



SME Fund 2024 – An Opportunity for European and Ukrainian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

The SME Fund managed by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) for the fourth consecutive year re-opened on 22 January 2024 and will be available until 6 December 2024.

This fund makes it possible for European and Ukrainian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to obtain vouchers for partial reimbursement of the costs borne by them in protecting their Intellectual Property rights.

This European Commission's 'Ideas Powered for Business SME Fund' initiative aims in particular to help European SMEs to exploit their IP assets by providing financial support, in the attempt to prevent them from being induced to cut IP-related costs because of the current economic crisis and enables them to save up to EUR 6,000 in total on investments in Intellectual Property.

As is known, said fund can be used also at national level (see below) as far as trademarks, designs and patents are concerned, this allowing remarkable cost advantages.

This is therefore an important opportunity to be taken into consideration if you or your Clients are interested in obtaining IP protection in Italy with the assistance of local agents like our firm, which would be happy to assist.

Financial support will be provided in the form of vouchers, as follows:

- **Voucher 2: Trademarks and Designs**
- **Voucher 3: Patents**
- **Voucher 4: Community Plant Varieties**

Compared to previous editions, this year the maximum amount of the voucher for patents has been more than doubled and now covers not only official fees of the various

patent offices, but also professional fees for consultancy services rendered by patent attorneys.

In addition, the voucher for plant varieties has increased more than sixfold and covers about 75% not only the filing fee but also the examination fee in respect of new applications for plant variety rights filed before the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO).

The total budget for this year is EUR 20 million (EUR 18.85 million for trademarks and designs, EUR 1 million for patents and EUR 150,000 for plant varieties).

The applications for vouchers are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. For any voucher, should the budget be exhausted before the end of the call submission period, the online application system for that voucher will be closed.

Therefore, in view of the significant take-up and success of the initiative in previous editions, we suggest that SMEs interested in availing themselves of this opportunity should apply as soon as possible.

Calendar

Call submission period: **from 22/01/2024 to 6/12/2024.**

Vouchers are not retroactive, i.e., costs incurred prior to the date of the voucher grant decision notification will not be reimbursed by the voucher.

Criteria for Eligibility

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) established in one of the EU Member States or in Ukraine (in territories that are under the effective control of the Ukrainian government at the time the application is submitted) are entitled to apply.

When applying, the applicant enterprises must declare that they neither have benefited nor will benefit from other national or EU financing schemes for the same activities or part of the activities covered by this call.

VOUCHER 2 – Trademark and Design Protection

Up to **1.000 euro** per beneficiary for:

- **trademark and design protection within the EU (at national, regional and EU level)**

IP rights admitted to reimbursement through the vouchers are trademarks and designs filed directly and in electronic form (where allowed) at the EUIPO and IP offices of member states. In accordance with the co-financing principle of the European Commission's programmes, SMEs meeting the requirements may apply for a **75 % refund of fees paid** to obtain trademark and design protection in the EU (including application, class, examination, registration, publication and deferment of publication fees).

IP rights similar to those provided for trademarks under current legislations (e.g., logo protection under Portuguese law) are included.

- **trademark and design protection outside the EU**

To support the growth of EU SME's on a more international scale, the eligible fees for international trademarks and designs administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization may be **reimbursed by up to 50 %**. This activity intends to extend the support currently offered to EU SMEs by assisting them in the internationalization process, while boosting their innovation and competitiveness globally.

The fees subject to reimbursement are those charged for applications (including basic fees, designation fees and subsequent designation fees) under:

- **the international trademark system (Madrid System);**
- **the international design system (The Hague System).**

Designation fees for an international trademark and/or design

are eligible, including EU member states and/or EUIPO. The handling fees charged by the office of origin for an international trademark and/or design application are excluded from this scheme.

VOUCHER 3 - Patents

Up to **3.500 euro** per beneficiary for:

1a. official fees applied by IP offices of the EU member states for registering **national patents**, including fees for prior art patent searches, filing fees, search and examination fees as well as publication and grant fees; and

1b. official fees, including both filing and search fees, for **European patent applications**.

2. attorney's professional fees (consultancy) for drafting and filing a new European patent application.

SMEs meeting the requirements may request a 75% reimbursement for the fees under 1a) and 1b) above, up to a maximum of EUR 1500, and a 50% reimbursement for the fees under 2) above, up to a maximum of EUR 2000.

VOUCHER 4 – Plant Varieties

Up to **1.500 euro** per beneficiary for:

- The online filing and examination fees charged by the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO). SMEs meeting the requirements may request a 75% reimbursement of such fees.

We at Interpatent are available for any information or assistance your Clients may need in using their SME Fund 2024 vouchers for IP activities in Italy.

