

GOING ABROAD? DON'T FORGET YOUR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY.

This article is part of a series written by the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO).

The doors to the global marketplace are open. It has never been easier for businesses to sell their goods and services, or license and franchise their intellectual property (IP) rights outside their national borders.

IP rights, however, are territorial—so they are usually only secured in the country or region where you have applied for and obtained IP protection.

Protecting your IP helps provide a competitive advantage for your business—the ability of a business to capture greater market share and maintain presence in the market can often determine success. IP protection in [export markets](#) is therefore essential.

For additional information regarding the importance of IP and IP licensing/franchising, please see the **Think IP: Help Your Business Grow** article written for this blog.

OPTIONS FOR PROTECTING YOUR IP INTERNATIONALLY

Current and future markets, business goals, and resources should be considered when applying for international IP protection, in order to ensure appropriate IP coverage for your business.

To obtain IP protection outside of Canada, a business may apply directly in individual countries. Each country has its own application requirements, such as fees and language. A business may accelerate the process of obtaining patent protection in foreign countries by using the [Patent Prosecution Highway](#) (PPH), which has been launched as a cost-effective and efficient way to speed up the examination process for corresponding patent applications filed in participating IP offices.

Businesses may also benefit from agreements between countries for obtaining IP protection for an entire [region](#). For example, you can file a single trademark application with the European Union Intellectual Property Office to obtain IP protection in all 28 member countries.

From a global perspective, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) administers [IP systems](#), which offer applicants from participating countries the ability to seek IP protection in numerous countries around the world by filing a single application, in one language, and paying one application fee.

WIPO-administered systems provide three different paths for international IP protection:

- The [Patent Cooperation Treaty](#) (PCT) assists applicants in seeking patent protection internationally. The PCT makes it possible to secure the rights to an invention simultaneously in a large number of countries by filing a single “international” application, instead of filing several separate applications. The granting of a patent remains the responsibility of the national or regional IP office. The process of obtaining patent protection using the PCT is detailed on the Canadian Intellectual Property Office [website](#).
- The [Madrid System](#) permits registering and managing of trademarks worldwide and [The Hague System](#) allows for the international filing of industrial designs. While Canada has not yet joined these systems, Canadian businesses can still leverage them to access foreign markets, provided they meet certain applicant requirements in a member country.

Businesses seeking to operate in a global marketplace should take steps to protect and exploit their IP internationally. You may wish to seek advice from a qualified IP agent or lawyer who can assist in determining the best options for your business, and ensure that international IP protection is properly secured.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CAN ALSO HELP WITH YOUR BUSINESS PLANNING

The Government of Canada, through the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service and National Research Council, provides valuable services for taking your business abroad, including [practical advice on foreign markets](#), [customized innovation assistance](#) and [global market access support](#).

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IP?

To learn more about IP, read the other IP posts on WEOC’s website, or follow us on Twitter ([@CIPO_Canada](#)) and [LinkedIn](#).

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