

Tunisian-Swiss Intellectual Property Project (TUSIP)

The project objective is to contribute to enabling entrepreneurs, creators, researchers and producers in Tunisia to benefit from effective IP protection.

Project background and context

Tunisia has made considerable progress since its political transition from the Tunisian Jasmin Revolution in 2011, including a new Constitution in 2014 and the creation of new institutions. While the country has moved towards democratic governance, economic transition has not kept pace thus leading the country to face an economic crisis. Even though creating jobs and encouraging entrepreneurship in order to diversify the economy are major challenges, IP rights are not yet sufficiently known as a value-added strategy in various sectors of the urban and rural economy.

Tunisia's new Constitution states that "intellectual property is guaranteed". In turn, Tunisia has legislation on industrial property, copyright, geographical indications, plant varieties, traditional cultural expressions, and is party to several international conventions and treaties in the area of intellectual property.

Despite the country being party to the main international IP agreements, the existence of a national IP legal framework, the IP institutions being in place and its participation in several free trade agreements, the country has not yet tapped into the opportunities offered by the IP system. Most importantly, there is no National IP Strategy and the stakeholders in the fields of IP, innovation and technology transfer are not yet well defined.

The TUSIP was initiated at the request of the Tunisian Government to the Swiss Confederation. The project was planned in consultation with the main Tunisian stakeholders of the Tunisian IP system. It represents their expressed needs and priorities and aims to strengthen the capacities of the Tunisian public and private sectors to benefit from IP rights with a view to economic growth.

Goals and objectives

Selected goals and objectives of high relevance to Tunisia to be achieved by the TUSIP include:

- Improved and effective implementation of **IP legislation** and a National IP Strategy contributing to better framework conditions for investment and innovation;
- Well-functioning **IPR registration and administration entities** providing efficient and user-friendly services;
- Strengthened capacity of IPR entities, academia and private sector representatives in the **promotion, acquisition, use and transfer of IPRs** to potential users;
- Strengthened national capacities in relation to the **enforcement of IPRs**.

Quick project facts

Project duration

Jan. 2022 – Dec. 2025

Total budget

CHF 1,500,000

Donor agency

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

Implementing institution

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

Main partners

- Institut National de la Normalisation et de la Propriété Industrielle (**INNORPI**)
- Direction Générale de la Production Agricole (**DGPA**)
- Organisme Tunisien des Droits d'Auteur et des Droits Voisins (**OTDAV**)

Tunisia country context

Population: 11.7 million

Area: 163,610km²

Annual GDP growth: 1.0% (2019)

GDP per capita:

USD 3,317 (2019)

Activities

The TUSIP aims to contribute to effective IP protection to the benefit of the Tunisian entrepreneurs, creators, researchers and producers. To this end, various activities will be implemented to strengthen the **legal framework of IP protection** such as contributing to the drafting of the National IP Strategy, updating the **industrial property and GI legislations** as well as creating the **legal framework for the establishment of Collective Management Organizations (CMOs)** in Tunisia.

Furthermore, activities for **strengthening the capacities and service delivery** of the main IP authorities regarding registration and administration are planned.

In response to the need to raise awareness of IP rights, with the aim of using them as a means of economic development, the project will focus on **reinforcing IP Academy capacities**, as well as the capacity of **innovation and export promotion entities**, in regard to IPRs and **country branding**. Enhancing the **awareness on Geographical Indications (GIs) and their management** in agri-food and handicraft sectors is also foreseen.

Finally, to contribute to effective enforcement of IPRs, TUSIP will work together with the Tunisian judiciary and customs authorities through training sessions on **inspection and the fight against piracy and counterfeiting** and will support them in developing guidelines and materials.

Alignment with Tunisia's general development priorities

The National Development Plan 2016-2020 of Tunisia aims to turn the country into an economic hub, through achieving diversification of the economy with greater export potential and job creation. More specifically, it aims to "Promote innovation and creativity" by doubling the number of patents, and increasing expenditure dedicated to scientific research to 1.2% of GDP in 2020. This objective should be met by "increasing the contribution of scientific research and technology innovation to social and economic development" and "enhancing capacities and resources allocated to the national research and innovation system".

Tunisia strives to establish the country as a pioneer in digital economy in the region. The above-mentioned National Development Plan also establishes the 'Digital Tunisia 2020 National Strategic Plan'. Under this, the national Start-up Tunisia Strategy was formalized with the Start-up Act in 2019, with the vision of "Making Tunisia a start-up friendly country at the crossroads of the Mediterranean region, the MENA region and Africa". Tunisia is the first African country with such an affirmative start-up policy and system.

Despite the reform-oriented policies and institutions, the Tunisian innovation and IP system is rather disjointed and would benefit from being defined under a National Strategy for Innovation and/or IP.

Therefore, although all of the main IP legislation and institutions are available in Tunisia, the definition and coordination of the national IP system and enhanced capacity of its stakeholders will be key to allowing the country to benefit from IP opportunities and move towards economic growth.

Beneficiaries

The Tunisian government will be a direct partner and beneficiary, specifically the the *Institut National de la Normalisation et de la Propriété Intellectuelle* (INNORPI) under the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mines, the *Direction Générale de la Production Agricole* (DGPA) under Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries and the *Organisme Tunisien des Droits d'Auteur et Droits Voisins* (OTDAV) under the supervision of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

Other direct beneficiaries include selected stakeholders of the national IP system such as Office National de l'Artisanat (ONAT), Agence Nationale de la Promotion de la Recherche Scientifique (ANPR), Ministry of Commerce (economic crime inspectors), Direction Générale des Douanes Tunisiennes, Centre d'Etudes Juridiques et Judiciaires (CEJJ), technology transfer offices, private sector representatives, Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Tunis, and other users of technology and innovation such as research institutions and universities, IP consultants (IP lawyers, technology transfer consultants), artist unions as well as selected GI producers associations and copyright users.

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