

EUIPO: Consumers Face Risks of Fake Products More than Ever

Thomas Wahl



News

The problem of product piracy has worsened during the corona pandemic, in particular due to the accompanying increase in online trade. Counterfeiters have mainly exploited people's uncertainty in the face of emerging treatments and vaccines. This is one of the key messages according to a [press release issued by the EU Intellectual Property Office \(EUIPO\) on 8 June 2021](#).

The statements refer to [the 2020 IP perception study](#), in which the EUIPO carried out over 25,000 interviews in the 27 EU Member States between 1 June and 6 July 2020 in order to assess the Europeans' perception, awareness and behaviour towards intellectual property. In addition, reference is made to a [joint study carried out by the EUIPO and the OECD](#), which analyses the scale and magnitude of illicit trade in counterfeit pharmaceutical products, and the [2019 IP SME Scoreboard](#) that provides insight on how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) handle IP-related problems. Accordingly, the following could be observed:

- Consumers find it difficult to distinguish between genuine and fake goods;
- On average, 9% of Europeans claimed that they were misled into buying a counterfeit product (although the proportion of misled consumers differs among the EU Member States);
- Counterfeits represent 6.8% of EU imports, worth €121 billion;
- The proliferation of counterfeit medicines (e.g., antibiotics and painkillers) and other medical products increased in 2020;
- It is estimated that over \$4 billion worth of counterfeit medicines is traded worldwide;
- Digital piracy is becoming a more and more lucrative market for infringers;
- Evidence shows that counterfeiting and piracy is closely connected with profitable activities involving organised crime groups;
- 1 of 4 SMEs in Europe claimed to have suffered from IP infringements.

Executive Director of the EUIPO, *Christian Archambeau*, said that in particular the rise of counterfeit medicines and medical products requires urgent robust, coordinated action and has recently been reinstated as one of the top ten EU priorities in the fight against organised crime.

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