



# **SOUTH AFRICA** **Swiss PartnershIP**

## Intellectual Property Cooperation Programme

*This programme aims to strengthen the IP systems in partner countries to promote higher competitiveness and sustainable economic development. Swiss PartnershIP – South Africa builds on the success of the Swiss-South African Intellectual Property project to address further challenges within the country's IP-related legal and institutional frameworks as well as the wider innovation ecosystem.*

### Project background and context

As one of the largest economies in Africa, South Africa harbours a significant demographic advantage, demonstrable market sophistication, and the potential for dynamic growth. The country looks to foster a knowledge-based economy where intellectual property (IP) can be used as a crucial tool to drive development and innovation. The South African government has demonstrated a strong commitment to this goal through the implementation of its 2018 National IP Policy, led by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic) and the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC).

Despite notable progress, the IP landscape continues to face challenges that limit its full potential. Key legislative reforms, including the Patent and Copyright Amendment Bills, remain pending. The CIPC is undergoing a major transition to a search and substantive examination system for patents, which calls for enhanced capacity-building and streamlined administrative processes. The strengthening of coordination efforts to combat IP infringements and counterfeiting is also essential to protect local businesses and their IP rights.

Low levels of IP awareness among Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), together with limited resources, remain significant barriers to the effective commercialisation of intangible assets. At the same time, addressing youth unemployment, and ensuring socio-economic transformation - including the empowerment of women in IP - remain pressing national priorities

### Objectives

The overarching objective of Swiss PartnershIP – South Africa is to support the country's socio-economic and urban development by promoting the protection and effective use of intellectual property rights. To this end, the project plans to implement a range of activities across four priority areas with the following goals:

- **Outcome A:** Support the implementation of the National IP Policy and enhance institutional capacities of entities responsible for IPR registration and administration;
- **Outcome B:** Strengthen Supporting Organisations and MSMEs, in particular women and youth, around the acquisition, use and protection of IPRs;
- **Outcome C:** Raise awareness and capacity of GI producers and the biotrade sector; and
- **Outcome D:** Increase commercialisation of IPRs as part of the innovation process.

### Quick project facts

#### Project duration

4 years (2025 – 2029)

#### Total budget

CHF 1'100'000.00, plus in-kind contributions from the Government of the Republic of South Africa

#### Donor agency

Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (**SECO**)

#### Implementing institution

Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (**IPI**)

#### Main partner

- Companies and IP Commission (**CIPC**)

#### Country context

- Population: 64.7 million
- Area: 1,219,090 km<sup>2</sup>
- Annual GDP growth: 0,6%
- Annual GDP per capita PPP: USD 15,458

## Activities

The project offers targeted technical assistance and capacity-building to strengthen South Africa's IP system.

- To **advance the National IP Policy**, activities will provide technical assistance to the CIPC in its transition to a search and substantive examination system for patents. The project will offer exchanges between the CIPC and the IPI on automating the registration of IP rights, in addition to capacity-building for CIPC officials and examiners to improve workflows. Likewise, support will be given towards enforcement and anti-counterfeiting initiatives.
- To **support MSMEs, women, and youth**, the project will work with the Innovation Bridge and business- and entrepreneurship support organisations to disseminate IP information through webinars and train-the-trainer programmes. Specific events will be held to promote women in IP through for example mentorship opportunities.
- For **GI producers and the biotrade sector**, the project will support the drafting of GI product specifications for Honeybush and examine the feasibility of a cross-border GI for Marula. Activities will also include stakeholder consultations and awareness campaigns, and will seek to build on synergies with SECO's other projects, especially Swiss PartnersHIP's "sister" projects: Access and Benefit Sharing Compliant Biotrade in South(ern) Africa (ABioSA), Global Quality and Standards Programme, and Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO).
- To **increase IP commercialisation**, the project will continue to deliver workshops for MSMEs on the commercialisation of IP. Capacity-building at universities and their technology transfer offices will also be offered, to support skills training on patent searching and drafting, and licensing of IPRs.

## Alignment with South Africa's development priorities

The project is directly aligned with South Africa's national priorities. The focus on strengthening MSMEs, job creation, and fostering innovation contributes to economic growth. By specifically targeting women and youth, the project supports key socio-economic transformations to broadly contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, support for the bio-trade sector and the development of GIs promote sustainable trade and rural development, adding value to unique South African products.

## Beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries are South African government institutions, including the dtic, the CIPC, the National Intellectual Property Management Office and the Technology Innovation Agency, among others. Other key beneficiaries include MSMEs, business and entrepreneurship support organisations, GI producers, and the SECO sister-projects.

### For more information, contact

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