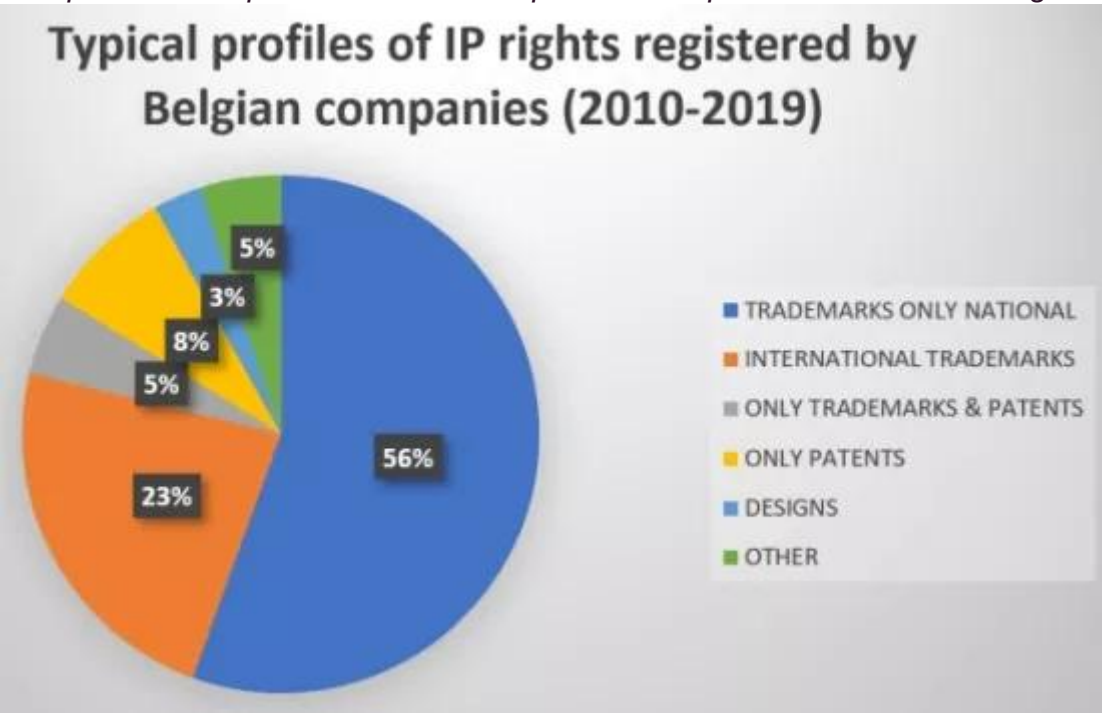
Who uses intellectual property rights in Belgium and what is the economic impact?

12 May 2022, 02:00

According to a recent econometric analysis of the use of intellectual property (IP) protection systems in Belgium, IP activity is associated with a 1% to 4% increase in growth in absolute value. Compared to the performance of comparable companies not active through IP, this increase



At the request of the FPS Economy and the Benelux Office for Intellectual Property, KU Leuven and Idea Consult examined the profile of companies owning intellectual property rights (IPR) in Belgium and their performance level compared to similar companies that do not own this type of asset.

A set of 15,193 companies (i.e. 3% of economic actors) that have or have had IPR in Belgium over the period 2010-2019 served as the basis for the work and on which the published results are based. Intellectual property rights include patents, trademarks, designs and breeders' rights. Below are some key figures from the econometric study on the profile of companies holding intellectual property rights:

- Of the companies operating in the field of intellectual property, all sectors combined, the vast majority are SMEs (84%, although they make up 99.8% of the economic landscape);
- Although the average value of intellectual property rights per company is 5.4, half of these companies have only one intellectual property right; 6% of companies make much more extensive use of intellectual property rights and hold more than 10 intellectual property rights each;
- Among the forms such as patents, trademarks or designs, trademarks are the most important, as 90% of IP-active companies have registered at least one trademark, mostly limited to the Benelux countries; only 25% of companies own at least one European trademark;
- 17% of IP-active companies have at least one patent;
- A statistical analysis allowed the identification of a number of representative clusters, leading to the identification of (non-exclusive) typical profiles:

Cluster name	Description	# companies	% companies
TRADEMARKS ONLY NATIONAL	Companies with only trademarks, restricted to the national route (Benelux)	8 409	55 %
INTERNATIONAL TRADEMARKS	Companies with trademarks, not restricted to the national (Benelux) route	3 517	23 %
ONLY TRADEMARKS & PATENTS	Bedrijven met enkel merken en octrooien	758	5 %
ONLY PATENTS	Companies with only patents	1 226	8 %
DESIGNS	Companies with designs (may be combined with patents and/or trademarks)	481	3 %
OTHER	All other combinations	802	5 %

- The most common combination of IPRs is the combination of trademarks and patents (64% of IPRs combined)
- According to their NACE code, we also find that more than half of the companies that hold at least one patent are active in technological sectors such as
    - 36%: Sector C - Industry
    - 20%: sector M - Specialized, scientific and technical activities
- Most patent companies have an international dimension.

The authors of the econometric study also analyse the performance of each of the IP-active firms relative to firms of similar size and activity sector within a set of 474,315 firms without IPR. Without resolving the question of causality, the numbers speak for themselves:

- IP rights go hand in hand with higher growth, which is 1% to 4% higher in absolute value for IP-active companies;
- For the technology sector, the combination of patent and trademark rights appears to be the most effective for economic growth, via a 4% higher growth rate in absolute value.

Do you have questions about intellectual property? Contact the Sirris Patent Cell!

Download the econometric study here.

Download the summary here.

Authors