

MALTA LEADS THE EU IN TRADEMARK APPLICATIONS IN THE 2025 EUROPEAN INNOVATION SCOREBOARD: WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRAND OWNERS

THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION SCOREBOARD 2025: AN OVERVIEW

On the 15th of July 2025, the European Commission published the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS), which provides a comparative assessment of research and innovation performance across the EU and other European countries. With a summary innovation index of 95.0 percentage points, as indexed to the EU in 2025, Malta has been classified as a Moderate Innovator, placing ahead of countries such as Slovenia, Italy, Spain and Portugal. It has registered an increase of 16.7 percentage points as against 2018 and 7.6 percentage points as against 2024.

MALTA LEADS THE PACK IN TRADEMARK APPLICATIONS

Among the indicators impacting the ranking, is trademark applications. With a score of 233.0% of the EU average¹, Malta has ranked as the best performing country in trademark applications at the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) per billion GDP, together with Cyprus, proving to be a relative strength for the jurisdiction. Fabrizio Guzzo opines that this may indicate a focus on brand-driven innovation.

This statistic also represents a rise in the entrepreneurial activity and a more accessible, efficient intellectual property (IP) registration system spearheaded by the Industrial Property Registrations Directorate (IPRD), which has streamlined processes, digitalised filings, and aligned Malta's system with EU-wide standards. The office also plays a policy role internationally through Malta's participation in EUIPO, World Intellectual Property Organization (WPO), and the European Patent Office (EPO).

TRADEMARK LAW IN MALTA: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Trademark protection in Malta is governed by the Trademarks Act (Cap. 597 of the Laws of Malta). Applicants can register trademarks nationally or secure broader EU coverage via the EUIPO. Key aspects of Malta's trademark system include:

- Validity of trademarks for ten (10) years with the possibility to renew indefinitely;
- Malta follows the Nice Classification System (NCL) for goods and services;
- Priority can be claimed from earlier filing under the Paris Convention or Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (WTO TRIPS Agreement);
- Protection extends to well-known marks under the Paris Convention in accordance with international obligations.

¹ European Innovation Scoreboard 2025 – Country Profile Malta, Independent Expert Report, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, p. 5

Though not a signatory to the NCL Agreement, Malta applies its classification system in practice, enabling easier harmonisation with international filings.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRAND OWNERS

The sharp increase in trademark activity means that the Maltese register is becoming more competitive. Businesses should be proactive to secure their brand rights and avoid conflicts. Clearance searches and filing strategies are essential, especially as the risk of oppositions and enforcement actions increases in a more crowded registry. It is also important for businesses to ensure robust brand monitoring, timely renewals, and enforcement plans to protect their intellectual assets in Malta's increasingly active IP environment.

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