

News story: UK ratifies Hague Agreement for industrial designs

The UK has completed its final step in the UK joining the Hague Agreement for industrial designs. The UK instrument of ratification was deposited in Geneva today. It will come into effect three months following from today. Users will then will be able to choose design protection in the UK for international applications

The UK's decision to join the Hague system in a national capacity is about flexibility. It is part of a wider designs modernisation programme to streamline the designs legal framework. Businesses will have a greater choice in how they register their designs internationally. They can also:

- save money on design registrations
- protect their Intellectual Property more efficiently, and
- encourage non-UK owners of designs to register their rights in the UK

The Hague Agreement allows applicants to register a design in any one of the 67 contracting parties through a single application.

Applications are filed to the International Bureau at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). It provides protection in the territories of up to 82 countries through a single international application and a single set of fees.

Her Majesty's Ambassador, Julian Brathwaite and WIPO Director General, Francis Gurry, at WIPO HQ Geneva. Image source: WIPO

Tim Moss CBE, Chief Executive, IPO said:

Design intensive UK business generate in excess of 11 per cent of our GDP with a total investment in intangible assets protected by design rights estimated at more than £14 billion.

The UK's decision to join the Hague system in our national capacity will give businesses a greater choice in how to protect, manage and register their designs internationally, and save them money.

Our membership of this international system may also encourage non-UK owners of designs to register their rights in the UK for basing manufacturing, distribution or licensing of their intellectual property (IP).

These IP assets are important for innovative companies, especially for SMEs. They have a positive impact on job creation and economic growth.

UK businesses have had to access the Hague system since 2008 through the EU's membership of it. The UK currently has membership via the EU and is not a contracting party in its own right. Joining in a national capacity creates this option.

Further updates and guidance for business will be published in due course.