What is a patent?

A patent is an intellectual property (IP) right for a technical invention. It allows you to prevent others from using your invention for commercial purposes for up to 20 years. You decide who is allowed to produce, sell or import your invention in those countries in which you own a valid patent. You can also trade your patent, e.g. sell it or licence the use of your invention.

You can patent products (e.g. heated ski boots) and processes (e.g. a method for freeze-drying coffee). However, the invention must solve a problem in a new, non-obvious and technical way. In the example of the ski boots, the problem of cold feet while skiing is solved by fitting self-regulating heating elements to the boots.

The three requirements for obtaining a patent

Once a patent expires, an invention becomes common property and can then be freely used by anyone.

Validity and enforcing a patent

Patents only protect inventions that are novel and inventive at the time of applying for patent protection. However, these two requirements are not checked during the Swiss patent granting procedure. A patent is granted without a guarantee and can therefore be challenged by third parties. For this reason, it is essential that you clarify the novelty of your invention yourself via searches either before or after applying for a patent.

Similarly, you are also responsible for enforcing your patent. The state doesn't monitor for patent infringements. You have to detect any infringement against your patent yourself and defend your rights.

An invention becomes known when it is patented
In return for the exclusive right of use of your invention, you must divulge its basic technical concept. Experts can then understand how the invention works and develop the technology further. This way, both patent owners and society benefit from it.

**What does a patent look like?**

Here are a few examples (in German):

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**DOCUMENTS & LINKS**

- **Pocket Guide "Envisioned. Created. Protected."**

**RELATED TOPICS**

- What is an invention?
- An overview of patent protection