

Boards of Appeal Action Plan 2026-2030





Executive Summary

The Boards of Appeal Action Plan 2026-2030 strategically positions the Boards to strengthen their leadership role in EU-wide convergence and legal harmonisation efforts, aligning procedural innovation with stakeholder expectations.

The Boards of Appeal of the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) play a central and independent role in safeguarding the coherence, quality and legitimacy of the EU's trade mark and design systems. Amid growing complexity in intellectual property (IP) disputes and rising user expectations, the Boards are committed to leading with clarity, fairness and innovation.

The first Action Plan 2021-2026 provided an internal framework to respond proactively to rising case complexity, the digitalisation of procedures and the need for consistency and convergence in decision-making. That Plan marked the beginning of a journey towards a more integrated and strategic role for the Boards within the EUIPO and the wider EUIPN (European Union Intellectual Property Network).

The Boards of Appeal's second Action Plan 2026–2030 aims to continue that progress but also marks a significant evolution in ambition, scale and scope.

It embraces the broader concept of access to justice. Although the Boards of Appeal are not a judicial body like a court, their decisions and procedures must uphold key principles of access to justice — including the right to be heard, the right to an effective remedy, and the right to a fair process — all of which are enshrined in EU law.

Today, access to justice means more than just legal representation or access to a decision-making body. It encompasses fair processes, legal certainty and clarity and applicability of decisions in practice. Individuals must be able to understand and enforce their rights, supported by affordable and accessible mechanisms — including mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution.

The Action Plan 2026–2030 also supports the Boards’ alignment to the European Union’s broader policy priorities. Intellectual property is a key enabler of innovation, competitiveness and investment. By ensuring timely, high-quality and consistent decision-making, the Boards directly support a more innovation-friendly environment for European businesses, especially SMEs. This contributes with the EU’s Competitiveness Agenda and the Draghi Report on the Future of EU Competitiveness for stronger legal certainty, institutional excellence and strategic coherence across the Single Market. In doing so, the Boards of Appeal will continue to track performance through quality, timeliness and user experience, while preserving flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

As part of the EUIPO, the Boards play a vital role in delivering on the Office’s mandate to promote innovation, growth and an effective IP ecosystem. The Action Plan therefore reinforces not only the Boards’ operational independence, but also their strategic alignment with the EUIPO Strategic Plan 2030 (SP2030), contributing to a future-ready, agile and business-oriented IP framework across Europe.

The Action Plan 2026–2030 defines a clear and comprehensive vision to develop the Boards’ work and culture into a **One-Stop IP Dispute Resolution Hub** — a platform delivering fast, accessible and high-quality decisions tailored to users’ needs. Grounded in judicial independence and a strong service orientation, the new Plan reinforces the Boards’ unique role within the EU IP system. Legal certainty will remain the guiding principles, with the Boards’ case law providing clarity and consistency across the IP framework, where it may have implications for enforcement, while remaining fully within the scope of the Boards’ mandate.

A major focus of the new Action Plan will be the responsible adoption and leadership of artificial intelligence (AI) in decision-making. Building on the SP2030, the Boards will engage with selected AI initiatives, including those developed in the Office, ensuring that their use in adjudicatory work enhances case law research, effective drafting assistance and consistency of decision making while safeguarding judicial independence and fundamental procedural rights. Over the next five years, the Boards aim to become a recognised reference point on the use of AI for national and regional Intellectual Property Offices’ (IPOs) appeal bodies, as well as for national and regional IP Courts, contributing practical experience and thought leadership to the wider European IP Community.

AI will be applied as an enabling technology across multiple strands of the Action Plan — from quality assurance, drafting support and jurisprudential analysis, to user-oriented services such as transparent documentation search tools. By sharing experience, engaging with national and regional IPO’s appeal bodies and national IP Courts, as well as with academics and IP practitioners, the Boards will help shape emerging standards for the use of AI in context of appeal proceedings. This ambition reinforces the Boards’ broader vision to evolve into a “One-Stop IP Dispute Resolution Hub” that is also a hub for AI in the Boards’ activities— where technology, legal certainty and access to justice converge.

The Action Plan also takes into account broader developments in trade mark and design activities, with growing filings of European Union trade marks (EUTMs) and European designs (EUDs) at the EUIPO, contributing to higher volumes of oppositions, cancellations and invalidities at first instance and, ultimately, appeal proceedings and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes. In addition, recent trends confirm a steady increase in case complexity, with more extensive arguments, submissions and larger volumes of evidence, in part reflecting the wider use of AI tools by parties and representatives. In this context, the Boards will not only continue to play a pivotal role by further developing and enhancing their decision making, but also by further evolving its other services and products — from mediation and case law analysis to close engagement with national IP offices, their appeal bodies, IP Courts, user associations and the wider IP community.

To realise this vision, the Plan defines **three overarching goals**:

1. **Striving for Excellence and Trust in IP Dispute Resolution;**
2. **Fostering Efficiency and Accessibility;**
3. **Strengthening Partnerships through Collaborative Networks.**

These goals are to be delivered through the following **five strategic Lines of Action** which are implemented by a set of twenty defined Key Actions:

- **Enhancing Quality and Trust:** Strengthening legal coherence, case law consistency and quality assurance while preparing for new competencies under EU legislation;
- **Taking Mediation to the next level:** Expanding mediation as a mainstream dispute resolution tool, integrated across EUIPO procedures, and offered collaboratively with national IP offices;
- **Accessibility and Visibility:** Making decisions and procedures more transparent, launching modern legal research tools, and enhancing the use of oral hearings;
- **Partnerships and Growth:** Building stronger networks with Member State Courts, IP offices, user associations and academia, while extending global cooperation;
- **Collaboration and Innovation within the Boards of Appeal:** Investing in staff development, encouraging innovation, and promoting a collaborative and inclusive institutional culture.

This Action Plan is both operational and aspirational. It is grounded in clear, measurable actions and motivated by a shared commitment to justice, excellence and service to the public good. Its implementation will reinforce the Boards' role in the European IP system and their contribution to long-term EU competitiveness.



Introduction

This Action Plan sets out the strategic direction of the Boards of Appeal for the period 2026-2030. It aims to consolidate recent progress and address future needs.

The Boards of Appeal of the EUIPO play a vital and independent role in safeguarding the integrity, consistency, and effectiveness of the European Union's intellectual property (IP) framework. As the EUIPO evolves in step with the broader EUIPN, the Boards of Appeal have become not only the appellate instance within the Office, but also a key actor in promoting legal coherence, enhancing stakeholder confidence and advancing procedural innovation across the EU IP system.

The unique position of the Boards lies in their dual responsibility: to adjudicate appeals arising from EUIPO first-instance decisions and to serve as a 'laboratory' for legal excellence and best practices. They operate at the intersection of adjudication, institutional accountability, and the evolving expectations of businesses, practitioners and Courts across the Member States. Independence in decision-making remains the bedrock of the Boards' credibility, but equally crucial is their commitment to transparency, consistency and the quality of service delivered to users.

The Action Plan reflects the Boards' determination to continuously improve their adjudicative functions and reinforce their role as a trusted dispute resolution partner. It sets out a practical, forward-looking framework for delivering outcomes that are timely, well-reasoned and responsive to the realities of users and national authorities. It also aligns closely with the SP2030, building on shared principles of service excellence, technological evolution and stakeholder engagement. Its implementation is designed with three key components in mind: our internal staff, whose expertise and dedication drive quality; the judiciary and IP offices of the Member States, who rely on our case law and analysis; and the IP community — rights holders, legal counsel and business users — who turn to us for predictability, fairness and support.

Through this Action Plan, the Boards of Appeal reaffirm their role as a centre of IP legal excellence and procedural innovation, positioned to support the EUIPO and the EUIPN in delivering a high-quality, coherent and accessible IP system for all.

Vision

The vision of the Boards of Appeal for the period 2026 to 2030 is to establish the Boards of Appeal as a fully integrated, high-performing One-Stop IP Dispute Resolution Hub that offers timely, high-quality, and fit-for-purpose outcomes across the full spectrum of IP-related appeals and conflicts, including mediation.

This evolution reflects not only the growing complexity of IP litigation but also the increasing expectations of rights holders, their representatives, national Courts and the wider innovation ecosystem. To meet these demands, the Boards aim to consolidate their adjudicative, mediation and procedural expertise into a unified and user-centric model of dispute resolution.

At the core of this vision is the belief that justice in intellectual property must be accessible, efficient, transparent and collaborative.

As the Boards evolves into a One-Stop IP Dispute Resolution Hub, the Boards will ensure that this hub also becomes a centre of excellence on AI in dispute resolution. The Boards will not only use AI tools to improve case management, decision drafting, legal research and documentation accessibility, but will also drive the debate on ethical and judicial standards for the use of AI in appeal proceedings and decision-making. By embedding safeguards for independence, transparency and fairness, the Boards will help ensure that AI strengthens, rather than compromises, trust in justice.

The One-Stop Hub will rest on the following interlinked functional areas:

- **Case Management:** An integrated approach to the lifecycle of each appeal, with early intervention, triage and tailored procedural strategies to optimise efficiency and relevance;
- **Resolution Mechanisms:** A diversified toolkit that includes formal decisions, mediation, conciliation and other alternative dispute resolution methods, applied with flexibility to best serve the needs of each case;
- **Enforcement Readiness:** Where needed, support for the effective enforcement and follow-up of outcomes to strengthen legal certainty and reduce the cost of protracted litigation.

To realise the vision of becoming a One-Stop IP Dispute Resolution Hub, the Boards of Appeal will focus on three overarching goals. These goals respond directly to the challenges and opportunities emerging in the IP landscape and provide the foundation for the specific five Lines of Action and twenty Key Actions set out in this Plan.

Goal 1: Striving for Excellence and Trust in IP Dispute Resolution

The duty of the Boards of Appeal rests on their ability to deliver decisions that are legally sound, coherent and trusted by users and Courts alike. This goal seeks to reinforce the Boards' core judicial function while adapting to new legal realities and rising expectations.

Over the period 2026–2030, the Boards will work to further strengthen their legal consistency, improve the transparency and accessibility of their reasoning and ensure that quality is systematically monitored, evaluated and improved. The principle of judicial independence will remain a cornerstone of operations — safeguarded institutionally and supported by a culture of integrity and professionalism.

In parallel, the Boards will enhance cooperation with the EUIPO's first instance to support a more coherent, user-oriented adjudicative system. Structured exchanges, comparative analysis and discussion of decision-making practices and procedural matters, will help foster mutual understanding, and reinforce consistency across the Office's two instances.

This goal will also promote increased use of the Grand Board to address complex or novel questions of law and reinforce the work of the Consistency Circles to ensure convergence and internal dialogue.

Mediation will be professionalised and given greater visibility, contributing to trust in alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Legal transparency and inclusiveness will be reinforced through clearer communication, structured user feedback and engagement with national Courts and user communities. Excellence will not only be measured by the legal correctness of decisions but by their clarity, consistency, timeliness and impact.

Goal 2: Fostering Efficiency and Accessibility

The value of a dispute resolution body lies not only in the quality of its decisions but also in its ability to deliver them in a timely, predictable and accessible manner. As the Boards of Appeal face increasingly complex cases and growing user expectations, the need for efficient procedures and user-friendly services becomes even more critical.

This goal focuses on modernising case management, accelerating decision timelines and improving the experience of users interacting with the Boards. Efficiency will be pursued through the intelligent use of technology, proactive procedural design and better integration between legal and administrative workflows. In parallel, accessibility will be enhanced by clarifying procedures, simplifying interfaces and broadening opportunities for engagement.

Key initiatives will include the adoption of smart allocation systems, early case management tools and the flexible use of alternative dispute resolution pathways. These mechanisms will allow the Boards to tailor their approach to the nature and complexity of each case, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently and user needs are addressed promptly.

As part of the Office-wide digital and AI transformation, the Boards will take part in the Office's AI initiatives to ensure consistency and shared innovation. **AI-assisted tools** will support legal research, consistency checks and process automation. Such technologies will be deployed in line with the EUIPO's ethical standards and institutional safeguards to uphold fairness and legal certainty.

Goal 3: Strengthening Partnerships through Collaborative Networks

The Boards of Appeal operate within a wide and interconnected network of IP stakeholders that includes national intellectual property offices, Courts, user associations, academic institutions and international organisations. As the legal and commercial environment surrounding IP continues to globalise and digitalise, fostering strong partnerships becomes essential – not only for the success of the Boards, but for the coherence and resilience of the entire EU IP system.

This goal aims to reinforce the Boards' role as an active contributor to a unified European IP legal space by building trust-based, structured relationships with key institutional, professional and academic actors. It will do so by increasing dialogue with Member State IP offices and their appeal bodies, strengthening cooperation with national and EU-level judiciaries, and opening new pathways for cross-border exchange and convergence.

The Boards will also expand collaboration with user associations to ensure services and procedures respond to the needs of rights holders, legal professionals and businesses of all sizes. Dialogue formats such as focus groups, expert panels and co-design workshops will be used to facilitate feedback and mutual understanding.

Special emphasis will be placed on cultivating the next generation of IP professionals. Academic partnerships will support research, training and legal innovation while exchange programmes and moot court participation will provide law students and young professionals with early insight into the workings of administrative decision-making.

Finally, the Boards will deepen their involvement in international cooperation, contributing to global legal development in areas such as alternative dispute resolution, AI in decision-making and comparative analysis of administrative justice. Engagement with organisations such as World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), European Patent Office (EPO), Trade Mark 5 (TM5 - forum of the five largest trade mark offices: EUIPO, US Patent and Trade Mark Office, Japan Patent Office, Korean Intellectual Property Office and China National Intellectual Property Administration) and Industrial Design 5 (ID5 - forum of the five largest trade mark offices: EUIPO, US Patent and Trade Mark Office, Japan Patent Office, Korean Intellectual Property Office and China National Intellectual Property Administration) will allow the Boards to share best practices, learn from peers and reinforce their reputation as a forward-looking and reliable adjudicative body.

This goal reflects the Boards' belief that legal quality is not achieved in isolation. It is built through continuous engagement, openness to new perspectives and collaboration with those who share the responsibility of upholding a fair and predictable IP system in Europe and beyond.

To translate its vision and strategic goals into concrete and sustainable results, the Boards of Appeal will operate through five comprehensive Lines of Action, each supported by a set of twenty defined Key Actions. These Lines of Action represent thematic pillars that encompass the legal, operational, strategic and institutional aspirations of the Boards over the next five years to develop them into a One Stop IP Dispute Resolution Hub. These thematic pillars will be implemented within the Office's existing activity-based budget structure and that operations of the Boards, ensuring consistency in reporting and monitoring.

Together, they provide a practical, phased framework for turning ambition into measurable outcomes, while also allowing the organisation to remain flexible and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities in the European IP environment.

Line of Action 1: Enhancing Quality and Trust

This Line of Action underpins the very legitimacy of the Boards' function. At its core lies the commitment to delivering decisions of the highest legal standard, in a manner that is timely, well-reasoned and consistent. Quality must not only be maintained but continuously enhanced. Independence, while essential, must go hand-in-hand with the responsibility to explain and justify decisions transparently. In this context, the Boards will strengthen the institutional mechanisms that foster coherence, including the strategic deployment of Consistency Circles, Grand Board cases and case law research. Collaboration with EUIPO Business Support Department and the first instance, also known as Business Operations Department, will ensure reuse of relevant SP2030 Business Case deliverables that can enhance quality and consistency at appeal level, and support multilingual accessibility, plain language drafting, and coherent terminology.

A formal **quality assurance framework** will be developed and implemented, ensuring that all decisions are subject to internal learning loops, performance monitoring and user feedback mechanisms.

The Boards will also prepare for new competencies under EU legislation, reinforcing their institutional agility and relevance within the evolving legal framework.

KA1: Implement a robust quality assurance framework

A comprehensive and enhanced quality assurance system will be developed to support continuous improvement in decision-making. This will cover the revision of performance indicators, improving decision drafting clarity and expanding the scope of internal quality checks.

The Boards will examine how artificial intelligence can support quality reading and quality control, while safeguarding judicial independence. In line with SP2030, and in close collaboration with the Office AI Steering Committee, a structured BoA AI adoption plan is being prepared, with pilot projects to test current AI tools and to identify future needs. To further streamline drafting, the Boards will also refine the existing Appeal Drafting Editor tool, which integrates standard paragraphs maintained by the Consistency Circles.

The existing quality framework will be enhanced by reviewing current key performance indicators and quality measurements — such as consistency, timeliness, and user experience — and by considering new ones, taking into account the framework of the ISO certifications. This will ensure that quality assurance is benchmarked against internationally recognised standards and remains fit for purpose.

Future-oriented approaches such as a **Study on the optimal characteristics of high-quality decisions** will help identify new standards and best practices. Based on the results and recommendations of this study, the Boards will identify and implement best practices to further enhance the quality of their decisions and also share these recommendations and results within the network of Appeal Bodies and users.

As part of the improved quality assurance system, the Boards will launch a dedicated **User Feedback on Decisions** project. (*KA1 Implement a robust quality assurance framework*). This initiative will provide a structured mechanism for user associations (as outlined below under *KA15 Strengthen dialogue with users and their associations*) and legal professionals to review and assess the clarity, consistency and usability of selected Board decisions. Feedback will be collected via thematic workshops and targeted consultations, and the findings will feed into the quality assurance and legal drafting improvement processes. This project aims to close the gap between decision-makers and users, fostering mutual understanding and supporting the continued evolution of high-quality, user-conscious adjudication. It will also offer users a direct and constructive role in shaping the future of EUIPO appeal procedures and legal reasoning. The project will start by defining the quality criteria based on the results and recommendations of the study on the optimal characteristics of high-quality decisions.

Simplification of proceedings will be pursued through a review of the Rules of Procedure and working practices, while workflows and IT tools will be modernised to enhance efficiency. The Rules of Procedure will be reviewed within the framework of the established Revision Cycle, including a consultation of key stakeholders. The working instructions and practice notes will also be reviewed on a continuous basis as part of the quality framework within the Boards.

Appeal forecasting tools will also be enhanced to support better planning and resource allocation. This will be accomplished in close collaboration with other departments within the EUIPO. For instance, predictive modelling using historical data and AI based dashboards could be developed to anticipate appeal flows and optimise resource allocation.

KA2: Holistic case management

The Boards will transition to a **360-degree case management model**. This involves classifying and prioritising appeals early in the process, identifying the most suitable procedural route (contentious administrative proceedings, but also alternative dispute resolution, e.g. decision, conciliation, mediation that offers global, time-saving, and cost-effective solutions for users), and engaging with parties from the outset to align expectations. Among others, the case management system will analyse previous decisions in similar cases and identify cases that could be suitable for referral to the Grand Board or for holding an oral hearing. It will be developed and rolled out in close cooperation with the users. Case management conferences will be piloted and formalised, and procedural flexibility will be increased through updates to the Rules of Procedure.

Internally, debate platforms amongst the individual Boards of Appeal will be expanded to discuss specific ‘out-of-the-ordinary’ appeal cases (e.g. politically sensitive cases, cases affecting a large number of appeals, cases raising issues where there is no pre-existing body of case law) before taking a decision. Therein, the Boards will brainstorm on best solutions with the aim of getting a broader view of legal opinions and thus be able to take a more informed decision. This will also improve consistency and quality from the outset, and help prevent divergent approaches on impactful, novel, or emerging issues. The mechanism will be developed in line with similar initiatives for the first instance under the SP2030. Special workflows for monitoring sensitive cases will be put in place with the participation of the Registry and the Grand Board coordinator. The design of the 360-degree case management model will take also into account the Business Operations Department’s Early Case Management deliverables, and integrate plain language and multilingual accessibility principles, where applicable, in collaboration with Business Support Department.

This holistic approach will be supported by process optimisation, AI-assisted insights, and more intuitive IT tools, enabling the Boards to provide a more agile and responsive adjudicative service. Artificial Intelligence has the potential to improve holistic case management, and its currently possible applications will be leveraged in line with the respective initiatives outlined in the EUIPO's SP2030. AI can facilitate the work of the Registry when receiving, dispatching, safekeeping and notifying documents, as well as compiling appeal case files. It can also support the Boards in their decision-making by giving instant access to legislation, case law, legacy decisions, and other data. In this regard, the Boards' dedicated AI adoption plan will also cover case management applications, testing pilot projects, such as smart search engines retrieving relevant precedents and automated support for Registry tasks. The insight from these pilots will inform requirements for future AI developments and needs.

KA3: Case law Analysis Tracking System (CATS)

The concept of holistic case management will be strengthened through the development of a new **Case law Analysis Tracking System (CATS)**.

CATS will function as a strategic tool — tracking jurisprudential trends, identifying areas of convergence and divergence in both substantive and procedural law, and assessing their practical implications for users and decision-makers alike. It will support the early detection of legal questions that merit further attention, whether through referral to the Grand Board, analysis in Boards of Appeal case law research reports or inclusion in new convergence initiatives with national IP offices. To maximise its impact, the Boards will explore **possible AI based analytics from the Boards' AI adoption plan**. These will be piloted to enhance pattern recognition and automated tagging of cases.

The analysis will also look at the Boards of Appeal research case law reports, the Common Practices by the EUIPO and national and regional IPOs as outlined in the Common Communications and identify legal areas where new research reports and/or Common Practice could be needed. This system will systematically map and analyse decisions issued by the Boards of Appeal, as well as relevant judgments from the General Court and the Court of Justice.

Designed to **serve both internal users, national and regional IPOs, their appeal bodies and national IP Courts, as well as the wider IP community**, CATS will promote transparency and shared legal understanding across jurisdictions. Its insights will be disseminated through regular updates and thematic reports, ensuring that it becomes an integral resource for reinforcing legal consistency and fostering informed decision-making throughout the EU IP system. The Boards will review the possibility of setting up dedicated workshops with national IP offices, user associations, and academics to review CATS outputs, and to co-create follow-up actions.

Furthermore, the Boards of Appeal will establish a benchmarking process to evaluate the impact of the Boards of Appeal case law research reports on harmonising IP practice by regularly reviewing and analysing case law from the General Court, the Court of Justice, and the Boards of Appeal. Subject to the results of *KA11 'Move from eSearch Case Law to Case Law View'*, which includes the collection of judgments from national IP Courts and decisions from national IP offices, the Boards will explore at a later stage whether how such national judgments and decisions could be integrated into CATS. This will be done in a second phase once Case Law View becomes fully operational (see *KA11 Move from eSearch Case Law to Case Law View*). The Boards will evaluate how national case law could also be incorporated into the CATS framework, thereby broadening the mapping and analysis of to cover case law of all EU Member States, drawing on the enhanced Case Law View database.

In addition, the Boards will use CATS to flag legal areas of particular importance, where guidance from the Court of Justice is needed to ensure the harmonisation for EU trade mark, design, and GI law. This guidance is given in the context of further appeals filed against judgements of the General Court (the EUIPO route) or via preliminary rulings submitted to the Court of Justice by national IP Courts (the national route). It is essential for the IP Community to identify more effectively those legal areas of particular importance in order to strengthen harmonisation across the EU IP system. This will be done in close collaboration with the IP Judges Community (*KA14: Convert the IP Judges Network into an IP Judges Community*) and with the users (*KA15: Strengthen dialogue with users and their associations*).

KA4: Broaden the horizons of the Grand Board

The Grand Board will play a greater role in legal development and user engagement.

Since the legislator introduced the possibility for groups or bodies representing manufacturers, producers, suppliers of services, traders, or consumers to submit observations in 2017, the proceedings before the Grand Board have clearly benefited from the sectorial expertise and different perspectives of those bodies. The case files were enriched thus allowing the Grand Board to take more informed decisions for the benefit of the users and the IP system as a whole. Building on that, the Boards of Appeal are determined to also include the viewpoints of EU national and regional IP offices in the arsenal of the Grand Board. The first experience of a Regional IP Office filing such observations has proven to be positive so observations from national IPOs, user associations and relevant stakeholders will be encouraged and integrated.

As already explained, **observations by third parties** before the Grand Board have proven beneficial. There is therefore no reason to hamper the process with administrative burden. The groups, bodies and institutions concerned should be allowed to file their observations in the five working languages of the EUIPO, irrespective of the language of proceedings in the specific case pending before the Grand Board. Requiring them to provide translations seems to be unnecessarily overcomplicating the proceedings. This change will require adaptations in the Rules of Procedure and the respective workflows and work instructions of the Boards of Appeal.

To support this, a **clear and transparent set of criteria for referral** to the Grand Board will be published, alongside multilingual submissions possibilities for Third party observations.

National IP judges of the EUTM and EUD Courts face many issues similar to the ones that the Grand Board is called upon to address. Knowledge and experience in applying the domestic law of the Member States can offer invaluable insights to the members of the Grand Board. To that end, the Action Plan foresees the organisation of **thematic workshops within the Boards' IP Judges Community** (*KA14: Convert the IP Judges Network into an IP Judges Community*) to gather input on the legal questions pending before the Grand Board in appeals with a broader impact. Such appeals could be the ones affecting a large number of cases, appearing frequently in practice. The **thematic workshops and webinars** that will be introduced will further enhance the visibility and pedagogical value of Grand Board cases, creating space for legal debate and public dialogue.

Third party observations (as per Article 37(6) EUTMDR) have worked quite well since the last legal reform on trade marks. The Boards of Appeal will strive to identify categories and examples of groups and bodies representing the industry, consumers, Member States and potentially other entities of academic nature with a strong interest in Grand Board proceedings, for instance, universities offering master and doctoral programmes in the area of Intellectual Property. Once kicked off, collaboration with the said entities will be set out in detail ensuring maximum return. Entities will be regularly informed about the possibility to submit observations using all communication channels available. Statistics on observations filed will be made public to keep actors in the field of IP informed and hopefully encourage further and wider participation.

KA5: Ensure full operational readiness and efficiency for legislative reforms and initiatives

As of 1 December 2025, craft and industrial products will fully benefit from an EU-wide geographical indications (GIs) protection under Regulation (EU) 2023/2411. Unlike the system for agricultural products, the EUIPO will oversee the national and EU-level phases of the examination and registration. The legislator has granted a new competence to the Boards of Appeal, namely, to hear appeals against decisions of the Geographical Indications Division. The Boards will prepare for the assumption of new competences by revising the Boards of Appeal Rules of Procedure and adapting internal workflows accordingly. This will ensure that procedures are fit for purpose and consistent with the unique legal and procedural requirements introduced by Regulation (EU) 2023/2411.

In the same vein, the Boards of Appeal must safeguard the proper development of their decisional practice in the area of GIs. A dedicated Consistency Circle will be created to deal with all issues pertaining to geographical indications for wines, spirits, and agricultural products as well as craft and industrial products. This will facilitate internal collaboration and knowledge-sharing, while ensuring consistency in the application of legal principles applicable to GIs (including examination of absolute grounds, relative grounds, cancellations, and the specific procedures under Regulation (EU) 2023/2411). This expert forum will also act as a monitor hub, scanning for emerging jurisprudence, supporting legal alignment and identifying issues requiring clarification or further guidance.

Article 35 of Regulation (EU) 2023/2411 foresees the establishment of an Advisory Board (composed of one representative from each EU Member State and one from the European Commission) that delivers opinions in cases where this is provided. The Boards of Appeal may, and at the request of the Commission shall, consult the Advisory Board on questions concerning an application at any stage of the procedures for registration, including opposition, appeal, amendment of the product specification and cancellation of the registration, as well as other horizontal matters (e.g. assessment of the quality criteria, establishment of reputation of a product, determination of the generic nature of a name). The Boards will ensure smooth cooperation with the Advisory Board, particularly in relation to supporting the effective implementation of legislative changes, evaluating their operational impact and ensuring transparency in the appeal process to facilitate this, following consultation with the relevant stakeholders, clear Terms of Reference will be drafted, supported by IT enabled communication channels for efficient exchanges and real time feedback.

Operational coordination will be pursued with the Business Operations Department to ensure smooth interfaces between first instance and appeal procedures, and with Legal Affairs Department to ensure alignment. This will cover areas such as procedures, training and knowledge-sharing, with the aim of fostering consistency, efficiency and mutual learning across both levels. By working closely together, the Boards, Business Operations Department, and Legal Affairs Department will be better placed to anticipate challenges, respond effectively to legislative reforms, and deliver a coherent service to users.

While fully focused on the Boards' appeal level dimension, these activities will be developed in complementarity with the structured exchanges already taking place under European Cooperation Projects, particularly the Virtual Communities on CIGI and design reform. The Boards' contribution will focus on appeal specific aspects, thereby ensuring added value and alignment with the wider cooperation framework

At the same time, the new legislative package on designs enters its second phase of implementation. This includes not only the execution of the implementing and delegated regulations to the Rules of Procedure, but also the modifications required to the Boards' practices and IT tools in close collaboration with the Office as per the SP2030. The main focus of this process will be to ensure the effectiveness of the updated design system giving the maximum useful effect to the changes in order to reap the benefits intended. Implementation of Phase II of the reform will also entail the expansion of the forums for discussion with other design appeal bodies in a structured manner. First and foremost, this covers the counterparts of the Boards of Appeal in the national IP offices. Extending the dialogue will not only promote harmonisation and shared legal understandings but also help avoid divergence in the treatment of nascent legal matters (e.g. 3D printing) and ensure smooth interaction with the national and international systems in procedural aspects (e.g. file formats allowed for non-graphically represented designs).

KA6: Maintain and exploit the impact of Consistency Circles

Building on their achievements, the Boards of Appeal Consistency Circles will continue to develop and update case law research reports to support greater consistency in decision-making. While no rights or obligations arise from these reports, they serve as a useful reference for practitioners and stakeholders wishing to follow jurisprudential developments and anticipate evolving lines of reasoning within the Boards of Appeal. Even though these reports are restricted to the analysis of EU level case law and are not legally binding, they are **closely linked to the EUIPO Convergence Projects**, contributing to alignment between the Office and national IP offices. Stakeholders will be encouraged to propose new topics, and efforts will be made to promote the broad use of these reports across the IP system.

As the case law continues evolving, the maintenance and update of the case law research reports will be formalised, and an internal workflow will be established to keep these reports up to date. A new project for the maintenance system for the case law research reports will be created. Options such as the creation of online repository with version control, will be looked into, to ensure transparency in updates, and easy access.

To fully exploit the work of the Consistency Circles, the Boards seek to further raise awareness of and promote the case law research reports within the whole EU IP community. This will be achieved by promoting the case law research reports through all information channels and presenting and discussing them within the EU IP Network and network of Appeal Bodies, as well as with other key stakeholders such as national IP offices and Courts and user associations. Furthermore, the Boards will organise webinars on new Boards of Appeal case law research reports and raise awareness of these reports in their various cooperation activities and networks from specific user groups, practitioners, and/or judges.

As has been the practice to date, all case law research reports will be published so that they are available to all users of the IP system. They will also be shared with the EU IP Network as well as internally with all the departments of the Office to uphold the quality and coherence of decisions and to foster deeper legal discussion.

Line of Action 2: Taking Mediation to the next level

Since 2011, when mediation was offered for the first time at the EUIPO at the level of the Boards of Appeal, and in particular since the creation of the EUIPO Mediation Centre in 2023, the use of mediation and other ADR processes has steadily grown. The EUIPO has repeatedly been selected as the world's innovative IPO because it is among the few IPOs to have made ADR, in particular mediation, an integral part of its proceedings. National and regional IPOs, their Appeal Bodies and national IP Courts are showing a growing interest in using mediation to relieve their burden of work and to provide IP rights holders with cost- and time-effective way of settling their IP disputes globally. This Line of Action, therefore, focuses the expansion and refinement of mediation and other forms of ADR at the EUIPO and at the EU IP Community. The aim is not only to offer these mechanisms more widely, but to embed them structurally across inter partes proceedings and ensure that they are seen as credible, accessible and effective alternatives to litigation.

Mediation will be streamlined through integrated digital workflows, training and accreditation of mediators and increased cooperation with national IP offices and Courts. Outreach activities will seek to foster a cultural shift through raising awareness within user communities and among future legal professionals and academic partnerships. A key driver of this cultural change is the **IP Mediation Conference**, organised by the Boards of Appeal twice per year in both in-person and hybrid formats, which has already become a recognised platform for dialogue between users, mediators, IPOs, academics and practitioners.

In close collaboration with other departments, primarily first instance, the scope of mediation will continue to evolve to cover additional procedures, where appropriate, ensuring a coherent and user-friendly approach across all instances of the Office.

The ambition is to make mediation a **genuine “first stop” for many disputes** — delivering faster, more cost-effective and less adversarial outcomes for users, while alleviating pressure on adjudicative resources. **Possible pilots** will also explore how AI can support early case triage, flagging disputes suitable for mediation, or assisting mediators with preparation and documentation. Additional options include digital “mediation dashboards” that guide users through their process, or hybrid mediation formats designed to overcome geographical barriers and reduce costs.

KA7: Consolidate and streamline EUIPO-wide mediation

The Boards will complete the **full integration of mediation services across all relevant inter partes proceedings at both first- and second-instance levels**. This includes appeals, oppositions, and proceedings related to Craft and Industrial GIs (CIGIs) under Regulation (EU) 2023/2411. **Processes** will be **simplified**, timelines shortened, and user experience improved through harmonised digital workflows and enhanced internal coordination. Possible options include introducing a single “request mediation” button within eAppeal and eOpposition, supported by automated triage tools (potentially AI-driven) to suggest mediation in appropriate cases. This will be done in close cooperation with other EUIPO departments, notably the first instance (Business Operations Departments) to establish referral pathways that are coherent, predictable and user friendly.

To ensure a high standard of service delivery, the Boards will invest in structured training and mentoring programmes for mediators. These will address IP-specific complexities, cross-border dynamics and sectoral sensitivities. User trust will be strengthened through clear procedural guidance and robust follow-up mechanisms.

At the same time, the Boards will explore options to reinforce the legal effect and enforceability of mediation outcomes. This includes **assessing mechanisms for formalising mediated settlements**, such as the issuance of consent awards under arbitration rules where appropriate. **Guidelines** will clarify the legal status of agreements, ensuring parties have confidence in their durability and enforceability. Common principles and communication approaches will be explored together with other departments to provide clarity while preserving procedural efficiency.

Regular benchmarking across EUIPO decision-taking areas at first and second instance confirms that mediation offers strong efficiency gains due to the fact that the vast majority of EUIPO mediations settle more than three parallel proceedings pending at the EUIPO, national and regional IPOs, their Appeal Bodies and/or pending at national IP Courts. While decision-making at the EUIPO has been progressively optimised, mediation already now demonstrates a high return on the time and cost invested per case, putting mediation at the same level of efficiency as EUIPO cancellation and appeal proceedings. The aim of the coming five years is to further enhance the efficiency of mediation to assure that it becomes as efficient as opposition decision making.

By combining procedural integration with stronger guarantees for outcome implementation, this action will make mediation more effective, attractive, predictable and trusted across the EU IP system. It will also generate efficiencies for the Office by reducing caseloads and allowing resources to focus on complex cases where adjudication is unavoidable.

KA8: Bring mediation to the EU IP Community

To create a coherent and EU-wide ADR offer, the Boards will intensify collaboration with national and regional IPOs and national IP Courts, aiming to extend the availability of mediation to cross-border disputes and parallel proceedings. A shared framework for identifying, flagging and referring appropriate cases to mediation will be developed in close partnership with participating offices. This could include **model referral criteria**, common templates, and a secure communication channel between IPOs and IP Courts.

With regards to IPOs, pilot initiatives will explore **joint mediation panels of EU mediators** capable of facilitating settlement in complex or multi-jurisdictional disputes. These efforts will be underpinned by legal compatibility assessments, inter-office coordination mechanisms, and an **evaluation framework to track outcomes**. For example, cross-border coexistence disputes could be tested through joint mediation, with AI-based case mapping tools helping to detect parallel proceedings across jurisdictions. The Boards will ensure complementarity with the Office’s broader cooperation framework under European Cooperation Project (ECP4), thereby reinforcing coherence and avoiding duplication.

With regards to the IP Courts, the Boards will also explore structured cooperation with some judicial bodies, starting with a pilot initiative with some EUTM/EUD Courts. The pilot will focus on developing a practical workflow for referring disputes by EUTM/EUD Courts to the EUIPO Mediation Centre in cases where mediation is suggested by the Court and accepted by the parties. This pragmatic approach will ensure smooth interaction between national judicial IP proceedings and the EUIPO's Mediation Centre, and it will support IP rights holders in finding time and cost-efficient global settlements.

In all these initiatives, the Boards will apply a prudent and case-sensitive approach, ensuring mediation is promoted where it can genuinely add value, while respecting IP rights holders' choices and the specificities of each dispute. This balanced positioning will reinforce mediation as a trusted, complementary pathway rather than an imposed alternative, strengthening confidence among IPOs, users and IP Courts alike.

A cornerstone of these efforts is the **IP Mediation Conference**, organised by the Boards of Appeal twice per year in both in-person and hybrid formats. This successful recurring forum brings together user associations, mediators, national IP offices, academics and practitioners to debate trends, exchange practices and promote mediation culture across Europe. The next IP Mediation Conference will take place in 2027, with more details to follow on the EUIPO's webpage.

As these networks expand, the Boards will also promote exchange of good practices, **comparative studies** on mediation uptake and **joint visibility campaigns**. The overarching aim is to make mediation a mainstream resolution pathway within the EU IP system. The aim of overarching is to make mediation a mainstream resolution pathway within the EU IP system. Possible initiatives include **joint research with IPOs and User Associations** on barriers to mediation, and coordinated awareness drives to make mediation a mainstream resolution pathway across Europe.

KA9: Enhance the spirit of mediation by awareness raising

Changing legal culture takes time and collective effort. To make mediation a natural consideration for parties to IP disputes, the Boards will launch targeted awareness-raising initiatives across the EU IP ecosystem. These will include thematic events, workshops and publications aimed at explaining the value and potential of mediation, especially in fast-evolving or high-stakes markets.

The Mediation Centre Stakeholder Network will act as a core partner in these efforts, sharing case studies, proposing improvements and amplifying outreach. Special focus will be placed on cultivating future generations of IP professionals through academic collaboration.

They will highlight success stories, offer targeted training and create platforms—such as a **University Mediation Community** and a **moot mediation competition** – for the next generation of IP professionals to gain experience and deepen engagement.

Collaboration with the EUIPO Academy and interested Pan-European Educational Seal Programme (PES)

Universities will be key to developing this University Mediation Community with the aim of incorporating mediation as a subject within their IP study and master programmes.

Collaboration with law firms and in-house IP counsel will also be pursued through tailored workshops and briefing sessions, ensuring that advisers integrate mediation into their dispute resolution strategies. Impact will be measured not only through participation in events but through evidence of increased referrals and user satisfaction with mediation. In parallel, awareness will be actively raised with national and regional IPOs (also under the framework of the European Cooperation Project (ECP4)), national IP Courts, user associations and other stakeholders, fostering a common understanding of when and how mediation can serve as an effective solution.

Line of Action 3: Accessibility and Visibility

This Line of Action focuses on empowering users by making the Boards' work more visible, understandable and accessible. Transparency in legal reasoning and procedural rules is essential not only for user trust but also for legal predictability and convergence across jurisdictions.

A new **appeal compendium documentation tool** will provide centralised access to documentation, decisions, case law research reports and overviews. This tool is designed to address the needs of different audiences – from internal colleagues to external stakeholders including practitioners and judges to students and occasional users – ensuring clarity and ease of navigation.

Case Law View with an AI-enhanced multilingual search platform, will replace the existing eSearch Case Law tool, facilitating a deeper and more intuitive search for all decisions from the Boards, national IP offices and EU and national IP Courts.

In addition, the Boards will expand the use of oral hearings where they provide procedural or substantive value. These hearings will be made more accessible through hybrid formats and streamlined processes, ensuring inclusivity without sacrificing efficiency. User feedback will be collected systematically after hearings to refine formats and ensure they meet real needs.

By fostering greater accessibility and visibility, the Boards will align with the broader goals of the SP2030 and meet the evolving needs of a dynamic, interconnected IP ecosystem. In close cooperation with the AI key initiatives of the SP2030, the Boards will explore ways to integrate AI tools into Boards of Appeal workflows with the aim of becoming more efficient and effective.

KA10: Establish an Appeal Compendium Documentation Tool

The Boards will create a centralised, user-friendly documentation platform that consolidates all appeal-related resources. This compendium will provide structured and intuitive access to overviews of case law, Rules of Procedure, legal notes, internal guidelines, consistency reports and summaries of Grand Board decisions and General Court and Court of Justice judgments,

The tool will be tailored to meet the needs of different user groups, from internal staff to external practitioners, judges, researchers and students. Clear filters, multilingual navigation and regular updates will ensure that the tool remains current, relevant and accessible.

Development of the tool will be undertaken in synergy with existing resources, ensuring consistency in terminology, metadata and formatting. Close cooperation with Business Operations Department, and expert knowledge from Digital Infrastructure Department, will provide the needed support, while Business Support Department's expertise in publication standards and multilingual clarity will guide presentation and usability.

Possible additional features will be explored, such as interactive timelines of case law development and simplified explanatory summaries. Particular emphasis will be given to AI-based functions, such as intelligent search, recommendation engines suggesting related resources, and automated cross-referencing. These developments will build on the Office's wider AI initiatives. Special care will be taken to ensure that legal information is designed and presented in a structured, user-friendly manner, enabling even all users to find what they need efficiently.

This initiative will significantly reduce the information gap for all type of users of the appeal system, while enhancing procedural transparency, institutional accountability and knowledge sharing across the EU IP system. The compendium will also function as a key training and orientation resource for new colleagues and external stakeholders – for example through onboarding packs, tutorials and video explainers embedded in the compendium - helping to build a shared understanding of the Boards' role and legal framework.

KA11: Move from eSearch Case Law to Case Law View

To modernise how legal data is accessed and understood, the Boards will transition to a new Case Law View platform. Case Law View will offer a more dynamic interface, advanced search capabilities using artificial intelligence and a **multilingual translation** that enables comparison and tracking of decisions across the EUIPO and its Boards of Appeal, national IP offices and EU and national IP Courts.

This legal research platform will serve multiple audiences: IP professionals will benefit from precise retrieval of relevant decisions; judges, experts from IPOs and academics will gain a deeper understanding of evolving case law trends; and users will experience greater confidence through accessible, well-documented precedents. Resources and budget permitted, potential AI features will be explored, such as predictive search, natural language queries and automatic cross-linking of related decisions. The Boards will also ensure that Case Law View integrates with internal workflows, research tools and procedural databases to promote institutional coherence.

To expand the content of Case Law View, the Boards will establish a common approach for the collection of EU national case law whilst strengthening collaboration with Member State Courts and IPOs. This will be carried out in collaboration with the Cooperation and Partnerships Department and the Observatory, with the objective of streamlining working methods, coordinating efforts, and enhancing resource efficiency.

Technical changes will be implemented gradually, ensuring that improvements remain relevant and aligned with users' needs.

Training modules and support materials will be offered in various formats, including webinars, guidance notes and live demonstrations, to support use of the tool. In close cooperation with the Office, consistency of terminology and multilingual accessibility of the translations will be secured. Pilot user panels will be organised to test usability, with training modules offered through webinars, guidance notes and live demonstrations.

KA12: Empower parties through direct dialogue

Direct dialogue between the parties and the Boards of Appeal is pivotal to an effective resolution process. Recognising the potential added value that **oral hearings, when appropriate** and depending on the case, can bring to such dialogue, both from a procedural and substantive point of view, the Boards will promote their strategic and selective use — particularly in complex or precedent-setting cases where issues are nuanced, the factual background is disputed, or broader stakeholder input is warranted. This also includes discussions with the parties involved to explore the possibility of settlement through alternative dispute resolution.

A balanced and cautious methodology will be developed to ensure that oral hearings are reserved for situations where they offer clear added value to the adjudication process or to the parties themselves. This methodology will uphold principles of fairness, transparency, judicial economy and resource efficiency. It will be complemented by **practical guidance** to help parties understand the purpose, format, and expectations of oral hearings, encouraging meaningful and well-prepared participation.

To broaden access, oral hearings will be made available in **hybrid formats** (virtual and in-person), reinforced by **multilingual support** where feasible to allow a broader interested public to follow them. Options under consideration including **testing AI based transcription tools** to provide rapid multilingual summaries.

The Boards will use oral hearings not as default proceedings, but as targeted instruments of transparency, engagement and procedural fairness, applying a cautious and case-based approach. In the long-term, **data and user feedback from oral hearings** will be analysed to further refine practices, ensuring continued alignment with user needs and the evolving complexity of cases before the Boards.

Line of Action 4: Partnerships and Growth

This Line of Action responds to the increasing interdependence of institutions within the EU IP landscape. Legal and practice convergence and institutional dialogue are essential to a coherent, effective and resilient IP system. The Boards will therefore intensify structured engagement with users, National and Regional IP Offices, their Appeal Bodies and judicial systems and build new cooperation channels with academics and students.

The existing IP Judges Network will be evolved into a broader and more interactive IP Judges Community, allowing regular dialogue and cooperation across judicial levels and Member States. Universities and academic institutions will be integrated into the Boards' knowledge ecosystem, contributing to legal research and supporting outreach and training activities. Regular consultation with user associations will ensure that services remain relevant and responsive to user needs.

International cooperation beyond the EU will also be prioritised, particularly with key partners such as WIPO, EPO, TM5 and ID5 Offices and their Appeal Bodies and other non-EU Offices to actively contribute to fostering IP alliances in line with the Key initiative 36 of the SP2030. This outward-looking strategy will reinforce the Boards' position as a reference body for administrative IP decision-making globally. When engaging external stakeholders in activities such as IP Judges Community meetings, User Focus Groups, Tertulias, or academic collaborations, the Boards will ensure compliance through appropriate data protection measures.

Collaboration with other departments of the Office will also be vital to support coherent messaging to external stakeholders, especially where first and second instance practices intersect (e.g. training materials and shared data assets).

The new Case Law View platform developed under *KA11 Move from eSearch Case Law to Case Law View* enables easy and user-friendly access to decisions and judgements not only from EUIPO and EU Courts but also from national IP Courts and IPOs which will significantly support and boost open dialogs and discussions on jurisprudential trends with all external stakeholders.

The Appeal Compendium Documentation Tool established under *KA10* will ensure that all cooperation partners and members of Boards of Appeal's networks will have easy, prompt and user-friendly access to all appeal related resources. This will facilitate and enhance knowledge sharing and exchange of practices in more structured manner and support growth of cooperation activities.

KA13: Strengthen partnerships with National and Regional IPOs and their Appeal Bodies

The Boards will deepen cooperation with National and Regional IP Offices and their Appeal Bodies, building on the strong foundation of their existing bilateral relationships and the established Network of Appeal Bodies of National IP Offices. These relationships will be formalised and expanded through annual meetings of the Appeal Bodies, **biannual seminars, roundtable discussions and various workshops co-organised with IPOs** to enhance legal understanding and share best practices on substantive and procedural issues.

This initiative will also create structured channels for open dialogues on future convergence topics, the harmonised implementation of ongoing legislative changes and identify the practical implications of recent EU and national case law. The national IPOs will be intensively involved in concrete Actions of this Action Plan as the crucial external stakeholders. They will be invited to contribute to **identifying jurisprudential trends** under *KA3 Case law Analysis Tracking System (CATS)* from a national perspective and **detect topics which are suitable for further round table discussions or should be subject of case law research reports**. This process will contribute to **identification of topics for new convergence projects**, as referred to in *KA6: Maintain and exploit the impact of Consistency Circles*.

Furthermore, the Network of Appeal Bodies will be involved in discussions on results of the **Study on optimal characteristics of high-quality decisions** launched under the *KA1 Implement a robust quality assurance framework* with the aim to identify standards and harmonise practices among IPOs.

The Boards will also encourage broader participation of Member States in pending Grand Board cases through the submission of observations. In this context, thematic discussions and workshops will be organised within activities of the Network of Appeal Bodies to allow large-scale legal debate and public dialogue on pending legal questions before the Grand Board, as foreseen under the *KA4 Broaden the horizons of the Grand Board*. This will ensure a more inclusive and harmonised adjudicative culture, with stronger alignment in the interpretation and application of EU trade mark, design and geographical indication law.

To maximise impact, the Boards will ensure that these appeal-focused initiatives are aligned with the existing cooperation mechanisms under the European Cooperation Framework, including the Virtual Communities, while maintaining their independent scope and focus.

KA14: Convert the IP Judges Network into an IP Judges Community

To promote legal coherence and comprehensive dialogue among the judiciary, the Boards will upgrade the current IP Judges Network into a more structured and dynamic **IP Judges Community**. This initiative will bring together judges from all instances of national IP Courts- first instance, appeal and supreme jurisdictions - as well as representatives from the General Court and the Court of Justice of the European Union.

By ensuring the participation of judges across the full spectrum of judicial levels, the Boards will promote a richer understanding of how their decisions are applied in practice, from urgent interim measures at first instance to precedent setting rulings in higher Courts. This inclusive approach will also allow the Boards to share their jurisprudence more effectively while receiving feedback that can support case law analysis and consistency initiatives.

Regular meetings will allow judges to share insights, address common challenges, and contribute to the development of coherent jurisprudence. These meetings will feature thematic dialogues on issues such as cross border evidence, oral hearings and digitalization to name a few, alongside discussions on jurisprudential trends.

In alignment with *KA3 Case law Analysis Tracking System (CATS)*, the IP Judges Community will also serve as the forum where the legal areas of particular importance identified through CATS are discussed, with judges giving all judges the necessary information to decide to submit a preliminary ruling to the Court of Justice. This structured dialogue will help prioritise recurring interpretative challenges, provide valuable input for the Boards' case law consistency initiatives.

The Community will facilitate the exchange of perspectives, identify common interpretive challenges and promote mutual learning on the evolving landscape of IP. To support this, **an IP Judges Forum** will be created as the Community's digital platform (for example, via MS Teams), enabling judges to share materials, exchange views and maintain dialogue between (and post) meetings.

A **group of national IP Judges Ambassadors** will be established to act as a communication bridge between those judges attending the IP Judges Community Meetings and the broader national judiciary. These IP Judges Ambassadors, together with the support of the Boards of Appeal, will also help manage the Forum, ensuring its effective use. Furthermore, **possible bilateral activities and technical exchanges between the Boards of Appeal and the National IP Courts** will be channelled **through IP Judges Ambassadors**. Topics of common interest which might be a subject of case law research reports or future convergence initiatives will be identified and explored through workshops, roundtables and thematic discussions.

To support these exchanges, in addition to possible new case law research reports, where feasible and possible, the Boards will also look into developing tailored materials based on their own outputs to feed into both the Forum and the IP Judges Community meetings.

In parallel, the Boards will also establish a **dedicated network of academic institutions** to support the IP Judges Community with legal research, legal comparative studies and analysis of key jurisprudential developments both at EU and national levels. Universities will be invited to participate in workshops, legal debates, fostering a triangulated model of collaboration that will enrich the IP Judges Community – for instance, comparative studies on new legislative frameworks or research symposia, either presented to or jointly hosted with the IP Judges Community, such as quality of administrative decisions, comparative appeal structures and oral hearings etc.

KA15: Strengthen dialogue with users and their associations

User engagement is a critical part of a responsive and accountable adjudicative body. The Boards will continue to expand their user dialogue platforms, including **User Focus Group meetings** and the popular **Tertulias** — held annually in Alicante (in person and hybrid) and also in Luxembourg and Brussels — which serve as dedicated forums for exchange on case law and legal trends. These events are increasingly recognised as flagship opportunities for open discussion between users, practitioners, academics, and the Boards, strengthening mutual understanding and trust.

New formats will serve not only as communication channels but also as co-creation spaces for further mutual development. For example, Tertulias could be complemented by short explanatory publications summarising the discussions, or follow-up webinars capturing the main takeaways for a wider audience. User Focus Groups may also be extended to cover procedural innovation (e.g. mediation, oral hearings, digital workflows), providing users with a direct say in shaping tools and services.

New formats, such as regional user sessions, thematic webinars, interactive Q&A sessions and feedback forums on case law trends, will be introduced to ensure open channels of communication.

In context of the User Feedback on Decisions *under KA1 Implement a robust quality assurance framework*, User Associations will be offered to give feedback to the Boards of Appeal decisions. For this purpose, a specific system will be established together with the User Associations, where also the long-standing practice of the Office's Stakeholder Quality Assurance Panel (SQAP) will be looked at. A transparent feedback loop will be established to demonstrate how user insights translate into improvements of appeal decisions, reinforcing trust and legitimacy. For example, an annual "Users' Contribution Report" could highlight how user feedback has influenced practice, guidance or priorities, building on the experience of SQAP and other Office-wide mechanisms.

The Boards will also offer **dedicated briefings** for user representatives on important legal developments, Grand Board cases and key performance metrics. These may take the form of regular state of play briefings, webinars, newsletters, forums, or targeted workshops explaining the implications of landmark decisions.

KA16: Enhance collaboration with universities and young professionals

Building bridges between legal education and practice is essential for the long-term development of the IP system. In collaboration with the EUIPO Academy, the Boards will engage with universities and law faculties across Europe to involve students and professors in legal research, training initiatives and events. These partnerships will aim to stimulate academic interest in administrative decision-making and foster the next generation of IP professionals. This will include, among others, guest lectures by Boards of Appeal's staff, co-hosting seminars and trainings on procedural and substantive law.

University-based research will be commissioned to support ongoing policy work, including comparative legal analysis, empirical studies and tracking emerging jurisprudential trends to contribute to activities of IP Judges Community and the Network of Appeal Bodies. Professors and students will be encouraged to contribute to conferences, legal symposia, guest lectures and dialogues. They will be invited either as observers to the meetings of these networks or to join regional seminars and workshops organised together with IP Offices and IP Courts, which raise awareness about EU IP Appeal Systems among students of law and young professionals

A **collaborative network of academic institutions** will be formed to support the development of future-focused legal thinking and ensure the Boards of Appeal and their networks benefit from diverse scholarly input. This will include the possibility of creating a "Young IP Professional Network" linked to the Boards, in collaboration with both Talent Management and Academy departments and in line with key initiatives of the SP2030, potential moot courts on appeal and supporting academic-Boards of Appeal joint publications.

KA17: Boards of Appeal collaboration beyond the EU

The Boards will deepen their engagement with international partners such as the EPO, WIPO, TM5 and ID5 Offices and their Appeal Bodies and other non-EU IP Offices, focusing on development of comparative decision-making and cross-border procedural standards. These relationships will be leveraged through IP Alliances to address global IP challenges and to promote shared understanding on topics such as design law, non-traditional marks and the use of AI in legal decision-making.

By enhancing their global footprint, the Boards aim to position themselves as a respected contributor to the evolving field of administrative IP adjudication, committed to excellence, transparency and international dialogue.

The Boards will **enhance mapping of appeal systems** in different non-EU jurisdiction with the aim to identify non-EU Appeal Bodies as potential new cooperation partners to be invited to the IP Alliances, with particular attention to regions with growing IP systems such as Asia, Latin America or Africa. Comparative studies could then be developed jointly, for example benchmarking appeal timelines, decision formats, or the use of technology across jurisdictions.

Looking beyond Europe, the Boards will actively seek new opportunities to engage in dialogue and exchange views with non-EU trade mark and design appeal bodies and IP Courts, focusing on global trends and developments in the field of intellectual property. Possible options include joint research papers on emerging jurisprudence, comparative case law reports in cooperation with academic partners, and pilot ADR exchanges with TM5 Offices.

Building on close cooperation with the EPO Boards of Appeal and the WIPO, the Boards will invite them to contribute with their experience and views to benchmarking discussions on results on key initiatives. For example, the EPO could provide input on the Study on Optimal Characteristics of High-Quality Decisions (*KA1 Implement a robust quality assurance framework*) or on Methodologies for Oral Hearings (*KA 12 Empower parties through direct dialogue*), while WIPO databases could be linked with the Case Law View (*KA11 Move from eSearch Case Law to Case Law View*) to create cross-searchable access to international jurisprudence.

Line of Action 5: Collaboration and Innovation within the Boards of Appeal

This final Line of Action ensures the Boards have the internal capabilities and culture required to implement this Plan successfully. Excellence in decision-making and dispute resolution depends on motivated staff, cross-functional collaboration and a shared commitment to professional development. It will also build on the high level of expertise and knowledge that the Boards' staff have developed over the years and through the implementation of the previous Action Plan 2021-2026.

The Boards will invest in modern career path, role clarity and knowledge sharing across teams and disciplines. Innovation will be encouraged through dedicated workshops, interdepartmental projects and participation in Office-wide strategic initiatives. Diversity, equality and inclusion will be mainstreamed in recruitment, development and engagement efforts. The Boards will celebrate staff contribution and participation to innovation and collaboration initiatives, fostering a culture of shared achievement.

Cross-functional understanding and dialogue with other EUIPO departments will be enhanced to reinforce alignment and reduce operational silos. Staff development will also be a strategic priority, with targeted training and upskilling to align capabilities with evolving challenges and opportunities, including digitalisation and sustainability.

These efforts will be aligned with the EUIPO's SP2030 talent strategy and executed in close cooperation with the EUIPO Talent Management and Academy departments, ensuring all Boards of Appeal staff have access to the skills, tools and support needed to excel in a rapidly evolving legal and technological landscape. The Boards of Appeal's actions will be mapped towards the SP2030 structure to ensure consistency in monitoring, facilitate the internal Task Allocation tool, and allow the Office to follow up on resources and FTE evolution in a coherency and integrated way.

KA18: Promote a culture of collaboration and innovation within the Boards of Appeal

The Boards will invest in internal cohesion and creativity by promoting cross-functional teamwork, knowledge exchange and open communication across all levels and roles. Concrete actions will include inter-disciplinary workshops, joint problem-solving groups, project-based collaborations and staff-led initiatives aimed at improving workflows, tools or decision-making support systems. Staff will be also encouraged to take part in Office wide wellbeing and engagement initiatives, coordinated by other departments, in for instance ergonomics, volunteering and other programmes that reinforce community and resilience.

Internal think tanks and themed innovation days will provide space for knowledge sharing, reflection on common challenges and exploring creative solutions, such as a Working Group to test new drafting techniques or AI tools. These initiatives will not only address internal needs but also explore how innovative practices can improve services for users, increase transparency and enhance the quality of decision making.

To recognise and motivate internal engagement, different types of measures may be introduced – such as sharing success stories or highlighting good practices - to celebrate contributions to collaboration, legal innovation and service excellence. Participation of staff in initiatives that reinforce wellbeing, such as social connection or sports, will be encouraged to cultivate a healthy work environment and a long-term organisational success. Programs that support solidarity and inclusion — such as volunteering, mentoring and local engagement projects — will also be promoted and developed, enriching both the internal culture and the Boards' identity within the EUIPO and the wider Alicante community.

To ensure coherence with Office-wide Diversity & Inclusion efforts, any BoA-specific initiatives will be aligned with the EUIPO's broader D&I framework. One possible measure to reinforce this alignment will be to appoint a Boards of Appeal representative in the Office's Committee on Diversity, thereby ensuring visibility of the Boards' initiatives within the overall narrative and enabling a consistent overview of all D&I actions across the Office.

Furthermore, the Boards will integrate continuous learning opportunities into collaborative and innovative initiatives, to ensure teams remain adaptable and equipped to tackle evolving challenges. Practical initiatives include peer-to-peer learning platforms, such as information sessions on case law and latest practice developments, and joint challenges where mixed teams generate creative proposals to improve transparency or user experience. The Boards aim to create a resilient and forward-thinking organisational culture that drives long-term impact.

KA19: Deepen dialogue within the EUIPO

To ensure strategic and operational alignment with the broader EUIPO framework, the Boards will strengthen their ties with all departments. Regular coordination meetings, joint task forces and shared working groups will help address cross-cutting issues, such as legal convergence, digital transformation, accessibility and user service enhancements.

The Boards will focus on knowledge-sharing platforms and cross-functional training to build organisational resilience and adaptability in response to evolving legal, environmental and technological landscapes. Building on collaboration with all departments, the Boards will participate to Office-wide initiatives to support sustainability, innovation and diversity and actively contribute to promote measures impacting environment, inclusion and modernisation. This approach will be guided by continuous dialogue, and a commitment to evolving best practices to align with identified goals at EUIPO's level.

A calendar of regular interdepartmental dialogues will be developed to synchronise planning and implementation of joint initiatives. Shared spaces — both physical and digital — will be created to foster inter-departmental communication and the exchange of ideas. These platforms will serve as incubators for joint innovation projects, enabling faster translation of ideas into practical improvements that benefit both internal operations and external users. Examples of concrete actions include establishing an annual Boards of Appeal Forum to review cross cutting priorities, setting up joint task forces on key topics, such as sustainability, AI or accessibility; inviting colleagues from other departments to participate in BoA events and seminars; Boards of Appeal staff participating and/or co-hosting cross department working groups and workshops.

By enhancing dialogue and collaboration, the Boards aim to reduce silos, reinforce consistency in practice and ensure a seamless and coherent user experience across the Office while safeguarding their independence. Strategic initiatives under the SP2030 will be fully integrated into the Boards' planning and execution, ensuring unity of purpose across the organisation. Again, collaborations with first instance, Business Operations Department, will help ensure effective reuse of SP2030 Business Case outputs, while cooperation with EUIPO Workplace Solutions Department will support sustainability goals and the creation of shared spaces to foster dialogue and idea sharing.

KA20: Invest in Boards of Appeal staff development

The Boards will partner with the EUIPO Talent Management and Academy departments to provide tailored career development pathways for all staff. This includes IP Career Itineraries, as set out by Talent Management Department, and the use of the approved Office Job and Competency Mapping as the basis for developing IP Career Itineraries. The Office's Job and Competency Mapping, which is updated annually, will serve as the framework for creating and refining competency profiles for different roles, with any new roles developed as part of this revision cycle.

Training opportunities will span from technical and legal modules to leadership, communication and ethics. A mix of formats — including e-learning, seminars, mentoring circles and cross-functional learning groups — will ensure broad accessibility and flexibility. These efforts will fall under, and be complementary to, the SP2030 business case on upskilling and reskilling of staff, as well as the IP Upskilling workstream and related Office-wide initiatives in emerging technologies. Interactive training programmes using case studies, AI-based tools and real-world scenarios could also be explored to strengthen adaptability and problem-solving skills.

The Boards will also strengthen their onboarding approach not only for new members and legal assistants but for all new staff, offering structured procedural training and immersion in the Boards' values, culture and strategic objectives.

To promote internal knowledge sharing and peer learning, job-shadowing opportunities may be offered within the Boards of Appeal, allowing staff to gain a deeper understanding of different roles and working styles across the organisation. Participation in external conferences will also be encouraged where relevant, broadening professional perspectives and fostering cross-institutional awareness.

For talent pipelines, coordination with Talent Management Department will be ensured under the new Talent Intelligence Management model, where talent reviews are centrally coordinated. "Talent pipelines" will therefore be considered not only in the context of Career Itineraries, but also as part of broader workforce planning across the Office.

The Boards will actively support, and champion initiatives aimed at maintaining connections with and between former trainees, recognizing the contributions they can continue to make to the organisation and promoting a continuous affiliation with the organisation and its community. Particular attention will be given to supporting staff at all career stages — whether newcomers, experienced specialists or future leaders. Regular feedback mechanisms and reinforced continuous dialogue will be used to capture staff perspectives on training, development and career pathways. The Boards will contribute actively to the Office's strategic workforce planning, ensuring that BoA needs and perspectives are integrated into EUIPO-wide workforce priorities. Examples of initiatives include: a structured "BoA Academy" programme with learning tracks for different roles; mentoring and coaching systems pairing new staff with experienced colleagues; possible shadowing within the different Services or Boards as well as with other EUIPO departments; targeted workshops on intercultural communication, digital tools or mediation techniques; and in line with *KA18 Promote a culture of collaboration and innovation within the Boards of Appeal* and *KA19 Deepen Dialogue within the EUIPO* joint training task forces with other departments (e.g. on AI skills, sustainability awareness or user-service design) to ensure that professional development is consistent and mutually reinforcing across the Office.

The Boards of Appeal Action Plan 2026–2030 is both a strategic roadmap and a statement of intent. It is a clear affirmation of the Boards' role as a trusted, independent and forward-looking adjudicative body at the heart of the EUIPO. Rooted in judicial excellence and built upon collaboration, innovation and inclusivity, this Plan charts the next stage in the Boards' evolution — transforming ambition into action.

Over the next five years, the Boards will work to become the EU's One-Stop IP Dispute Resolution Hub: a space where users can expect independence, fairness, efficiency and quality; where legal certainty is strengthened through consistent reasoning; where IP rights holders are able to resolve their disputes globally and definitively and where stakeholders — whether staff, judges, rights holders or counsel — are engaged as active partners in shaping the future of EU IP law.

Through five interlinked Lines of Action and over twenty concrete Key Actions, the Boards will deliver improvements that are visible, measurable and user-centred. We will enhance the coherence of our case law, expand the use and credibility of mediation, make our decisions more accessible, deepen our ties across Europe's IP and legal communities and invest in the talent and resilience of our staff. We will also integrate Artificial Intelligence thoughtfully and responsibly, using it to support decision-making, strengthen case law analysis and improve user services, while ensuring that technology complements — rather than replaces — judicial expertise.

As we implement this Plan, we are also reaffirming our commitment to the principles that define our mission: independence, transparency, excellence and service to the public good. In doing so, we strengthen not only our own institution but also the broader IP framework of the European Union —ensuring it remains responsive, reliable and resilient in a rapidly evolving digital environment.

This Action Plan is a shared journey. Its success depends on our collective engagement and on the trust we build with all those who rely on the integrity of the IP system. Together, we will combine judicial excellence with innovation to deliver decision-making that meets the highest standards of law and fairness – today and into the future.

