Intellectual Property for Researchers

Maximising the impact of research through smart IP management

An EUIPO product with input from the European Commission (DG RTD)

01 What is IP in research and why should researchers care about IP rights?

02 Why should researchers protect their IP assets?

03 Timing matters: balancing publication and protection

04 Publishing choices: commercial or open science

05 Managing IP at different research stages

06 AI and IP in research: what every researcher should know

07 How can you control your IP?

08 Enforcing your IP rights

09 Practical tips for researchers

What is IP in research and its connection to IP rights?

Efficient **intellectual assets management** fosters innovation, creativity and knowledge sharing. It improves the chances of knowledge reaching the market, benefiting society faster.

Intellectual assets encompass any result or product generated by research and innovation activities, including intellectual property rights (IPRs), data, know-how, prototypes, processes, practices, technologies and software.

If you create, design, or invent something new, you are generating research results with IP value.

! Ask your technology/knowledge transfer office (TTO/KTO) early: what counts as IP in my project?

Research output	Research output	Research output	Research output	Research output
Inventions and technological solutions Devices, processes, chemical compounds, methods	**Scientific publications, standards and teaching materials** Articles, reports, slides, manuals, outreach materials	**Software, algorithms, code, digital tools** Custom code, AI/ML models, simulations, trade secret if unpublished	**Designs, models, visual outputs** Product shapes, UI layouts, graphical elements	**Project names, logos, acronyms, visual identity** Logos, names, slogans

Turn me around!

Why should researchers protect their IP assets?

- To protect their value from misuse, so that valuable assets without recognition or benefit for the researcher.
- To prevent misuse or unauthorised use.
- To facilitate technology or knowledge transfer to industry and the public sector.
- To support licensing, spin-offs and collaboration with small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups.
- To comply with contractual obligations if it or institutional funding.
- To boost opportunities in securing venture capital funding or attracting top researchers.
- To increase societal and commercial impact.

Timing matters: balancing publication and protection

It's all about timing. You can publish and register IP rights, but not in the wrong order. If you publicly disclose your invention or design first, you risk compromising its protection in the future.

Public disclosure

What is it?	What is NOT?
Click me!	

! **Remember!** Even **unintentional disclosure** (an online slide, a public thesis defence or a YouTube demo) can destroy novelty. Always check with your TTO/KTO or IP adviser **before** you share or publish.

Roll over!

Publishing choices: commercial or open science

Researchers face strategic decisions about how to share their original literary, scientific and creative work—each option has IP implications.

Roll over!

A

B

! **TIP:** Always check the publishing agreement—know which rights you keep, which you transfer and whether you can deposit your work in an institutional or open-access repository.

Managing IP at different research stages

Each research stage can involve new IP considerations. IP management is iterative.

Ideas
Capture and document your research concepts early and keep them confidential until you assess their protection.

Research output and data
Manage data rights, authorship and open data policies; ensure publications don't compromise future protection.

Technologies & prototyping
Secure background IP and foreground; record contributions and ensure prototypes don't reveal commercially sensitive prematurely.

Products and services
Use IP strategically to differentiate your innovations while monitoring for possible infringements.

AI and IP in research: what every researcher should know

AI has a significant impact on scientific research and how IP, particularly copyright, applies. At every stage, from data usage, prompting, to model output and ownership of AI-generated work, researchers should be aware of the legal rules to mitigate risks and ensure compliance.

Good news—if you work for a research organisation, you can use text and data mining (TDM) for scientific research without asking for permission,as long as the data is lawfully accessed (e.g. open datasets,licensed content or materials available through your institution) and you respect copyright and data protection rules.*

Roll over!

*In the EU, this is covered by a specific research exception (Article 3 of the EU Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market).

What about using AI to generate content?

GenAI can boost efficiency and be a central tool in your innovative or creative processes— but it also blurs the lines of authorship and responsibility, making IP awareness essential.

Liability and infringement risks
AI-generated content can unintentionally reproduce or resemble copyright-protected material, exposing the platform or other IP infringements.

Click me!

IP protection and ownership
Most legal frameworks currently require human authorship for rights holders. This means that AI-generated content or results may not be protected by copyright or AI-generated inventions may not be patentable unless there is sufficient human creative input is involved.

! **TIP:** Keep clear records of data sources, licences, and contributions to demonstrate compliance and support future IP protection or IP claims and data usage agreements. This transparency not only respects the copyright of original creators but also enhances the credibility and legal security of your research activities.

How can you control your IP?

IP protection isn't just about profit, it's about control. By securing your IP assets, you can ensure that they're used responsibly, generating both commercial returns and meaningful benefits for society. Your IP can generate value through:

- **Outright sale** of ownership
- **Licensing** and exploitation agreements
- **Open Source licensing**
- **Joint ventures** or collaborations
- **Spin-out or start-up** creation and growth
- Supporting **evidence-based policy- and decision-making**
- Fostering **responsible IP practices** to create positive social impact

Click me!

! Talk to your institution's ITO / legal office or seek professional advice to understand which route is more suitable.

Enforcing your IP rights

Protecting your IP is only the first step—enforcing your IP rights turns protection into real value. Active enforcement prevents misuse, safeguards recognition and secures the value of your research in collaborations, licensing and future innovation.

1 2 3 4

Click me!

Practical tips for researchers

Protect your results

Click me!

Know the project's terms

Under EU-funded projects, open access to publications and fair data management are mandatory, but they don't replace IP and data protection rules. Researchers should:

Turn me around!

GRANT AGREEMENT

Use free tools and support

- **European IP Helpdesk** for EU projects
- EUIPO **DesignView**, **TMview** and **DPD**
- **Espacenet patent search** tools
- IP training and eLearning: EUIPO IP Academy, EPO Knowledge Sharing Platform
- EUIPO IP **Enforcement** portal
- **National IP offices**

Other resources and links

- **Code of Practice on intellectual assets management**
- **Code of Practice on industry-academia co-creation for knowledge valorisation**
- **Knowledge Valorisation Platform**
- **Horizon Europe Guidance**
- **EUIPO Academy Learning Portal**

©European Union Intellectual Property Office, 2025

Disclaimer: Neither the EUIPO, the European Commission nor any person acting on their behalf is responsible for the use that might be made of the content information.