless otherwise agreed by the Parties, or specified otherwise in the Registration Agreement, the language of the administrative proceeding shall be the language of the Registration Agreement, subject to the authority of the Panel to determine otherwise, having regard to the circumstances of the administrative proceeding. The language of the current disputed domain name Registration Agreement is English, thus the Panel determines English as the language of the proceedings.

### 2. Factual Background

### A. The Complainants

Complainant 1 in this case is PRODO Finance. The address is Russia 125047, Moscow, an administrative unit in the city Tverskoy municipal district, 1st Tverskaya-Yamskaya st., 21, room 3/9. Complainant 2 in this case is PRODO Kaluga Poultry Farm. The address is Russia 249842, the Kaluga region, the Dzerzhinsky district, Leo Tolstoy village. The authorized representative of Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 (collectively referred to as "the Complainants") in this case is Igor Motsnyi.

#### **B.** The Respondent

The Respondent in this case is Xel Group. The address is Commercial Avenue, Bamenda, North West NONE, Cameroon (CM).

The Respondent is the current registrant of the disputed domain name "prodokaluga.com", which was registered on 21 August 2022 according to the WHOIS information. The Registrar of the disputed domain name is NameSilo LLC.

#### 3. Parties' Contentions

#### A. The Complainants

1. The domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark of the Complainants

The Complainants are members of the Prodo Group, one of the biggest Russian producers of poultry and meat products, delicacies, as well as ready-to-cook products founded in 2004. The goods under the "PRODO" brands are sold in 65 regions of Russia. The Prodo Group received various recognitions and awards for its business activity including "Platinum Certificate of Ross-140" in 2020 and the government of Russia included PRODO Group in the list of systemically forming enterprises in 2020. The Prodo Group is in top ten of the largest Russian agro-industrial companies. The official website of the Complainants and the Prodo Group is "www.prodo.ru/en".

One of the production farms of the PRODO Group is located in Kaluga, Central Russia. The Complainant 1 is a member of the Prodo Group and is the owner of various Russian national trademark registrations that include the "Prodo" word element cited above in this Complaint ("Prodo Trademarks").

The Complainant 2 is a member of the Prodo Group and operates its own farm production in Kaluga, Central Russia and uses the "Prodo Trademarks".

The Complainant 2 is also a sublicensee of the trademarks No. 245487, 296456 and 407524 and is an affiliate of the Complainant 1. Complainant 2 has also been authorized by the Complainant 1 to co-file this UDRP complaint.

Thus, the Complainants have rights over the "Prodo Trademarks": Complainant 1 as the owner of the registered marks (see par. 1.2 of WIPO Overview 3.0: "Where the complainant holds a nationally or regionally registered trademark or service mark, this prima facie satisfies the threshold requirement of having trademark rights for purposes of standing to file a UDRP case") and Complainant 2 as an affiliate, sublicensee and a member of the Prodo Group operating under the name "PRODO Kaluga Poultry Farm JSC" (see par. 1.4 of WIPO Overview 3.0: "A trademark owner's affiliate such as a subsidiary of a parent or of a holding company, is considered to have rights in a trademark under the UDRP for purposes of standing to file a complaint").

The disputed domain name was registered on 21 August 2022 and is used for a website that impersonates Complainant 2, pretends to be a website of Complainant 2 and contains false claims of being a website of "Prodo Kaluga" farm.

The Complainants assert that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Complainants' trademarks. 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 Complainants' trademark and the disputed domain name. This test typically involves a side-by-side comparison of the domain name and the textual components of the relevant trademark to assess whether the mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name. Where the relevant trademark is recognizable within the disputed domain name, the addition of other terms (whether descriptive, geographical, or otherwise) would not prevent a finding of confusing similarity under the first element.

The disputed domain name fully incorporates the trademarks owned by Complainant 1 with the addition of the geographical term "Kaluga", a city in Central Russia where Complainant 2 is located. The fact that some of the "Prodo Trademarks" have design elements does not affect the confusing similarity analysis in this dispute as the "Prodo" word element is a dominant element in the "Prodo Trademarks" cited above and as noted in WIPO Overview 3.0, par. 1.10: "To the extent that design (or figurative/stylized) elements would be incapable of representation in domain names, these elements are largely disregarded for purposes of assessing identity or confusing similarity under the first element". The fact that some of the "Prodo Trademarks" are in Cyrillic script does not change the perception of the disputed domain name as being connected to the "Prodo Trademarks" and the Prodo business and does not eliminate confusing similarity. As confirmed by WIPO Overview 3.0, par. 1.14: "A domain name that consists or is comprised of a translation or transliteration of a trademark will normally be found to be identical or confusingly similar to such trademark for purposes of standing under the Policy, where the trademark – or its variant – is incorporated into or otherwise recognizable, through such translation/transliteration, in the domain name".

Besides, while the content of the website associated with the disputed domain name is usually disregarded for the purpose of confusing similarity analysis, in the present dispute the content of the website clearly demonstrates targeting and once again confirms confusing similarity as provided in of WIPO Overview 3.0, par. 1.5: "In some instances, panels have however taken note of the content of the website associated with a domain name to confirm confusing similarity whereby it appears prima facie that the respondent seeks to target a trademark through the disputed domain name".

Thus, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the "Prodo Trademarks" as the "Prodo" element is clearly recognizable within the disputed domain name, the geographical element "Kaluga" actually indicates connection with the Prodo business and with Complainant 2 – production farm located in Kaluga and increases confusion with the "Prodo Trademarks" and the Prodo business of the Complainants and the content of the website demonstrates targeting. The ".com" gTLD shall be disregarded for the purpose of the first element analysis as it represents a merely technical requirement. Therefore, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the trademarks of the Complainants.

2. The Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the domain name It is a standard rule in UDRP jurisprudence that "proving a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the often impossible task of 'proving a negative', requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent (see par. 2.1 of WIPO Overview 3.0).

The general rule is the following:

- (i) a complainant is required to make out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests; and
- (ii) once such prima facie case is made, the burden shifts to the respondent who has to demonstrate his rights or legitimate interests in respect of the domain name under paragraph 4 (c) of the Policy.

If the respondent fails to do so, the second element of the Policy is satisfied.

The Respondent is not and has not been known by the disputed domain name and is not using and has never used the disputed domain name for any legitimate activity or for bona fide offering of goods or services. The Respondent has not received an authorization to register and use the disputed domain name from Complainant 1 – the owner of the trademarks and is not in any way related to the Prodo business and Prodo Group. The Respondent is identified as "Xel Group", and the name of the individual from "Xel Group" disclosed by the Registrar is "Rodrick Nfinyoh M.".

Neither "Xel Group" nor "Rodrick Nfinyoh M." has any connection to the disputed domain name, to the Complainants' trademarks or to the city of Kaluga. The Respondent's location is Cameroon and it has no relation whatsoever to the

trademarks of the Complainants and the Prodo Group business.

The Respondent is not making a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name. The disputed domain name is used to impersonate Complainant 2.

The website by the disputed domain name contains content in English with some false claims and information.

In particular, it claims to be "Prodo Kaluga" farm. The screenshot of the website by the disputed domain name shows that it contains information about a fake assistant general director "Ilya Viktorovich"; it contains actual address of Complainant 2: 249842, Kaluga region, Dzerzhinsky district, village of Leo (Lev) Tolstoy. In other words, the disputed domain name is used for impersonation purposes and possible fraud.

As stated in WIPO Overview 3.0: "Panels have categorically held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity (e.g. impersonation/passing off, or other types of fraud) can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent".

The declaration by the director of Complainant 2 confirms that:

- The website by the disputed domain name contains some false claims;
- The website by the disputed domain name is not operated by Complainant 2 or by any other Prodo Group company;
- It impersonates Complainant 2 and
- Complainant 2 does not have Assistant General Director named "Ilya Viktorovich".

The very nature of the disputed domain name also falsely suggests an affiliation with the Complainants, in particular Complainant 2 and the Prodo Group and as provided in WIPO Overview 3.0 par. 2.5 and 2.5.1: Fundamentally, a respondent's use of a domain name will not be considered 'fair' if it falsely suggests affiliation with the trademark owner; the correlation between a domain name and the complainant's mark is often central to this inquiry... Certain geographic terms (e.g., <trademark-usa.com>, or <trademark.nyc>) are seen as tending to suggest sponsorship or endorsement by the trademark owner". Clearly the use of the geographic term "Kaluga" in the disputed domain name indicates direct connection to Complainant 2 ("Kaluga" is also a part of the name of Complainant 2), its business and falsely suggests affiliation.

The use of the disputed domain name is a direct evidence of targeting, the content of the website contains direct references to Complainant 2 and the Prodo business and is a clear case of impersonation. Such use does not give rise to rights and legitimate interests.

To sum up, as noted by the panel in Madonna Ciccone, p/k/a Madonna v. Dan Parisi, WIPO Case No. D2000-0847: "use which intentionally trades on the fame of another can not constitute a "bona fide" offering of goods or services".

Therefore, the Complainants satisfy the second UDRP element.

3. The domain name was registered and is being used in bad faith

As stated in WIPO Overview 3.0 par. 3.1 and confirmed by UDRP jurisprudence "bad faith under the UDRP is broadly understood to occur where a respondent takes unfair advantage of or otherwise abuses a complainant's mark" and UDRP paragraph 4(b) provides some non-exclusive and illustrative scenarios of a respondent's bad faith.

The Panels shall take into account, in particular, the following factors in assessing bad faith of the Respondent:

- the nature of the domain name:
- the content of any website to which the domain name directs, including any changes in such content and the timing thereof,
- the timing and circumstances of the registration,
- other indicia generally suggesting that the respondent had somehow targeted the complainant and
- a clear absence of rights or legitimate interests (see par. 3.2.1 of WIPO Overview 3.0).

Besides, the same par. 3.2.1 of WIPO Overview expressly confirms that: "given that the use of a domain name for per se illegitimate activity such as the sale of counterfeit goods or phishing can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent, such behavior is manifestly considered evidence of bad faith".

As stated by WIPO Overview 3.0 par 3.1.4: Panels have moreover found the following types of evidence to support a finding that a respondent has registered a domain name to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to its website by creating a likelihood of confusion with the complainant's mark: (i) actual confusion, (ii) seeking to cause confusion, (iii) the lack of a respondent's own rights to or legitimate interests in a domain name, (iv) redirecting the domain name to the complainant's website, and (v) absence of any conceivable good faith use.

The Complainants claim that the disputed domain name is used for illegal purpose and for the purpose of impersonation and creating a false impression of affiliation with the Complainants' Prodo business and trademarks.

The disputed domain name is used for hosting a website that contains false information and pretends to be a website of Complainant 2. Such use is a manifest evidence of Respondent's prior knowledge of the Complainants' trademarks, it clearly shows targeting and Respondent's bad faith.

The Complainants state that the following factors and evidence demonstrate both bad faith registration and bad faith use of the disputed domain name by the Respondent:

- The nature of the disputed domain name the "Prodo" trademark is fully incorporated in the disputed domain name coupled with a geographical term "Kaluga" expressly referring to Complainant 2 and its location. The "Prodo Trademarks" gained significant reputation in Russia in relation to meat products, including poultry and the Prodo business was one of the leading meat businesses in Russia prior to the registration date of the disputed domain name 21 August 2022;
- The timing and circumstances of registration of the disputed domain name 21 August 2022, many years after registration of the Complainants' trademarks (registered between 2003 and 2010) and after the Prodo Group started operation in 2004, when the Complainants' trademarks and business had already gained significant recognition;
- The content of the website by the disputed domain name clearly refers to the Prodo Group business and to Complainant 2 specifically.

The content of the website of the disputed domain name indicates Respondent's intent to impersonate Complainant 2 and take unfair advantage of the Complainant's trademarks. The website by the disputed domain name contains false information, it pretends to be a website of Complainant 2 – "Prodo Kaluga"/ "Prodo Kaluzhskaya". The content of a website can be an indicator of Respondent's bad faith as proven by previous UDRP decisions, including the ADNDRC decision, Case number HK-2301735, "shopline-au.life": "From the contents of the Website, it is obvious that the Respondent used the Disputed Domain Name intentionally to attract Internet users to the Website for commercial gain by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark" and the ADNDRC decision, Case number HK-2201703, "usdonnawilson.com": "In the Complaint, the Complainant has provided screenshots of Google Search of its Trademark, and the website linked to the disputed Domain Name by which the Respondent fraudulently impersonates the Complainant...".

- A clear absence of rights and legitimate interests of the Respondent in this case taking into account all of the above, including the nature of use of the disputed domain name and the content of the website by the disputed domain name: express references to Complainant 2 (including its name, address, registration number and business description), and impersonation. The Respondent is based in Cameroon and has no apparent connection to the "Prodo Trademarks" yet claims to operate a website of Complainant 2 – "Prodo Kaluga Farm" in Kaluga, Russia, this is clearly false. The website by the disputed domain name also contains email addresses that pretend to be email addresses of Complainant 2. Such email addresses solicit information from actual or potential customers of Complainant 2 and can be used for fraudulent purposes.

Given the facts and the totality of circumstances of this case the Respondent by using the disputed domain name, has intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to its 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 website or location or of a product or service on the Respondent's website or location per 4 b. (iv) of the Policy.

Besides, the Respondent clearly attempts to take unfair advantage of or otherwise abuses marks of the Complainants and this constitutes bad faith registration and use under the UDRP.

Therefore, the Complainants satisfy the third UDRP element.

The Complainants request the transfer of the disputed domain name "prodokaluga.com" to Complainant 1.

#### **B.** The Respondent

The Respondent failed to submit a Response within the specified time period.

## 4. Discussions and Findings

Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy provides that in order to be entitled to a transfer of the disputed domain name, the complainant shall prove the following three elements:

- (i) The disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark in which the complainant has rights;
- (ii) The registrant 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.

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy states that the following circumstances in particular, but without limitation, shall be evidence of registration and use of a domain name in bad faith:

- (i) Circumstances indicating that the respondent has registered or 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 that complainant, for valuable consideration in excess of documented out-of-pocket costs directly related to the domain name; or
- (ii) The respondent 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 its website or other online location, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the complainant's mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of its website or location or of a product or service on its website or location.

## A. Identity or Confusing Similarity

According to the "Information about 'Prodo Group' business from the official website www.prodo.ru/en" and "Publications about 'Prodo Group' and 'Prodo' business of Complainants, including 'Wikipedia' article about 'Prodo' group" submitted by the Complainants show that both Complainants are members of the Prodo Group, one of the biggest Russian producers of poultry and meat products, as well as ready-to-cook products established in 2004. "Trademarks of Complainants" show that "PRODO" was successfully registered as trademark in Russia (Russian national trademark registration No. 245487) as early as 8 May 2003 and then assigned to Complainant 1 on 1 June 2009 with Complainant 2 as a sub-licensee. The registration date of the trademark was earlier than the registration date of the disputed domain name, i.e. 21 August 2022. All trademark registrations are still within the trademark protection period. The Panel has no problem in finding that the Complainants enjoy the prior trademark right over "PRODO".

The disputed domain name ends with ".com", which only indicates that the domain name is registered under this gTLD and is not distinctive. To consider the identity or confusing similarity, the Panel only needs to examine the main part of the disputed domain name.

The main part of this disputed domain name "prodokaluga.com" includes two sub-parts, taking the form of "prodo", which is the Complainants' trademark "PRODO", and "kaluga", which is the geographical name of a city in Central Russia "Kaluga". The Panel finds that the addition of the name of a geographical location to a trademark does not alter the underlying mark to which it is added. In this case, the combination of two sub-parts cannot effectively differentiate the main part of the disputed domain name from the Complainants' trademark; on the contrary, given the fact as shown in "Information about 'Prodo Group' and 'Prodo' business from the official website" that Complainant 2 operates its own farm production in Kaluga, such a combination strengthens the links between the disputed domain name and the Complainants, misleading the consumers to believe that the domain names are to show the Complainants' existence in Kaluga, Russia. Therefore, the disputed domain names are confusingly similar to the Complainants' trademark "PRODO".

The Panel holds, accordingly, that the Complaint fulfills the condition provided in Paragraph 4(a)(i) of the Policy.

#### B. Rights or Legitimate Interests of the Respondent

The Complainants contend that the Respondent does not have rights to or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Complainants have never authorized the Respondent to use the trademark or the disputed domain name. The Complainants' assertion is sufficient to establish a prima facie case under Paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy, thereby shifting the burden to the Respondent to present evidence of its rights or legitimate interests.

The Respondent has failed to show that the Respondent has any rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name. The Respondent is not commonly known by the disputed domain name. No evidence has shown that the Respondent is using or plans to use the disputed domain name for a bona fide offering of goods or services, which will be further elaborated below. The act of registering the disputed domain name does not automatically endow any legal rights or interests with the Respondent.

The Panel therefore finds that the Complaint fulfills the condition provided in Paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy.

#### C. Bad Faith

"Information about 'Prodo Grou' business from the official website 'www.prodo.ru/en'" and "Publications about 'Prodo Group' and 'Prodo' business of Complainants", including "'Wikipedia' article about 'Prodo' group" submitted by the Complainants show that both Complainants are members of the Prodo Group, one of the biggest Russian producers of poultry and meat products, as well as ready-to-cook products established in 2004; furthermore, the Prodo Group has received various recognitions and awards including "Platinum Certificate of Ross-140" in 2020. "Trademarks of Complainants" show that "PRODO" was successfully registered as trademark in Russia as early as 8 May 2003 and then assigned to Complainant 1 on 1 June 2009 with Complainant 2 as a sub-licensee. These dates are far earlier than the registration date of the disputed domain name.

"Screenshots of website by disputed domain name 'prodokaluga.com'" submitted by the Complainants shows that the website of this disputed domain name contains the trademark "PRODO" and the same products (poultry and meat products, delicacies, as well as ready-to-cook products) in the webpage; furthermore, it contains the address of Complainant 2: "249842, Kaluga region, Dzerzhinsky district, village of Leo (Lev) Tolstoy". All the above facts are obvious to all that the Respondent is aware of the existence of the Complainants and their trademark "PRODO". This can be further substantiated by the facts that "PRODO" is not a generic word. The action of registering the disputed domain name per se has constituted bad faith. Actually, it is impossible to conceive of any plausible active use of the disputed domain names by the Respondent that would not be illegitimate.

The fact as shown in the "Screenshots of website by disputed domain name

'prodokaluga.com'" that the website of the disputed domain name contains the trademark "PRODO", the same products of the Complainants and the address of Complainant 2 in the webpage constitutes exactly the type of bad faith use of the disputed domain name as identified in the Policy, i.e. the Respondent has intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to the website or other on-line location, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's trademark as to source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the website or location or of a product or service on the website or location.

The Panel concludes that the Respondent has registered and used the domain name in bad faith. Accordingly, the Panel finds that the Complaint satisfies the condition provided in Paragraph 4 (a) (iii) of the Policy.

#### 5. Decision

Having established all three elements required under the Policy, the Panel concludes that relief should be granted. Accordingly, it is ordered that the disputed domain name "prodokaluga.com" be transferred from the Respondent to the Complainant 1 PRODO Finance.

ZHAO Yun

Dated: 26 December 2023