

Design drives consumer choice across the EU as counterfeit risks persist

- Nearly 3 in 4 EU consumers are willing to pay more for products with a better design, according to a new EUIPO survey
- Product design is especially valued by younger consumers
- In Ireland, design is also highly valued: 76% of consumers are willing to pay more for better designed products
- Design-led sectors are particularly vulnerable to counterfeiting, with estimated losses of €12 billion in the clothing sector and €2.7 billion in handbags and jewellery due to counterfeiting each year. In Ireland alone, counterfeits cause losses of over €350 million in these sectors
- Design protection helps combat counterfeits and unauthorised copies and strengthens the EU's competitiveness in the global market

The design of a product plays a decisive role in consumer purchases across the European Union, according to new findings from the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). However, as design becomes an increasingly important factor in consumer decisions, European creators and businesses also face growing risks from counterfeiting.

The results of a new EU-wide survey show that **72% of European consumers consider product design important** when deciding what to buy. Around one third (31%) say that design is very or extremely important when buying a product. Moreover, half of EU consumers value a good design, and nearly **3 out of 4 (73%) are willing to pay more** for a product with a better design.

Design matters particularly to **younger consumers**: **80%** of those aged 18 to 24 say it is an important factor in their purchasing decisions. Young people are also more likely to be willing to pay higher prices for better-designed products and to associate design with positive emotions.

Looking at sectors, data reveals that design is especially influential in the **furniture and fashion industries**, with 76% of EU consumers considering it very important when buying furniture and 66% when buying clothing and accessories.

While quality and price remain the most important purchasing factors, design plays a role in shaping consumer preferences, particularly among younger generations.



But the value of design also makes it vulnerable to **counterfeiting and unauthorised copying**, which remain widespread across key sectors such as fashion, furniture, electronics and other consumer goods.

The Executive Director of the EUIPO, **João Negrão**, said:

“European design is one of our greatest competitive strengths. It shapes the products we trust, value and enjoy every day while helping businesses stand out in the global market. Research confirms that consumers, especially younger generations, recognise the value of good design. Protecting designs gives creators the confidence to innovate and businesses the edge to compete - generating the growth and competitiveness on which Europe's economy relies.”

Counterfeiting, a threat to European design

Counterfeit products that mimic the appearance of genuine products have become widespread, fuelled by the expansion of e-commerce and the influence of social media. Around 13% of Europeans report having intentionally bought counterfeit products, a figure that rises to 26% among younger consumers aged 15-24.

According to the EUIPO data, the fashion and clothing industry, closely linked to design, suffers estimated annual losses of **€12 billion**, while counterfeit handbags, jewellery and watches cost genuine manufacturers around **€2.7 billion** in lost sales every year across the EU. In **Ireland**, counterfeiting causes annual losses of **€349 million** in the clothing sector and **€10 million** in the handbags sector.

SMEs are particularly vulnerable to this type of infringement, as they often rely on a small number of distinctive product designs and have limited capacity to monitor and enforce their design rights.

Beyond the economic impact, counterfeit products can pose **serious health and safety risks for consumers and for the environment**, as they often do not comply with safety and quality standards. Research also shows that the trade in counterfeit goods is linked to **organised criminal networks** and, in some cases, to [labour exploitation](#).

Design as a strategic business asset

Design-driven industries represent a substantial share of EU economic activity and employment. They **employ around 28 million people**, accounting for approximately 13% of EU employment, and generate over **16% of the EU GDP**.

EUIPO studies further show that small businesses that register their designs generate almost **30% more revenue per employee and pay almost 25% higher wages** than those without registered intellectual property rights. Yet despite these benefits, only around 1% of SMEs in the EU hold registered design rights.



The EUIPO actively promotes design protection and enforcement, particularly for SMEs. These include financial support schemes such as the [SME Fund](#), advisory services including [IP Scan](#) and enforcement tools such as the [IP Enforcement Portal](#). In addition, the EUIPO works closely with other organisations such as Europol and Frontex as well as law enforcement authorities from Member States to counter intellectual property crime across the EU, including large-scale, coordinated actions targeting counterfeit products.

The EUIPO also organises the [DesignEuropa Awards](#), an EU design award competition which recognises outstanding designs and their creators, from established pioneers to emerging innovators, while also reinforces the importance of design protection. The Awards, which celebrate their 10th anniversary in 2026, also highlight Europe's rich design legacy and its significant contribution to culture, creativity and everyday life.

A recent [legislative reform modernising EU design law](#) has simplified procedures, reduced costs and made design protection more accessible, including new ways for representing innovative and animated designs.

Registering an [EU design](#) gives businesses fast, cost-effective protection across the entire EU market through a single application filed online with the EUIPO. The application fee starts at €350. Registered EU designs are enforceable in all 27 EU Member States and can be renewed every 5 years for up to 25 years.

ABOUT THE EUIPO

The [European Union Intellectual Property Office \(EUIPO\)](#) is one of the largest decentralised agencies of the European Union, based in Alicante (Spain) since its foundation in 1994. The EUIPO manages the registration of EU trade marks, designs, and craft and industrial geographical indications, all of which are intellectual property rights that cover the 27 EU Member States. The EUIPO also carries out cooperation activities at EU and international level to create a level playing field in the world of IP and is responsible for the [European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights](#). In 2025, the EUIPO was ranked as the [most innovative IP office in the world](#).

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