



Hans Hutter,
Partner, European
Patent Attorney

ARMOUR FOR YOUR INNOVATION

Nederlandsch Octrooibureau assists clients around the world in establishing their intellectual property rights within Europe, **Hans Hutter**, Partner, European Patent Attorney, details the necessity...

▶ Ever had the feeling: “That company is using my idea! Does it have the right to do so?”

You are not the first to ask this question, only to realise that your idea has been distributed publicly unprotected, when it could have been protected. Many intellectual property laws are available to protect your innovative ideas, including patent law, trademark law, design law and copyright law.

Patents can be granted for any innovative development. This applies to any device, system or method. In the old days, production methods – usually chemical or industrial processes – could be patented. Nowadays, software-related inventions can also be patented in many countries. This is even true for Europe, although many managers are not aware of it. The only requirement in Europe is that the software-related invention makes a technical contribution to the art. Examples include computer program inventions that control industrial processes like the production of end-user products, such as cars, mobile phones and medicines. However, computer program inventions that essentially solve a mathematical equation may also be patentable, provided they solve a technical problem – such as the encryption of telecommunication messages, data compression or signal processing.

Specialist protection

Trademarks are symbols used to distinguish the products or services of one company from the competition. This may concern words, letter combinations, number combinations, product shapes (eg the shape of the Volkswagen Beetle), as well as the colour of a product (eg Camping Gas blue), melodies or even noise (eg the roar of a Harley Davidson engine).

Designs are used to protect the external appearance of a device that is made in an industrial or traditional manner. This could pertain to the external appearance of mobile phones, laptops and cars, or even coffee cups and irons.

Protecting your innovations is the work of specialists. It is therefore a very good idea to call in the help of such specialists. Too many people have discovered that, after trying to protect their innovations on their own, they end up empty-handed because the requested protection was inadequate.

Nederlandsch Octrooibureau is located in the Netherlands, but assists clients around the world in establishing their intellectual property rights within Europe. Its consultants represent global clients at the European Patent Office and OHIM (international trademark organisation in Alicante, Spain). Since the Middle Ages, the Netherlands has been a country of trade and import/

export activities for many European countries. Today, Rotterdam, located in the western part of the Netherlands, is by far the largest harbour in Europe, while Amsterdam has one of the largest airports (Schiphol Airport) used to import goods into Europe. People in the Netherlands are fully aware of the importance of protecting intellectual property. That is why the Netherlands was one of the co-founders of the European Patent Convention and has an established intellectual property network that is well recognised across the world. The European Patent Office, for instance, has a branch office in The Hague, where almost half of its employees work.

Nederlandsch Octrooibureau is one of the larger intellectual property consultant firms in Europe and operates in this dynamic heart of intellectual property. With more than 40 consultants, it is a highly experienced firm that dates back to 1888. In spite of its old age, it continues to offer dynamic and innovative services. We understand our clients' needs and serve them with small teams that ensure there is always somebody available to be contacted. ■

CONTACT DETAILS

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www.octrooibureau.nl