

The EU deepens its commitment to supporting the use of Intellectual Property Rights in the Caribbean

The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) has increased its support to the CARIFORUM Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation (CarIPI) project. CarIPI will increase its budget from 3.28 to 4 million Euros, to further aid regional enterprises in increasing their innovation and competitiveness.

The **European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)** has agreed to add €750k to the CARIFORUM Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation project, with the aim of stepping-up efforts to strengthen the intellectual property (IP) rights environment in the Caribbean. IP and innovation are critical components in fostering trade and investment as well as stimulating innovation and competitiveness in the private sector.

Local enterprises, who trade their products across borders within the Caribbean and beyond, increasingly face the reality of unauthorised use of their reputation and brand image. Their design or technology may be copied and pirated and counterfeit versions of their products sold to consumers. There is a global increase in the proliferation of pirated and counterfeited products, even within the critical pharmaceutical and health-related product markets.

An exporter, whose brand name is already being used and protected by another entity in major export markets, can be forced to undertake a costly rebranding exercise to maintain market presence in the region. Therefore, it is critical for exporters to understand the importance of Intellectual Property (IP) protection and the role IP plays in international trade.

Added to this, the current global COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the rise in online trade, and the growth in the use of online business platforms. As a result, more companies, including micro enterprises, are now thinking about protecting their innovation and creativity around their products and brands.

Since its launch in November 2019, the **CarIPI** project has worked towards creating a strong enabling environment for IP creation, protection, administration, and enforcement. It also focusses on boosting the participation of CARIFORUM countries in the world economy and stimulate innovation and competitiveness of the private sector.





The CarIPI project is successfully advising the private sector in the Caribbean [working directly with producers of origin-linked products](#) (OLPs) such as Rum, Spices on how to use the Intellectual Property system to boost exports in international markets, and protect their brands.

[Resources](#) such as webinars training, and a mentorship programmes for OLPs using geographical indications will be launched this summer. According to CarIPI Activity Leader and IPR expert Dr. Wendy Hollingsworth based in Barbados *“We want regional entrepreneurs to know: your products or services have uniqueness and value that can be recognised nationally and internationally. It is important to wrap it in the protection of some form of intellectual property and be able to develop a strong market position as you trade individually or as a group.”*

The CarIPI project also includes training all stakeholder groups in the public and private in IP and Innovation solutions, providing support on legal reform processes for IP, supporting states in setting-up or improving their current IP administration practice, and supporting businesses in their IP strategies through mentorship programme, among others.

According to Ambassador to the Delegation of The European Union to Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, OECS and CARICOM/CARIFORUM, Malgorzata Wasilewska, *“With the addition of more funds to the CARIPI project we can carry out more activities that support innovation, economic diversification and private sector development all essential in assisting the Caribbean nations to navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and pave the way to economic recovery”*.

According to Alexandra Mayr, CarIPI Project Manager, *“we would like to reach out to more firms in the region, and help them to use intellectual property rights to generate more value from their products and services”*.

More information:

[CarIPI website](#)

[CarIPI annual work plans](#)

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