

Patents, Licensing, Trade Marks

Trademarks and patents are well protected in Germany. When establishing a company, you should remember to protect your company's intellectual property by means of registration. Conversely, you should ensure that your company and products do not infringe on existing intellectual property rights that have already been established in the German market.

Patents

Patents are granted for technical inventions which are new, involve an inventive step, and are industrially applicable. The duration of a patent is 20 years, beginning on the day following the invention patent application.

Under German patent law, patents are granted by the German Patent and Trade Mark Office (Deutsches Patent und Markenamt, DPMA) ruling. In order to apply for registration, the applicant must submit an application providing specific information and pay a fee. For details, as well as an overview of the patent fees, please refer to the DPMA's "Information for Patent Applicants" fact sheet available at the DPMA website.

- [DPMA's Information for Patent Applicant](#) ▶

Foreigners may register patents subject to exactly the same terms as German nationals (this is also the case with trademarks). However, applicants having neither a domicile nor an establishment in Germany must appoint a patent attorney in Germany as a representative filing the patent application.

European patents are granted under the European Patent Convention (EPC). The European and the national patent-granting procedure exist in parallel. When seeking patent protection in one or more EPC contracting states, the applicant can choose between following the national procedure of the respective individual states or adopt the European route which confers protection in the contracting states designated as part of the single procedure.

European patents, once granted, become a bundle of nationally enforceable patents in the designated states. For a step-by-step guide on the European patent granting procedure, please refer to the European Patent Organization website.

- [European Patent Organization](#) ▶

Trade Marks

A trademark is a personal name, a company name, a term, a logo, or a combination of these, which identifies a company, its goods, or its services. Marks of this kind that are associated with a specific manufacturer or supplier may for instance take the form of symbols, words, illustrations, audio signatures, color designs, or packaging.

Additionally, a company or a product name that has acquired a secondary meaning as a trademark due to its independent value can also be eligible for trademark protection.

A mark can be protected as a trademark by recording it in the register kept at the German Patent and Trade Mark Office (DPMA). As with patents, an application must be filed at the DPMA. For more information, please refer to the "Information for Trade Mark Applicants" fact sheet available at the DPMA website.

- [DPMA's Information for Trade Mark Applicant](#) ▶

At present, the fee for trademark registration application and entry in the trademark register is around EUR 300.

Once trademark protection has been obtained, the owner of a trademark has an exclusive right to use the respective trademark. If the trademark has been registered, the owner can indicate this by placing ® (registered trademark) after the trademark. Protection is valid for a period of ten years and can then be extended for another ten years.

Licenses

The right to use a patent or a trademark may be subject to either an exclusive or a general license. By granting a third party a license, the owner of a patent or trademark entitles a third party to use or exploit the right in question without ceding ownership.

An exclusive license entitles only the licensee (i.e. the person that has been granted the right of usage) to exploit the right, usually within a certain territory. General licensing or non-exclusive licensing enables various licensees to use a right in the same territory at the same time.



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Fotografie

CONTACT US

Christina Schön

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