

Twenty-five years registering trade marks: the EUIPO from 1996 to 2021

- **April 1 marks the anniversary of the receipt of the first EU trade mark application**
- **Trade marks applications in 2020 are over 10 % higher than 2019**
- **China has become the number one filer of EU trade marks**

The [European Union Intellectual Property Office \(EUIPO\)](#) commemorates the 25th anniversary of the first EU trade mark applications filed on 1 April 1996. Since then, applications have grown at a strong and steady pace, with annual growth averaging 5 %. This means that **from 1996 to 2020 applications have increased from 43 000 to more than 177 000**. This robust growth is depicted in a [short video](#) that also shows the main filing countries, as well as the recent rise of China to the number one source of EU trade mark applications.

In 2020, despite an initial sharp decrease in applications due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the year ended with a **record number of European Union trade mark (EUTM) applications, 177 000 in total**. This represents **growth of 10.2 %** compared with 2019. Furthermore, demand for EUTMs has continued to rise during the first months of 2021.

Chinese companies became the number one source of applications for EU trade marks in 2020 with a share of filings that has grown from 9.5 % to 16.2 % in a single year. In 2020 there has also been a general upsurge in the demand for EUTMs covering medical, personal and public hygiene, entertainment and household-related goods, most likely driven by the COVID-19 pandemic changing consumer needs.

On this landmark date, **Christian Archambeau**, Executive Director of the EUIPO, said:

Twenty-five years ago, the EUIPO received its first trade mark applications. Since then, we have processed more than 2.2 million trade marks. The growth in filings over the years and especially during the latest months is remarkable by any standards and it does confirm the success of the EU trade mark. In the current circumstances we need to go the extra mile, and in this respect, a set of measures has been put in place to support SMEs and make IP rights more accessible to all businesses during this difficult time.

In line with this development, the EUIPO has recently launched a set of initiatives aimed at helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) capitalise on their innovation and

protect their IP rights. The [Ideas Powered for Business](#) portal offers a one-stop shop for a wide range of SME services, including a [pro-bono advice scheme](#) and, in cooperation with the European Commission and the national and regional IP offices of the EU, a [EUR 20 million SME Fund](#). Already 2,500 EU SMEs have applied for financial support in the form of reimbursements of some 6,000 trade mark or design application fees at EU or national level.

1996: first CTM registration received

In April 1996, the first Community trade mark applications were received at the EUIPO, then known as the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM), in quantities that surpassed the most optimistic projections. The original prediction had been for 12 000 in the first full year of operations. But by the end of 1996, a total of 43 200 applications had been received.

Back then, the intense work that had gone into setting up the EUIPO, which was [founded in 1994](#), finally came to fruition. The [first Community trade mark applications](#) came from prominent user associations like AIPPI, ECTA, FICPI, INTA and the *Magister Lvcentinvs*.

The EUIPO had barely a handful of staff and all applications were received on paper, via ordinary mail or fax. Today, almost **99 % of trade mark applications are filed electronically** and more than 75 000 users have an account on the EUIPO's website. It takes now an average of 4 months and 6 days to register a trade mark, one fifth of the registration time in 1996.

Since then, the EUIPO has become a fully-fledged digital organisation and transformed its physical space from a rented office in the centre of Alicante to a purpose-built campus recognised with various sustainability awards. Over the years, cooperation has become a [mandate and a mission at the EUIPO](#), with the EUIPO working with the European Commission, countries outside the EU, as well as regions and international users. Highly committed and competent, the staff of the Office is another key factor behind the evolution of its activities. With a team of over 1 000 professionals, the EUIPO is now the largest agency in the European Union.

ABOUT THE EUIPO

The [EUIPO](#) is a decentralised agency of the EU, based in Alicante, Spain. It manages the registration of the European Union trade mark (EUTM) and the registered Community design (RCD), both of which provide intellectual property protection in all EU Member States. The EUIPO also carries out cooperation activities with the national and regional intellectual property offices of the EU.

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