**PRESS RELEASE**

**Start of the Unitary Patent**

**A historic step for innovating businesses in Europe**

* ***Watch the virtual ceremony today: “***[***Welcoming the Unitary Patent***](https://liveevents.epo.org/unitarypatent)***” at 3pm CET***
* ***History in the making: Treating European markets as a single coherent territory – a vision comes true***
* ***Cheaper, simpler, more transparent: a game changer for innovation in Europe***
* ***A unified patent judiciary to eliminate the last barriers to an internal market of technology***

**Munich, 1 June 2023** –The entry into force of the Unitary Patent system today marks a historic step in the completion of the Internal Market and ushers in a new era for the protection of innovations in Europe.

The Unitary Patent system brings a host of substantial improvements for users everywhere, including cost reductions, streamlined procedures, increased transparency, and enhanced legal certainty.

Starting today, users can apply for a single Unitary patent – a European patent with unitary effect - through a single procedure, subject to a single renewal fee in a single currency and litigate under a single legal system before the Unified Patent Court (UPC). The UPC, which also commences its operations today, makes a centralised litigation system for patents a reality and allows users to file cases at the European level.

Access to the Unitary Patent remains open to all EU member states. So far, seventeen states

- Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden – have joined, with additional EU member states anticipated to participate in the future. The economies of the member states currently participating generate an estimated combined GDP of more than EUR 12 trillion (corresponding to almost 80% of the entire EU’s GDP) and incorporate a population of nearly 300 million people.

The new Unitary Patent further solidifies Europe’s standing as a crucial global market for innovation and investment by offering a further option for patent protection in EU member states, in addition to the classical European and national patents. The entry into operation of the new system in Europe is expected to benefit micro-entities, such as start-ups, individual inventors and research centres. The step marks the single most important development in the European patent system in the last fifty years since the signing of the European Patent Convention on 5 October 1973, a landmark that will be celebrated later this year.

“*The entry into force of the Unitary Patent system today marks a historic moment by creating a more accessible, more cost-effective and simpler patent system. For the first time, Europe can rely on a borderless market for technology to support its innovative businesses. With this step, we have not only levelled the playing field with our competitors in other regions, but also created the conditions that will boost innovation and our economies. Thanks to this improvement, we anticipate a 2% increase in annual trade flows and a 15% growth in foreign direct investment in high-tech sectors*”, says EPO President António Campinos.

In the new system, the EPO acts as a one-stop shop for owners of Unitary Patents. This replaces the present system of a multitude of parallel national validation procedures with national IP authorities. Furthermore, Unitary Patents need to be filed in English, French or German only, thereby eliminating the need for inventors to translate their patent into multiple official national languages.

Fees to maintain patents are directly paid with the EPO and have been set by the EU member states to ensure they remain attractive to businesses: Patent holders will need to pay a fraction of the current costs – EUR 5000 over ten years, compared to almost EUR 30 000 at present - to maintain their patent in the 25 EU member states that have participated in the co-operation for the creation of the new system.

The advent of the new system has already attracted considerable interest from the users. The EPO will publish the first batch of Unitary Patents on 7 June.

**The Unified Patent Court**

The UPC also commences its operations today. Established under an international co-operation agreement of the EU member states, the UPC will serve as the central judiciary for patent litigation in Europe and have jurisdiction over infringement and revocation actions related not only to Unitary Patents, but also to classical European patents. This marks a significant improvement to the present situation where European patents have been the subject of litigation in parallel proceedings before national courts, rendering legal action complex and costly for all parties. In contrast, the UPC‘s jurisprudence will generate a harmonised body of case law in Europe that will enhance the legal certainty and transparency of the patent system, benefitting both innovators and the broader public. The UPC’s court of first instance is headquartered in Paris with a section in Munich and local and regional divisions across the EU member states. Its Court of Appeal is located in Luxembourg. The UPC also hosts a patent mediation and arbitration centre with seats in Ljubljana and Lisbon.

**Join us to mark the launch of the Unitary Patent system**

To celebrate the historic moment, the EPO will host a virtual public event at 15:00 CET, A Welcome to the Unitary Patent. The celebratory event will feature high profile speakers including EPO President António Campinos, Gunnar Strömmer, Swedish Minister for Justice, Éric Dupond-Moretti, French Minister of Justice, Franz Fayot, Luxembourg Minister of Economy, Thierry Breton, EU Commissioner for the Internal Market and Dr Klaus Grabinski, President of the Court of Appeal of the UPC. Online viewers do not need to register beforehand to follow the live event.

**Additional Information**

[Link to event](https://liveevents.epo.org/unitarypatent)

[Unified Patent Court](https://www.unified-patent-court.org/en)

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# A look back at 50 years of European patents

In 2023 the EPO celebrates the 50th anniversary of the founding of the European patent system. When 16 countries signed the European Patent Convention in Munich on 5 October 1973, they ushered in a new era of co-operation on patents. This laid the ground for a patent system supporting economic and technological developments that have shaped our lives and continue to do so today. Find out more about the history of the EPO and anniversary events planned in 2023.

# About the EPO

With 6 300 staff members, the European Patent Office (EPO) is one of the largest public service institutions in Europe. Headquartered in Munich with offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna, the EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening co-operation on patents in Europe. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors are able to obtain high-quality patent protection in up to 44 countries, covering a market of some 700 million people. The EPO is also the world's leading authority in patent information and patent searching.