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European Commission | Fund to protect intellectual property of EU SMEs

CREATIVESUNITE

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New 2023 SME Fund: €60 million to protect intellectual property of EU SMEs.

Today, the European Commission and the European Union Intellectual Property Office launched the new 2023 EU SME Fund, which offers intellectual property vouchers for EU-based SMEs. EU SMEs represent 99% of all businesses and provide around three-quarters of all EU jobs. To scale up and attract investment, SMEs need to protect their intangible assets with a flexible intellectual property toolbox.

The 2023 SME Fund will also support EU SMEs in their recovery from the economic crisis caused first by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. It will also help SMEs to step up their digital and green transition. The new EU SME Fund, with its budget of €60.1 million, will offer the following services

- Reimburse 90% of the fees charged by EU countries for IP Scan services.
- Reimburse 75% of the fees charged by intellectual property offices (including national intellectual property offices, the European Union Intellectual Property Office and the Benelux Intellectual Property Office) for trademark and design registration.
- Reimburse 50% of the fees charged by the World Intellectual Property Office for obtaining international trade mark and design protection.

From mid-February, the SME Fund will also reimburse 75% of the fees charged by national patent offices and the European Patent Office for the registration of patents; and 50% of the application fees charged by the Community Plant Variety Office for the registration of new plant varieties. From the second half of 2023, costs of initial enforcement-related advice could be also covered.

For the first time, the 2023 SME Fund will also cover European patents and plant variety protection to stimulate innovation and investment. It will help breeders to develop more drought and pest-resistant crops and other plants and thus contribute to the EU's green transition and food security. The IP Scan service will provide a broad assessment of the intellectual property needs of the applicant SME, taking into account the innovative potential

of its intangible assets. The European Commission's financial contribution, which amounts to €5.1 million, will be dedicated fully to the services related to patents and plant varieties.

The action will be implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office through calls for proposals. The applications will be examined and evaluated based on a first comes first served criterion.

On 31 January, a webinar will demonstrate the new services and the application process. The event will provide a practical guide on how to apply for the different services.

Background

The EU needs to increase the resilience of its SMEs to enable them to cope with the current challenges created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The EU capitalises on the value of the intangible assets its companies create, develop and share, by helping them manage these assets more effectively and by providing financial support and better access to finance.

The Commission launched the Action Plan on intellectual property to support the EU's recovery and resilience in November 2020. Among the priorities of the Action Plan, the Commission committed to promote an effective use and deployment of intellectual property rights, in particular by SMEs. Concretely, the Commission committed to offer financial support for SMEs, helping them to manage their IP portfolios as well as helping them move towards green and digital technologies.

The EU SME Fund is not a new tool in the EU's intellectual property toolbox designed for SMEs. In 2021 and 2022, the Commission together with the European Union Intellectual Property Office launched a first and second EU SME Fund with a total budget of €47 million offering services to reimburse the costs of IP Scan and patent, trade mark and design registration costs. In 2022, 12.743 SMEs benefited from the SME Fund.

Find more information here.