

"Fake reality" campaign has been launched with the motto "Evaluate the risks - choose a genuine surprise"

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Office news



On Monday, 27 June, the Patent Office, together with the Customs Board of the State Revenue Service (SRS) and an informative supporter Spice shopping center, launched a "Fake reality" campaign with the motto "Evaluate the risks - choose a genuine surprise" to encourage the public to think about the risks caused by buying fakes online, as informed by Agris Batalauskis, director of the Patent Office.

At the opening of the campaign, representatives of the Patent Office and the SRS Customs Board shared recommendations on how consumers and entrepreneurs can protect themselves from violations of intellectual property rights. At the same time, an awards ceremony of the finalists of a youth creative competition "Fake Dimension" took place.

Violations of intellectual property rights, namely product counterfeiting, pose risks to the safety and health of consumers and have negative consequences for entrepreneurs and national economies. Therefore, in June, when World Anti-Counterfeiting Day is celebrated, the topic of counterfeiting is especially relevant.

According to a report published in 2022 by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), most frequently traded categories of dangerous counterfeits in the European Union countries are perfumery and cosmetics, clothing, toys, automotive spare parts, and pharmaceuticals.

"Unlike manufacturers of genuine goods, distributors of fakes do not comply with either safety or quality requirements, so both fake clothes and perfumery, and especially pharmaceuticals, can contain illegal substances and seriously endanger health and life. Likewise, electrical devices are likely to have short circuits, can overheat and even explode, and automotive

spare parts can quickly wear out and not fulfill their function. Therefore, the aim of "Fake Reality" campaign is to educate about these risks," explained the Patent Office's director.

The said EUIPO report reveals that last year almost every second young person in Latvia aged 15 to 24 deliberately purchased imitations online. At the same time, 37% of the respondents concluded that they lacked knowledge of how to distinguish fakes.

That is why the campaign emphasizes the necessity to evaluate the risks before buying goods of uncertain origin. The Patent Office, in cooperation with the SRS Customs Board, has prepared a digital educational material available at <https://youtu.be/txt9xoyzTlk>. It contains information on the signs of counterfeit goods. Other practical recommendations are available on the initiative's website at <http://viltotarealitate.lv>.

The EUIPO's youth survey shows that the fear of being scammed online and other cyber risks are the main factors that discourage the respondents from buying fakes. The research participants indicated that a better understanding of the negative impact of fakes on the environment and society in general motivates them to think about what and where they buy.

☞ "Violations of intellectual property rights also cause indirect losses to the national economy. When consumers choose cheap imported fakes, the market share of local entrepreneurs, as well as the turnover of funds and opportunities to invest in the development of the company and creation of new jobs decrease," noted Batalauskis.

Iveta Priedīte, a member of the Board of Spice shopping center, agrees with him, stating that nowadays honest entrepreneurs play an important role not only in the economy, but also in preserving and improving the environment, which is also one of the priorities of the European Union and Latvia.

☞ "It is important for us as honest business operators that the companies trading in our shopping center offer visitors qualitative products of a known and proven origin, thus taking care not only of consumer health, but also safety," emphasized Iveta Priedīte.

Priedīte added that practicing an honest business also means investing in the economy. Official workplaces take care of their employees by guaranteeing a safe and comfortable working environment, paying salaries honestly and looking to the employees' well-being. Of course, the implementation of such a business also means a tax policy that complies with the law.

"Spice shopping center is currently facing changes, one of the main goals of which is to improve its sustainability, environment and availability of the represented goods and brands, thus contributing to the development of a well-thought-out shopping environment. These are just a few examples that illustrate the concern of an honest business for the consumer," said Priedīte.

Sandra Kārklīņa-Ādmīne, deputy director of the SRS Customs Administration, stressed that just as consumers should be proactive and attentive when shopping online, so also companies should protect their intellectual property.

☞ "If an entrepreneur wishes to enforce his/her intellectual property rights - trademarks, industrial designs, patents, copyrights, and others – he/she can submit a request to take action to customs authorities in any member state of the European Union, providing information about the goods and possible counterfeits. Upon receiving such an application, customs authorities on the external border of the European Union carry out increased control measures to prevent violations of the claimed intellectual property rights," explained Kārklīņa-Ādmīne.

The Patent Office also shared recommendations on how entrepreneurs should act to protect their intellectual property.

99 "First of all, before starting to register your trademark, it is recommended, in order to protect yourself from any misunderstandings, to make sure that someone has not already registered the same or a very similar trademark. Second, to take action against imitators, we recommend that you register your industrial property. Register a trademark to protect your logo, register an industrial design to protect the external appearance of a package, and protect your technology by registering a patent," pointed out Batauskis.

Third, companies should systematically take care of the quality of their product. It must be just so good to make it almost impossible to fake it. Fourth, it is recommended to be open to communication with customers. If customers are provided with comprehensive product descriptions, they will be able to identify counterfeits and report cases of purchasing a fake product. Fifth, carefully evaluate market developments on your own or using the services of a professional patent attorney and take action against imitators without delay.

More information on how to protect yourself and your intellectual property rights from counterfeiting is available on the campaign's website at www.viltotarealitate.lv. You can also report counterfeits there.

Since a large part of fakes find their way to the consumer online, here are some recommendations to pay attention to:

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- critically evaluate the information about the product on websites and in social networks;
 - pay attention to the quality of the website - printing, grammar errors, image quality, return and money-back guarantees, the ability to contact customer service, etc.;
 - "a replica is as good as the original" - the product is and remains a fake anyway;
 - counterfeiters tend to rush the purchase of a product, e. g. sudden and short-term discounts on luxury goods. If you suspect that the product is not genuine, check it on the website of the official manufacturer;
 - pharmaceuticals, especially prescription drugs, should only be purchased from licensed pharmacies or their online shops;
 - you can also search for consumer reviews on trustpilot.com.

<https://www.lrpv.gov.lv/en/article/fake-reality-campaign-has-been-launched-motto-evaluate-risks-choose-genuine-surprise>