



How Belgian SMEs can cut IP protection costs

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How to cut the cost of protecting innovation: IP subsidies and fee reductions in Belgium

When innovation starts to show market potential, many companies face the same questions. Should we file a patent? How much will it cost? Are there subsidies or tax incentives?

Protecting intellectual property can be complex and expensive, yet it is essential to secure your competitive advantage. Beyond patents and trademarks, companies also deal with freedom-to-operate analyses, prior-art searches, and patent landscaping to understand their position in the market.

The good news is that many forms of support already exist, at regional, federal, and European level, to help finance these IP activities. From early-stage IP scans and patentability studies to filing support and fiscal incentives, there are practical tools that make IP protection more accessible.

This overview brings together the most relevant subsidies, vouchers, and fee reductions available in:

- [Federal support](#)

- [European support](#)
- [Regional support in Flanders](#)
- [Regional support in Brussels](#)
- [Regional support in Wallonia](#)
- [Federal tax incentives](#)

Federal support: free IP scan for SMEs

Belgian SMEs can start with a **free IP scan** from the Federal Public Service Economy (FOD Economie).

An accredited IP expert analyses your company's activities, identifies existing and potential IP assets such as patents, trade secrets, software, data, and designs, and provides a tailored action plan for next steps.

- **Cost:** free of charge
- **Who can apply:** any company registered in Belgium
- **Output:** a confidential report with opportunities, risks, and recommendations
- **Apply via:** economie.fgov.be - [Prediagnostiek IE](#)

This scan is an excellent first step for companies exploring how to protect their innovation effectively.

European support: EUIPO and EPO measures

EUIPO SME Fund 2026

The **EUIPO Ideas Powered for Business SME Fund**, which reimburses part of SMEs' IP protection costs, reopened in February 2026.

Voucher	Covers	Reimbursement
Trade marks and designs	Filing, examination, registration, publication fees for national (Benelux), EU (EUIPO), or international (WIPO) applications	75% for EU or national filings, 50% for international filings
Patents	National patent filing, search and examination fees, European Patent Office filing or search fees, part of legal or drafting costs	75% for filing or search, 50% for legal costs (max around €3,500)
Plant varieties	Application and examination fees for Community Plant Variety Rights	75% reimbursement (max around €1,500)

Vouchers are granted on a first-come, first-served basis, so it is best to apply early.

Note that the EUIPO IP Scan voucher does not apply in Belgium, as this service is already available free of charge through the FOD Economie.

[Learn more](#)

EPO fee reductions for micro-entities

Since 1 April 2024, the **European Patent Office (EPO)** grants a 30% reduction on filing, search, examination, designation, grant, and renewal fees for:

- Micro-enterprises, natural persons, universities, non-profits, and public research organisations
- Applicants who have filed fewer than five European patent applications in the last five years

[Read more](#)

Regional support in Flanders

In Flanders (Vlaio, BOIP), several schemes help SMEs manage intellectual property strategically.

Scheme	What it supports	Benefit
i-DEPOT discount (BOIP)	Timestamping of ideas or early concepts	€10 discount, pay €27 instead of €37
VLAIO IP overview	Central hub for Flemish IP support and fiscal measures	vlaio.be - Intellectuele eigendom

Regional support in Brussels

Innoviris offers support for SMEs in the Brussels-Capital Region through the following schemes:

Scheme	What it supports	Benefit
Innovation vouchers	Small-scale technical or feasibility studies with accredited research partners	75% of eligible costs, up to €10,000 per year (excl. VAT)
Patents	Patent filing and procedure costs, including official fees, translations, and attorney costs	50% reimbursement; apply before filing

More information:

[Innoviris Patents](#) [Innovation Vouchers](#)

Regional support in Wallonia

In Wallonia, SPW Économie manages two key instruments to support IP activities.

Scheme	What it supports	Benefit
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Chèque Propriété Intellectuelle (Chèque PI)	IP analyses and strategic studies	50% subsidy, maximum €45,000 (excl. VAT) over 3 years
Win4Expertise - Brevets	Patent filing and procedure costs (national, EP, or PCT)	Around 50% subsidy; requires a Déclaration d'intention before filing (valid 7 months)

More information:

[Chèque PI](#) [Win4Expertise Brevets](#)

Details for Chèque PI (2025 limits):

- Patentability search ? €3,000
- Freedom-to-operate search ? €6,000
- Opposition or prior-art search ? €6,000
- State-of-the-art study ? €3,000
- Patent mapping ? €7,500
- Technological watch including patents ? €1,500

Tip: combine Chèque PI for analytical work such as patentability or FTO studies with Win4Expertise Brevets for patent filing. The two schemes complement each other well.

Federal tax incentives

When intellectual property begins to generate value, several federal tax incentives can further reduce costs.

Incentive	What it offers	Who benefits
Innovation income deduction (IID)	Deduct 85% of qualifying net IP income, reducing the effective tax rate to about 3.8%	Companies with income from patents or qualifying software
Partial payroll withholding-tax exemption	Retain up to 80% of withholding tax on R&D wages	Employers with registered researchers (BELSPO)
Investment deduction or R&D tax credit	Deduction or refundable credit for qualifying R&D investments, including patents	All R&D-active companies

Combining schemes and staying compliant

Each programme has its own eligibility criteria and administrative requirements. Most require applicants to declare any other public support received for similar activities, and the same cost

cannot be subsidised twice.

However, it is usually possible to combine different schemes for the same innovation or patent project. For example, one scheme can cover official filing fees while another supports consultancy or translation costs, as long as all funding is declared and the total public contribution remains within permitted limits.

Always check the latest guidelines or seek professional advice before applying, since rules can differ between programmes.

Conclusion

Protecting intellectual property is more than a legal formality. It is a strategic investment in your company's future.

By combining regional support, European vouchers, federal services, and tax advantages, Belgian SMEs can substantially reduce the cost of protecting their innovation.

Discover how the Sirris Patent Cell can support you

As an **octrooicel of the FOD Economie**, Sirris helps technology companies navigate these instruments, making sure innovation and protection go hand in hand.

[Discover the Sirris Patent Cell](#)

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