



**Joint Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of
the Committee on Intellectual Property under the Agreement
between the European Union and Japan for an Economic Partnership**

Brussels, 11 November 2024

The fourth meeting of the Committee on Intellectual Property under the Agreement between the European Union (“the EU”) and Japan for an Economic Partnership Agreement (“the EPA”) took place on 11 November 2024 in Brussels.

Japanese participants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, National Tax Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan Patent Office, Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the Mission of Japan to the EU; and the EU participants from the Directorate-General for Trade, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs and the EU Delegation to Japan had a fruitful exchange of views on matters related to Chapter 14 of the EPA on Intellectual Property (IP).

The EU and Japan emphasised the importance of the EPA as a foundation for collaboration on IP, highlighting the need for ongoing partnership to address challenges and enhance mutual understanding. Both sides expressed a commitment to strengthening the implementation of IP-related provisions under the EPA.

Japan presented its recent legislative updates in the field of IP. Amendments to the Trademark Act, effective from April 2024, introduced a consent system that allows for concurrent trademark registrations under specific conditions and a relaxation of restrictions on trademarks containing personal names. Additionally, Japan presented the latest amendments to the Unfair Competition Prevention Act, aimed at strengthening the prevention of imitation of forms in digital space, as well as an amendment to the Copyright Act, introducing a new compulsory licensing system which seeks to enhance the efficiency of licensing processes for copyrighted works.

The EU provided an overview of its recent developments, including the 2024 Recommendation to Combat Counterfeiting, which encourages stronger enforcement measures and greater cooperation between EU Member States and stakeholders in combating IP infringements. In that context, the EU described two resources developed to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in IP protection: the IP Scan Enforcement Voucher, which provides tailored consultancy and a report with actionable steps reimbursed through the SME Fund, and the Cybertheft Prevention Toolkit, designed to enhance IP protection for SMEs in the digital space.

The EU shared highlights from the 2023 Enforcement Report, noting that counterfeit goods detection increased significantly. The EU also presented its new legislation providing for protection of crafts and industrial products geographical indications (CIGIs), as well as the revision of the EU Geographical Indications (GI) system for agricultural products and foodstuffs, wines and spirits.

Both sides engaged in a discussion on further amending the list of protected GIs in Annex 14-B of the EPA, with a view to add 27 GIs each in 2025. Each side committed to share its draft list of GIs as soon as possible.

The EU recalled that paragraph 5 of Article 14.25 of the EPA, which allows grating, slicing and packaging operations to be carried out in Japan with regard to 13 EU GI-labelled cheeses, would cease to apply by the end of 2026. However, for technical reasons, two of those cheeses' producers would need more time. The EU therefore favoured an extension of the derogation period by two to three years. Japan acknowledged the request and noted the importance of an extended adjustment period to support compliance by domestic importers and producers. Both sides confirmed that the modalities for such a possible extension of the derogation period could be explored in a dedicated technical meeting which would be held before the end of this year.

The EU raised specific cases of alleged GI infringements in Japan relating to: i) the labelling of products where GIs are used as ingredients; ii) compliance with the technical specifications; and iii) updates of technical specifications. Japan confirmed that it would investigate these issues and review the publication of technical specifications for specific GI products for compliance. Additionally, both sides explored the implementation of streamlined GI enforcement measures to facilitate effective control and transparency.

The EU and Japan Co-Chairs expressed their appreciation for the fruitful meeting and reiterated their commitment to fostering a deeper understanding and cooperation in the field of intellectual property.
