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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do they protect?</th>
<th>PATENTS</th>
<th>COPYRIGHTS</th>
<th>DESIGNS*</th>
<th>TRADEMARKS</th>
<th>TRADE SECRETS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An invention, a new and innovative way of doing something, or solving a technical problem</td>
<td>A work, an original intellectual creation</td>
<td>A new and original visual appearance of a product</td>
<td>Distinctive signs that identify brands of products/services</td>
<td>Any type of useful information for business that is a secret and kept confidential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of what is protected
- Inventions and processes in all lines of business for examples of successful inventions by SMEs
- Audio-visual works, pictures, graphics, architecture, databases, software, designs, literature, novels, poems, plays, music and video, dramatic works
- Packages, containers, furnishings, graphic symbols, computer codes, typographies, graphical user interfaces, logos and maps
- Words, personal names, designs, letters, numbers, colours, shapes, packaging, sounds

How are my rights protected?
- Prevents unauthorised making, using or selling of the patented invention
- Prevents the work being used, performed, published, distributed or made available online
- Protects the integrity and attribution of the work
- Prevents unauthorised use of distinctive signs for the same or related products or services
- Prevents others from using the confidential information, as long as it remains secret

How long is my innovation protected?
- Up to 20 years
- Up to 150 to 170 years after death (depending on the country)
- Up to 25 years for registered designs
- Indefinitely, subject to use in commerce and revocation
- Indefinitely, provided it is not revealed

Do I have to register it?
- Yes, filling an application to a patent office is required
- More on patent applications in:
  - EPPO
  - EPO
  - DPA (DG)
  - INPI (PPI)
  - UK EP (SII)
- No, but it is highly advisable
- More info in:
  - EU IP Newsletter
  - ExOne
- Yes, three routes to registration:
  - National protection
  - EU-wide protection
  - International protection

How long does it take?
- 3 to 5 years
- 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 £2000)
- Low to medium (from £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
- Trademark Protection in the EU
- Trade Secrets in the EU:
  - How to manage confidential business information

Visit 4SMEs on www.4ipcouncil.com for an interactive version of this and other 4iP Council graphics.