

What is intellectual property?



Rigorous empirical research on intellectual property

Intellectual property (IP) is a property right established in law to exclude others from using, without authorisation, your intellectual creations. IP rights allow you to commercialise and exploit your innovative and creative ideas.

IP rights consist of:

- patents, which protect innovative technical solutions in all lines of industry,
- copyrights, which protect original intellectual creations in the creative arts,
- trademarks, which protect distinctive marks indicating a product's business origin,
- designs, which protect the visual appearance of the product.

Beyond these formal IP rights, businesses may also opt for protection of their own confidential information from misappropriation by keeping it a trade secret.

Which types of intellectual property do you need?

	PATENTS	COPYRIGHTS	DESIGNS*	TRADEMARKS	TRADE SECRETS
What do they protect?	An invention: a new and innovative way of doing something, or solving a technical problem See also: Here Here Here	A work: an original intellectual creation See also: Here Here Here	A new and original visual appearance of a product See also: Here Here Here	Distinctive signs that identify brands of products/services	Any type of useful information for business that is secret and kept confidential See also: Here Here
Examples of what is protected	Inventive products and processes in all lines of business For examples of successful inventions by SMEs see Here	Audio-visual works, pictures, graphics, architecture, databases, software, designs, literature, novels, poems, plays, music and video, dramatic works See also Here	Packages, containers, furnishings, graphic symbols, computer icons, typefaces, graphical user interfaces, logos and maps More on designs Here	Words, personal names, designs, letters, numerals, colours, shapes, packaging, sounds More on TMs Here See also Here Here	Any confidential information: business methods, customer lists, R&D data, financial information, cooking recipes, software, datasets, know-how, algorithms More on trade secrets Here
How are my rights protected?	Prevents unauthorised making, using or selling of the patented invention	Prevents the work being (without authorisation) copied, published, distributed or made available online Protects the integrity and attribution of the work Related rights: Public performance and display of the © work See also Here	Prevents unauthorised use of an identical or similar visual appearance for the same kind of product or services See also Here	Prevents unauthorised use of distinctive signs for the same or related products or services See also Here Here	Prevents others from using the confidential information, as long as it remains secret Allows to claim monetary compensation in case of unlawful disclosure of the confidential information
How long is my innovation protected?	Up to 20 years	Lifetime of the author +50 to 70 years after death (depending on the country)	Up to 25 years for registered designs	Indefinitely, subject to use in commerce and renewals	Indefinitely, provided it is not revealed
Do I have to register it?	Yes, filing an application to a patent office is required More on patent applications in: EPO EPO DPMA (DE) INPI (FR) UK IPO (UK)	No, copyright protection arises automatically with its creation See also Here	No, but it is highly advisable: Unregistered designs are protected only from unauthorised copying and they have shorter term of protection (up to 3 years versus up to 25) More info in: EU IPR Helpdesk EUIPO	Yes. Three routes to registration: National protection: GERMANY FRANCE UK EU-wide protection: EUIPO International protection: WIPO Madrid System	No
How long does it take?	3 to 5 years	n/a	3 to 12 months, depending on the country	3 to 24 months, depending on the country	n/a
How much does it cost?	Medium to high (from 6000€)	If registered: low (from 15€)	Low to medium (500€)	Medium (1000€)	Nothing
How do I start?	IPR Guide in Europe Patent Basics	IPR Guide in Europe Understanding Copyright and Related Rights	Design Basics Designs	Trademark Protection in the EU Trademarks Basics	Trade Secrets in the EU How to manage confidential business information

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