



European IP Helpdesk

Stay ahead of the innovation game.

Copyright in Collaborative Projects

European IP Helpdesk
30.09.2026





European IP Helpdesk

- Service initiative of the European Commission
- Addressing **current and potential beneficiaries of EU-funded projects, researchers and EU SMEs**
- Free-of-charge first-line support on intellectual property (IP)
- Hands-on IP and innovation management support
- International pool of IP experts from various thematic fields
- Unique cooperation scheme with the Enterprise Europe Network: 43 ambassadors from 26 EU countries





The EC IP Helpdesks





Upcoming events



29
SEP
2026

Upcoming

Training and workshops

EU - Webinar: IP Commercialisation and Licensing

🔗 Live streaming available

07
OCT
2026

Upcoming

Training and workshops

EU - Webinar: IP for Future and Emerging Technologies

🔗 Live streaming available

15
OCT
2026

Upcoming

Training and workshops

EU - Webinar: IP Management in ICT Projects

🔗 Live streaming available

23
OCT
2026

Upcoming

Training and workshops

EU - Webinar: IP and Artificial Intelligence - Advanced

🔗 Live streaming available

29
OCT
2026

Upcoming

Conferences and summits

Annual IP Helpdesk Stakeholder Conference 2026

30
SEP
2026

Upcoming

Training and workshops

EU - Webinar: Copyright in collaborative projects

🔗 Live streaming available

14
OCT
2026

Upcoming

Training and workshops

EU - Webinar & EU Innovation Platform: IP in EU-Funded Projects, Start-ups and Spin-offs

🔗 Live streaming available

20
OCT
2026

Upcoming

Training and workshops

EU - Webinar: IP Commercialisation & Licensing - Advanced

🔗 Live streaming available

28
OCT
2026

Upcoming

Training and workshops

EPO/EIC Training Coop: Licensing-based Business Models

📍 Online only

🔗 Live streaming available

29
OCT
2026

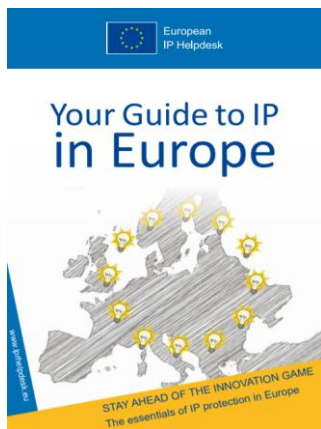
Upcoming

Training and workshops

EU - Webinar: IP Assessment



EC IP (SME) Helpdesk Hub – Gateway to Information



- E-learning modules & more
- Guides / Topic, country, sector-specific factsheets / Infographics
- Case studies



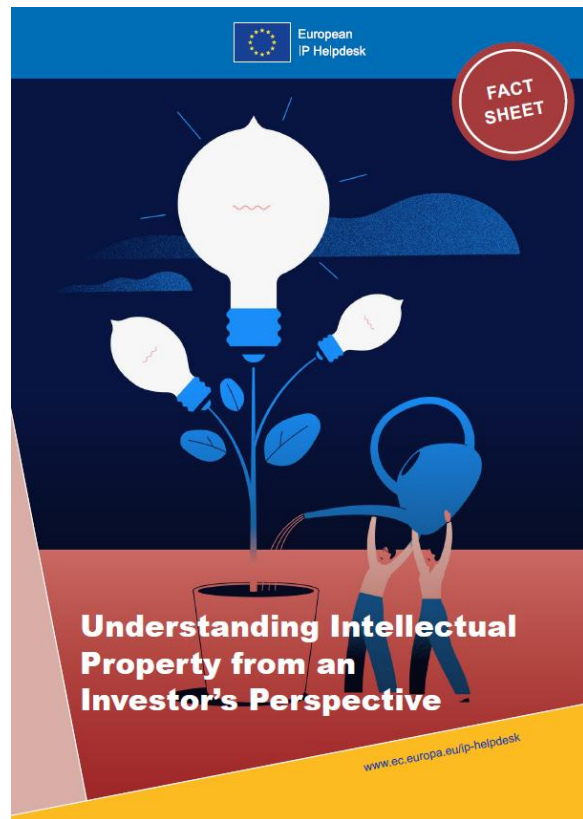
Ambassador Scheme

- **Cooperation scheme** with the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN): 43 ambassadors – 26 countries
- **Building IP capacities** among European SMEs
- **Overcoming language barriers**
- Making the topic **more accessible**
- Exchange and feedback from ambassadors on **needs of SMEs**
- Local **awareness** and **training events**

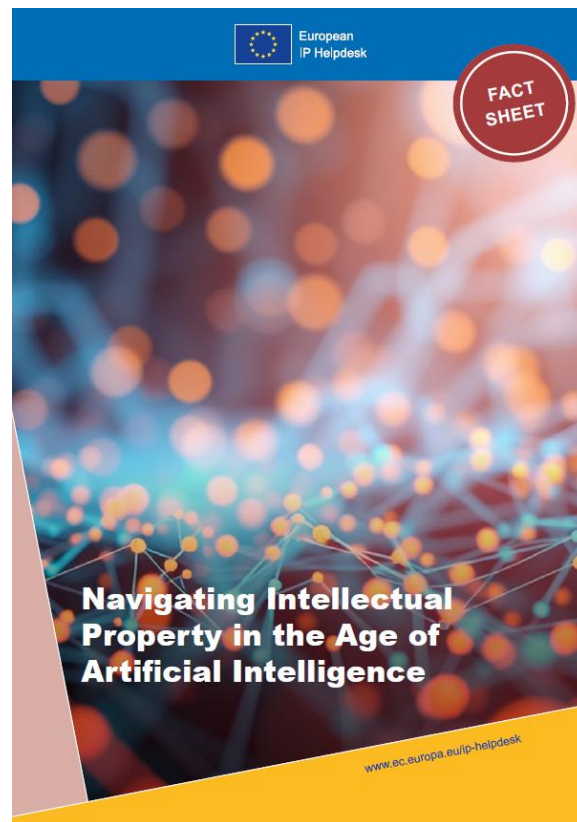




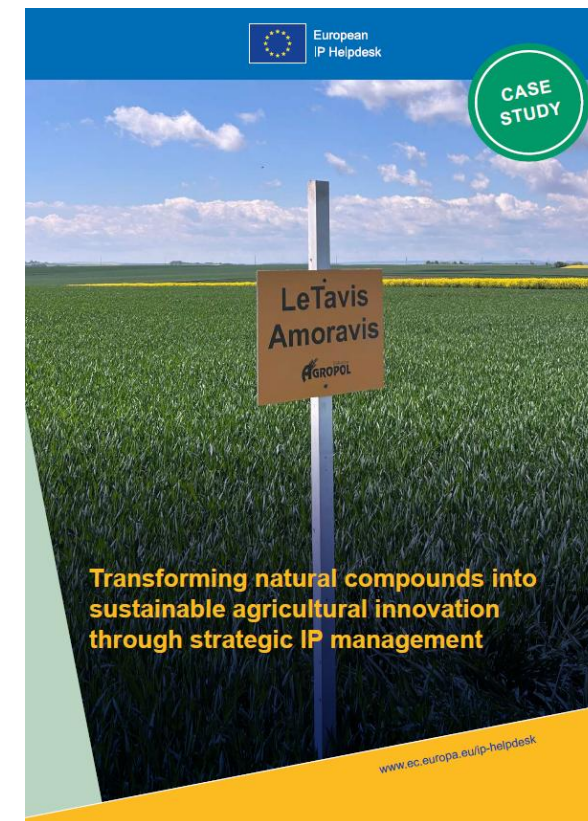
New Publications!



[Understanding Intellectual Property
From an Investor's Perspective](#)



[Navigating intellectual property in
the age of artificial intelligence](#)



[Letavis](#)



Thank you!

- www.ec.europa.eu/ip-helpdesk
- helpline@iprhelpdesk.eu
- training@iprhelpdesk.eu
- Twitter [@iprhelpdesk](https://twitter.com/iprhelpdesk)
- LinkedIn [/european-ipr-helpdesk](https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-ipr-helpdesk)



 European
IP Helpdesk

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Copyright in Collaborative Projects

Dr Eugene Sweeney, CEO, Iambic Innovation Ltd
Senior IP & Innovation Advisor, European IP Helpdesk
es@iambicinnovation.com



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Today's speaker



Dr. Eugene Sweeney

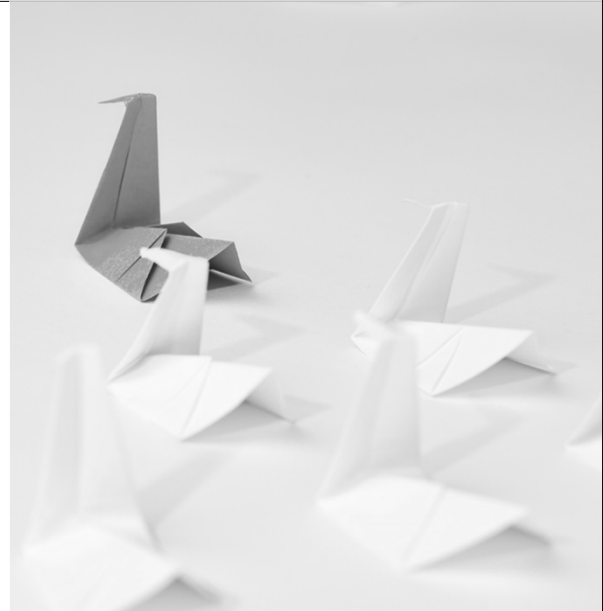
- Over 30 years experience with EC as **proposal evaluator, rapporteur, project reviewer and consultant**
- Over 40 years experience of **commercialising IP/research** and new technology
 - 1970's **Researcher** (first spin-out in 1978)
 - 1980's Computer **industry** (bringing new technologies to market)
 - 1990's Early-stage technology/IP **investment** and commercialisation
 - 2000 - **Consultant** in IPR, Innovation and research exploitation
- Member of International (ISO) and European (CEN) Standards Committees on **Innovation Management and IP Management**
- Member of Licensing Executive Society

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Roadmap

- What is copyright?
- Why is it important for researchers?
- What do you do with copyright?
- Ownership and rights of collaborators?
- What should be agreed in collaborations?
- Copyright and Open Science
- Licensing Copyright



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What is copyright?

A legal right for creators **and** owners of creative, literary and artistic works

- For **owners**: **economic rights**
 - related to **financial gain** from the use of the work
- For **creators(authors)**: **moral rights**
 - to **link them** (or not) with their work

A wide range of works

- Books
- Music
- Paintings
- Films
- Teaching materials
- Software code
- Databases
- Technical drawings
- Advertisements
- Maps

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Owners may not be the same as creators/authors

- Check your employment contracts, contractor agreements, grant agreements, etc!
- Check you institution's IP policy
- Many research institutions used to waive their (copy)rights for academic books, articles, research papers, etc.
- ..but this is changing!

Copyright belongs to author
unless explicitly assigned as part
of employment contract

Increased pressure to valorise
research AND TEACHING

The growth and importance of online
teaching

Software is all pervasive

Mandatory requirements of Open
Science in EU funded projects

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What are the rights?

The **owner** can **authorise or prohibit** others from using the work without permission (may be €).

- **Reproduction** of the work in various forms (e.g. making copies of your work)
- **Distribution** of copies of the work (e.g. software)
- **Public performance** of the work (e.g. music, or a play, in a theatre)
- **Translation** of the work into other languages (including computer languages or to binary)
- **Adaptation** of the work (e.g. turning a novel into a movie)

The **creator** can **asset their moral rights** to be named as the author, or not to be named

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Exceptions

Reproduction (copy)

- private use
- reproductions by libraries, archives and museums

Copy & communicate to the public

- for illustration purposes for teaching, or scientific research
- quotations for criticism or review
- use for caricature, parody or pastiche...

..and many other exceptions

Exceptions have been harmonized in the EU through Directive 2001/29/EC

Member states can choose from the list of exceptions in the Directive which ones they decide to implement through their national legislation (so **check national legislation** just in case!)

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How long does the right last?

For a literary, dramatical, musical or artistic work

- **70 years** from the end of the year in which the last surviving author dies.

For other types of work (sound recordings, film and typographical arrangements, software code, data, etc)

- varies, but usually **less than 70 years**

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New Copyright Directive 2019/790

Why was it needed?

To **increase the availability of works** for people across Europe, creating more favourable conditions for the **distribution of TV and radio programs**

To **modernise the key exceptions** in favour of education, research and preservation of culture, **focusing on digital and cross-border use**

To **create a fair marketplace for online content**, especially for press publications, online platforms and remuneration of authors and performers.

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What does it mean for you?

For researchers

- allows you to safely data-mine.

For educational establishments

- allows you to use pieces of protected works and make them available to your online students.

For cultural heritage institutions

- allows you to make copies of protected works that might disappear due to the deterioration of their support.

For press publisher

- allows you to control the use that internet service providers make of published news

For online content-sharing service providers ("OCSSPs")

- requirement to avoid infringing materials to be uploaded, and to act upon receiving an infringement notice

For users of OCSSPs

- requirement to provide OCSSP with information so they can perform their obligations, as soon as possible, with the required proof regarding infringements.

For authors or performers

- the rights to receive information how work is exploited and the money generated; to renegotiate the payments, and to revoke an exclusive contract if expectations not met

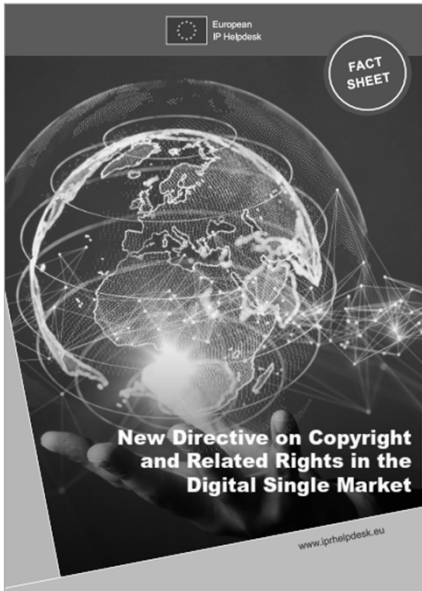
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More information

https://intellectual-property-helpdesk.ec.europa.eu/regional-helpdesks/european-ip-helpdesk/europe-fact-sheets_en



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The AI Act

 Official Journal
of the European Union

EN
L series

2024/168912.7.2024

REGULATION (EU) 2024/1689 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 13 June 2024

laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act)

To ensure safe and trustworthy AI, the AI Act puts in place rules for providers of AI based systems, including transparency and copyright-related rules

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The AI Act

Generative AI, like ChatGPT, will have to comply with transparency requirements

Disclosing that the content was generated by AI

Designing the model to prevent it from generating illegal content

Publishing summaries of copyrighted data used for training

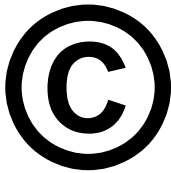
Content generated with the help of AI (images, audio, video files, deepfakes, etc) – must be clearly labelled as AI generated so users are aware when they come across the content

A GPAI (General Purpose AI) – Code of Practice will be prepared in an iterative drafting process by April 2025, facilitated by the European AI Office

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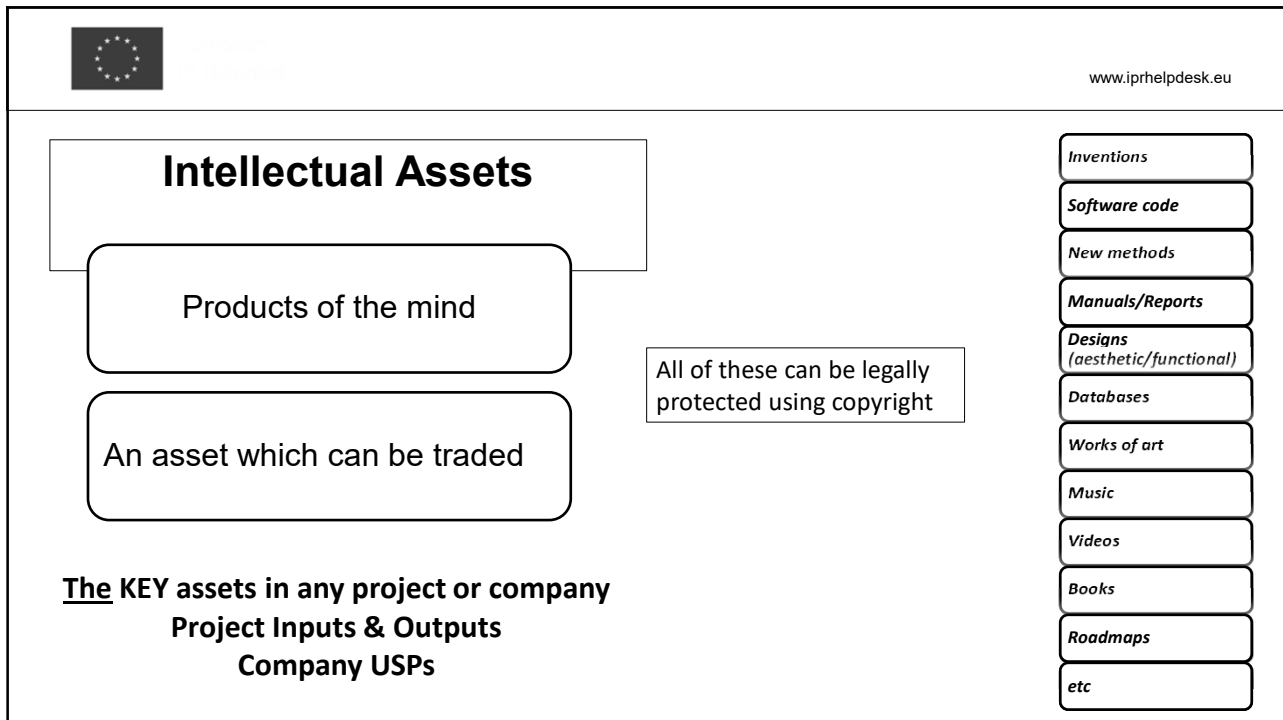


Why is copyright important for researchers..

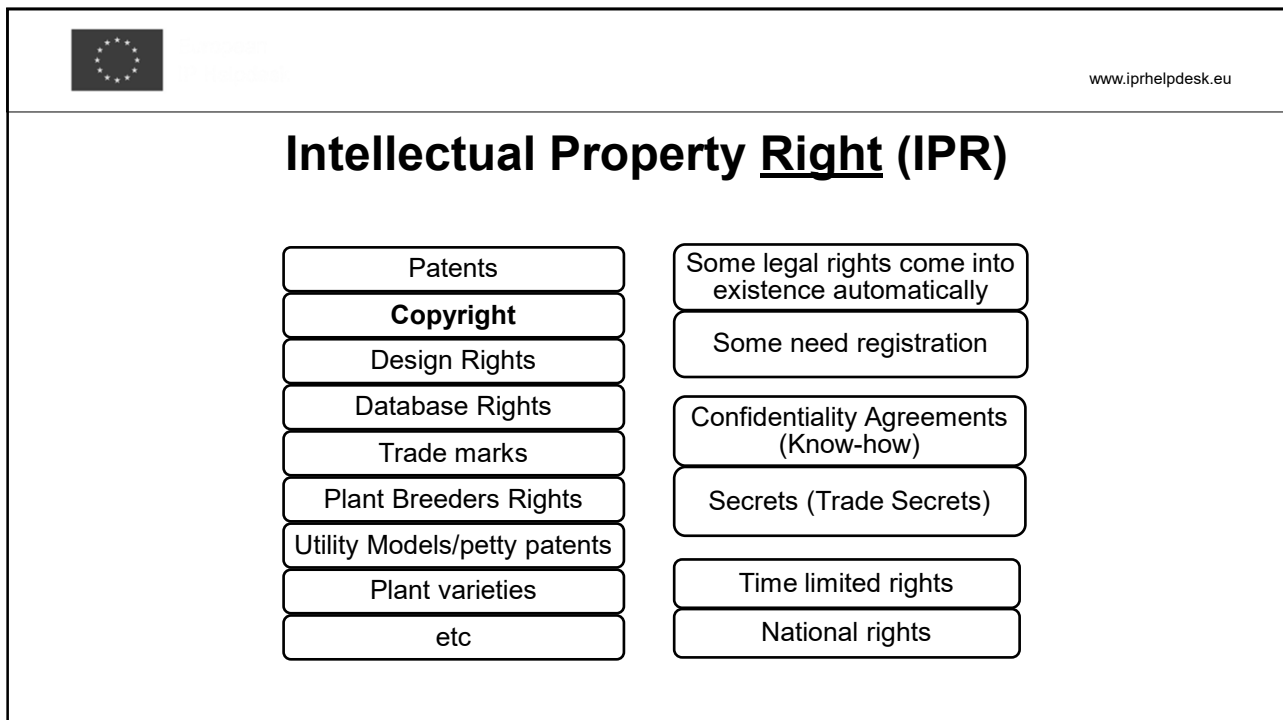
and how should it be used?



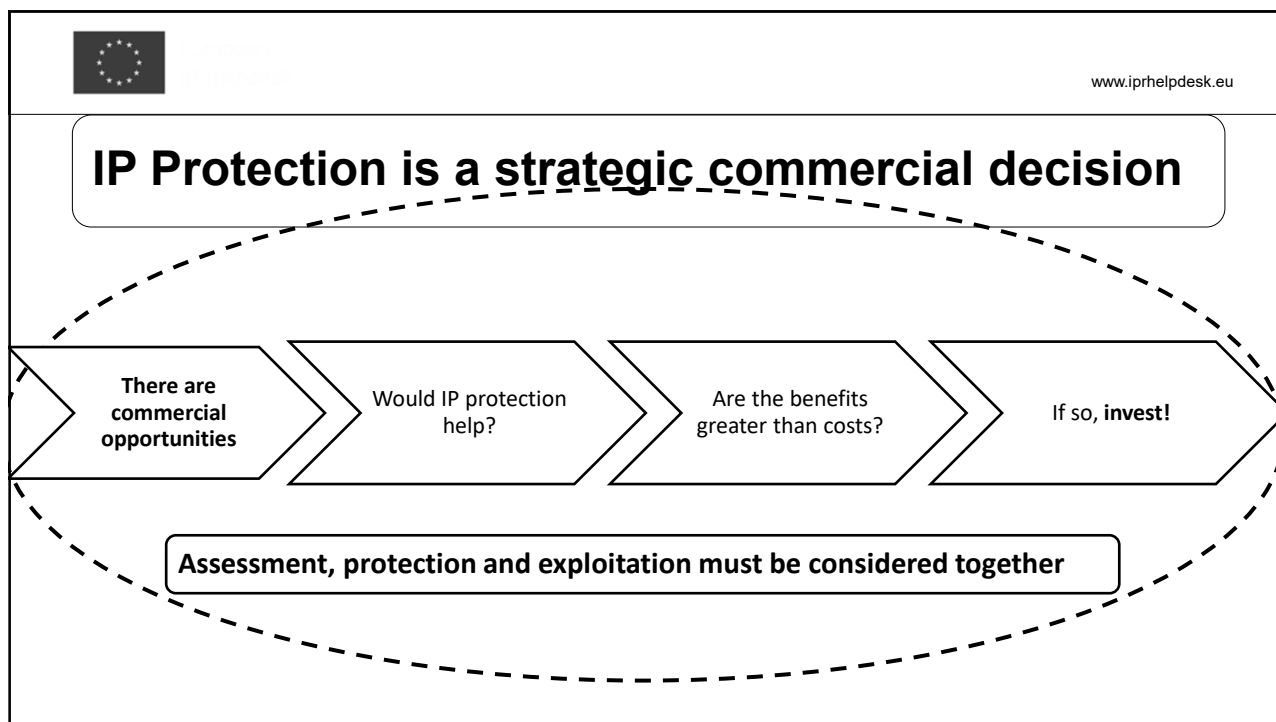
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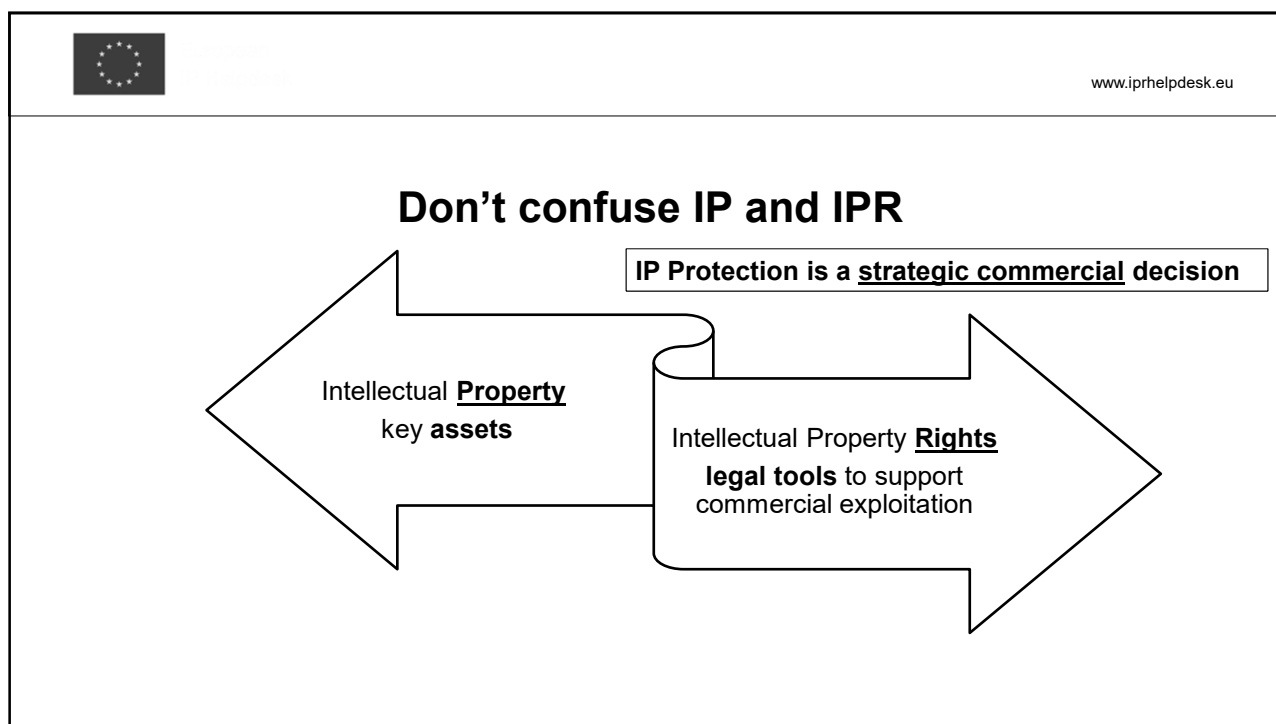
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MANAGING COPYRIGHT IN RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS



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Collaboration is about sharing

It's about "Give and Take" (usually IP!)

How should this be done?

BEFORE, DURING and **AFTER** the collaboration

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Challenges in any collaboration

Partners **bring something** to the table... and expect to **take something away**

Any “investment” expects a **return on investment**

..but there are challenges **aligning individual and shared strategies**

..and agreeing strategies for **managing, protecting and exploiting the IP**

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Understand who needs what, why, and when?

**Before the collaboration
(negotiation)**

Existing knowledge

New ideas

**During the collaboration
(research and/or commercial)**

Background IP and other
assets

Management and use of
new (shared) IP

Exploitation of new
(shared) IP

After the collaboration ends

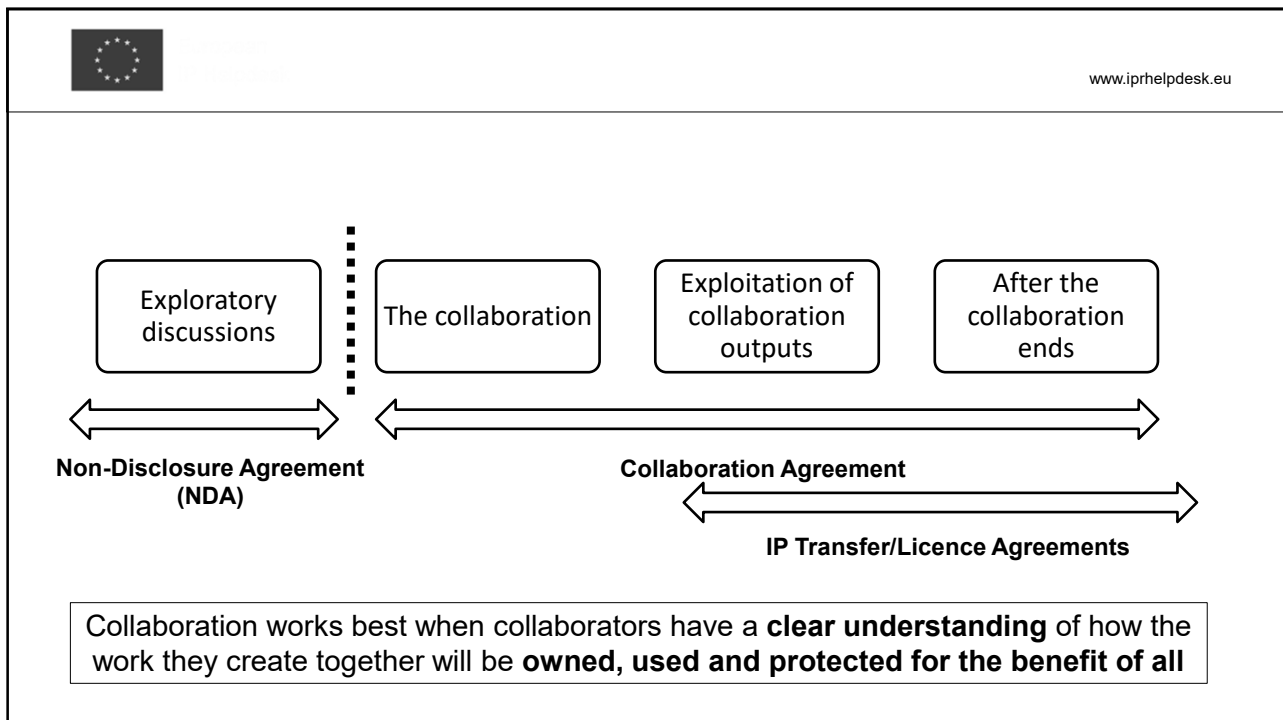
Management of
collaborative results

Management of
(collaborative) exploitation

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Exploratory Discussions - what should be disclosed?

Protected background

- Make collaborators aware of any existing IP Rights
- Clarify use during and **after collaboration** (research or commercial)

Unprotected (confidential or secret) background

- only on a “**need to know**” or “**black box**” basis with **NDA**
- Mark as “**confidential**”
- **Minute** all discussions

New ideas

- Discuss under an **NDA**
- Disclose the potential of the ideas, but not the “**how**” (unless agreed)

You cannot protect ideas, unless they are expressed in tangible form (e.g. written, built, drawn, etc)

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Disclosing confidential information and know-how

Always have an NDA prior to any discussion related to confidential information (trade secrets, know-how or new ideas)

An NDA **only covers disclosure, NOT commercial transactions.**

Make the **purpose of the disclosure** clear in the NDA

Do not use an NDA beyond exploratory discussions which may lead to a (commercial or research) collaboration agreement

Confidentiality and trade secret **laws may differ outside Europe**, so ensure NDA serves its purpose – and is “water tight”

Only disclose on a “**need to know**” basis

Consider “**black box**”, or **SaaS** rather than the **software code** if access is needed.

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Agree what happens during the collaboration

Clear management
responsibilities, structures
and procedures for:

- **Accessing** existing IP
- **Capturing, assessing**, and agreeing strategies for **protecting** new IP
- Agreeing terms of **joint ownership**, and its management and exploitation
- **Implementing the exploitation** strategies

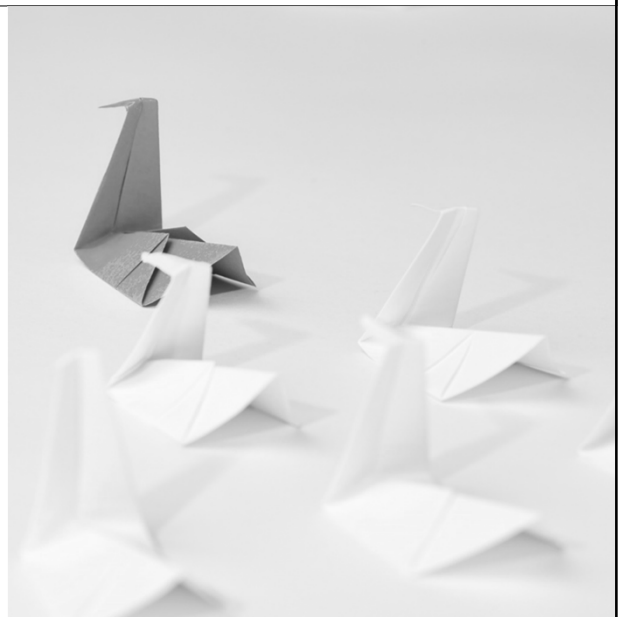
Ensure the
collaboration
agreement
covers this

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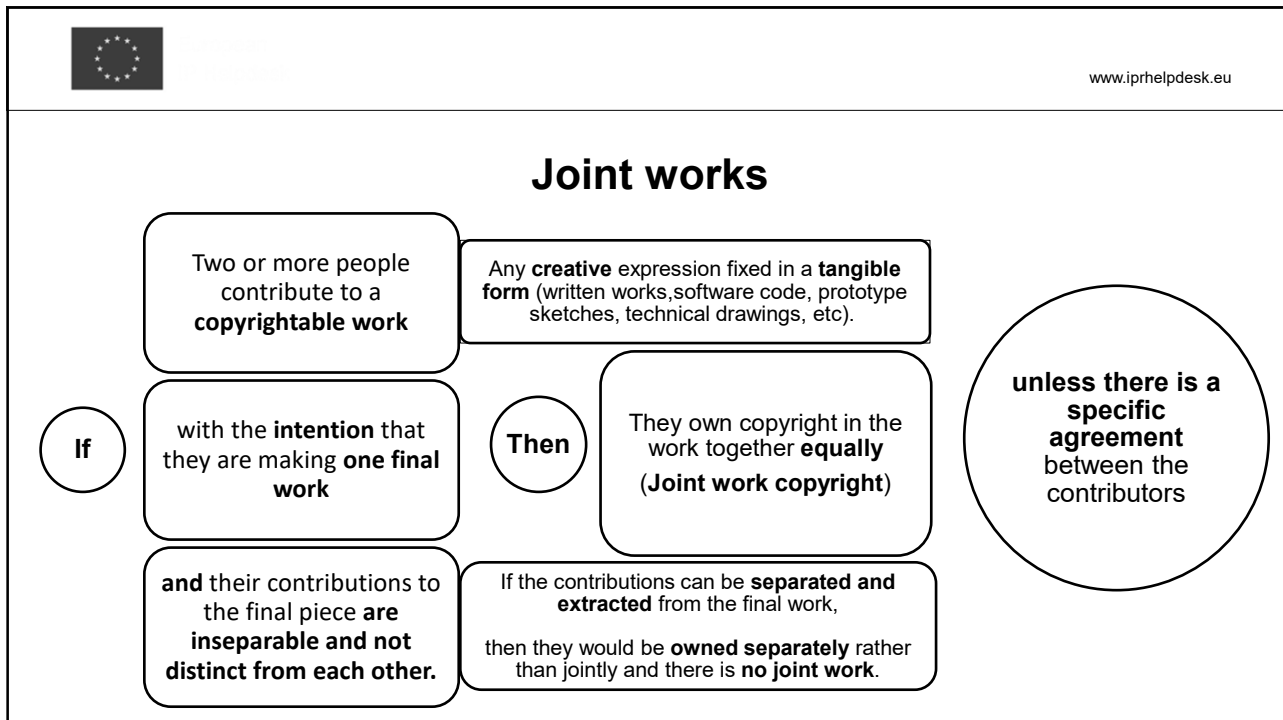


WHO OWNS WHAT?

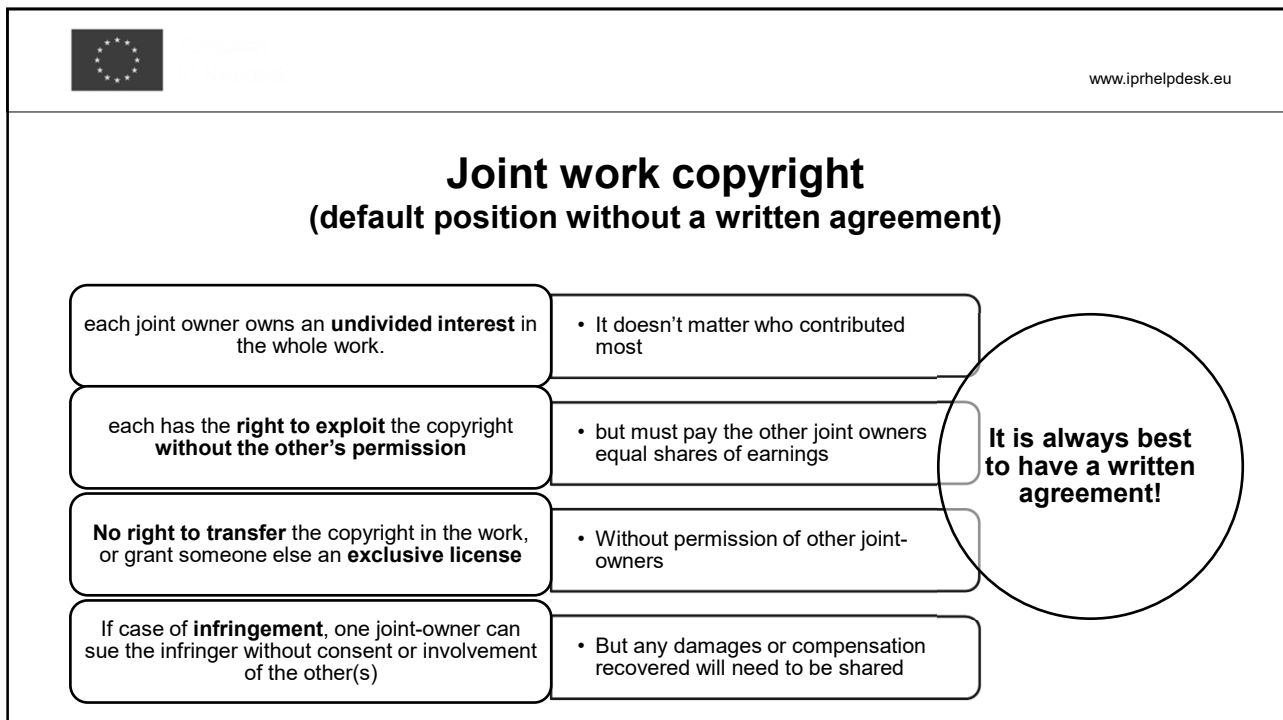
JOINT WORKS
DERIVATIVE WORKS



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Derivative works

A new work based on a separate, original work	• The author adds new copyrightable material to make another work. • The new author's creative process happens later and separately from the making of the original work.
Examples	• movie based on a novel • an illustration based on a photograph • a new software program based on existing software code
The author/owner of the new content owns copyright in the derivative work	• But that copyright only covers the new content. • The original copyright owner still owns copyright in the underlying work.
A derivative work is an infringement if it is made without the original copyright owner's permission	• In granting permission to make a derivative, the original copyright owner can impose conditions on how the derivative work is used

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Agree exploitation of the collaboration outputs

Agree exploitation strategies and pathways and responsibilities	• Who exploits what, where and how? • How, and under what terms, is IP made available for commercial or other use? • Rights of first refusal for upgrades/improvement? • Who will manage infringement, litigation? • Post-deal auditing?
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Copyright is usually made available under a licence
MORE LATER

Ensure the collaboration agreement covers these points

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Agree what happens after the collaboration ends (or terminated)

Terms of access and use of IP post-collaboration

Ongoing management of jointly owned IP and its protection

Who will **manage** and **monitor** existing **licences**, and **derivative works** including auditing

How will **infringement** and **litigation** be managed?

Ensure the collaboration agreement covers these points

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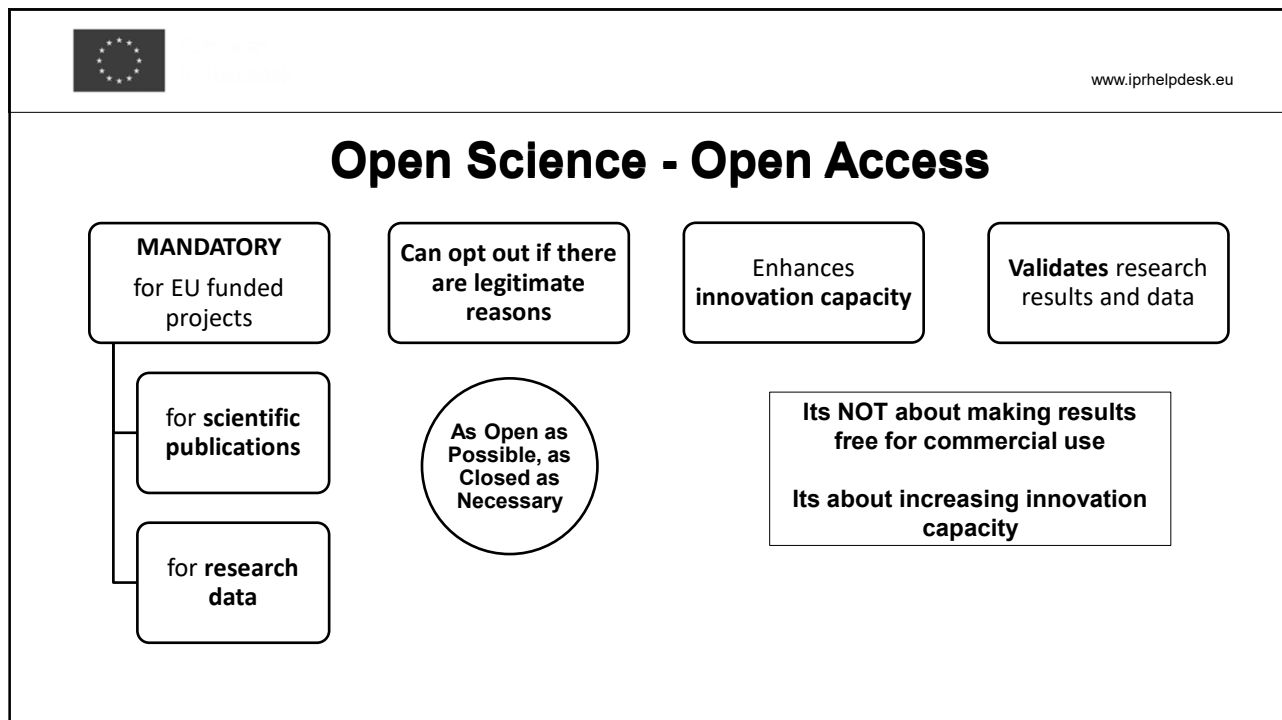


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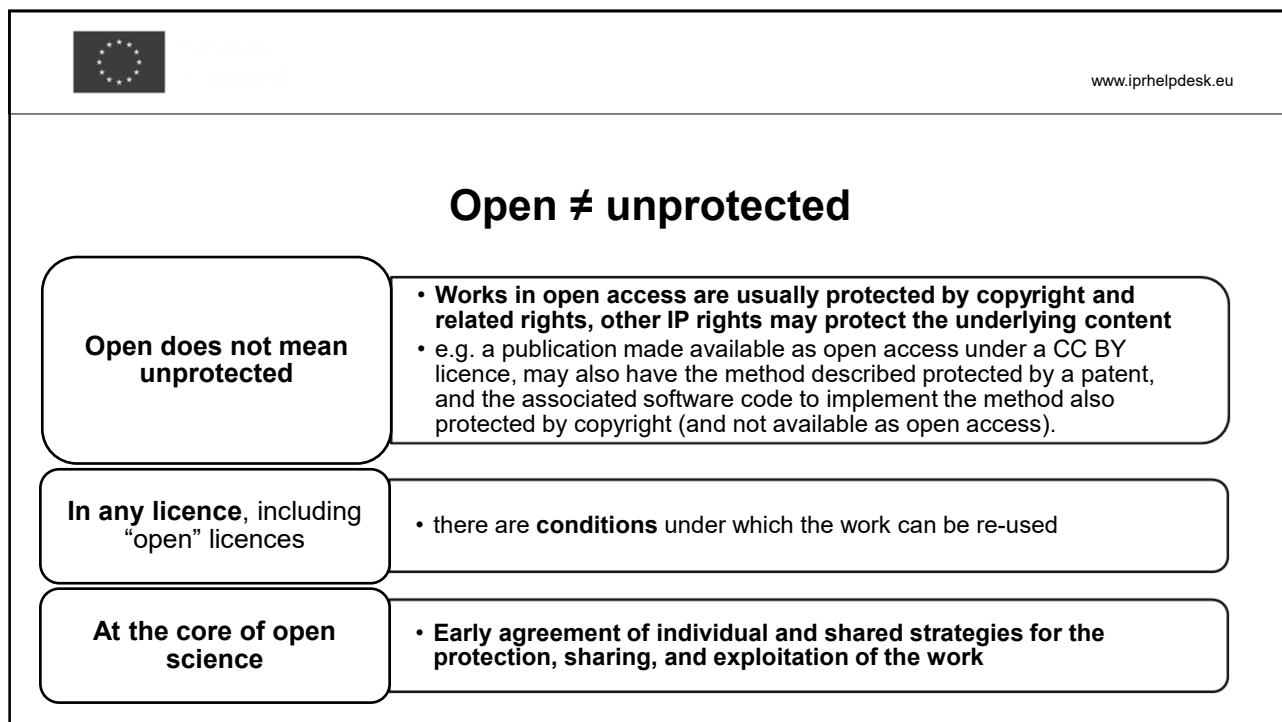
COPYRIGHT AND OPEN SCIENCE



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Research Publications and Data in Horizon Europe



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Open Science Obligations in Horizon Europe (for publications)

Not an obligation to publish

If/when a scientific article is published, it will have to be in open access

Not an obligation to disseminate or ignore IP rights

The dissemination of results can be postponed to allow the appropriate protection of results beforehand

But owners of the copyright must:
retain sufficient intellectual property rights (copyright) to comply with the OA requirements

At the latest upon publication:
deposit the AAM or VoR in a **trusted repository**, and **ensure open access** via the repository **under CC BY licence**, or equivalent

AAM: Accepted Author Manuscript. VoR: Final version

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Research Data

- **Copyright** protects the **contents (the data)**
- **Database right** protects the **collection** if there has been a "substantial investment" in obtaining, verifying or presenting the contents of the database.

IP Helpdesk Webinars
“IP and Artificial Intelligence”
“IP and Artificial Intelligence – Advanced”

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Open Science Obligations in Horizon Europe (Research data management)

Digital research data
generated must be
managed responsibly

- In line with the **FAIR** principles and:

As soon as possible
deposit the data

- In a **trusted repository**
- Ensure **open access under CC BY or equivalent**
- Follow principle ‘**as open as possible as closed as necessary**’

Provide **information**
via the repository

- Any **research output/tools/instruments needed to re-use or validate** the data
- Information about the **licensing terms**

Metadata
must be open

- Under **CC 0 or equivalent** (to the extent legitimate interests or constraints are safeguarded), in line with the FAIR principles

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Licensing Copyright

- Licensing in general
- Creative Commons Licences
- Open Source Licences



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Licensing (in general)

Granting right to use
Granting the right to use the **protected IP** under agreed terms and conditions

- Field of use
- Geographic territory
- To validate not sell
- Subject to conditions

European IP Helpdesk Bulletin No.1 - IP Licensing



http://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/sites/default/files/newsdocuments/bulletin/01/IP-H_b01_content-3.html

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Creative Commons Licences

Standardised (public) licence agreements for **copyright** works

Grant permission to use the work under **copyright law**

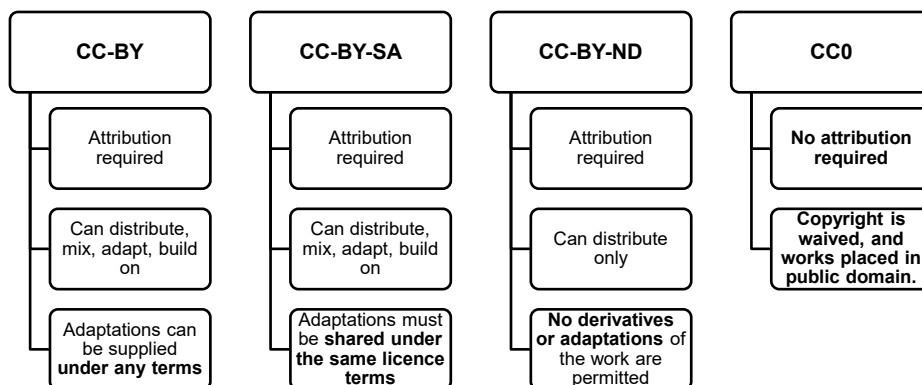
The licenses **cannot be revoked**.

You **must own copyright** in the work

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Types of CC licence allowing commercial use



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The diagram illustrates the differences between three Creative Commons license types: CC-BY-NC, CC-BY-NC-SA, and CC-BY-ND-NC. Each license is shown in a box at the top, with its requirements listed below in a vertical stack of boxes connected by lines.

- CC-BY-NC**
 - Attribution required
 - Can distribute, mix, adapt, and build on
- CC-BY-NC-SA**
 - Attribution required
 - Can distribute, mix, adapt, and build on
 - Adaptations must be shared **under the same licence terms**
- CC-BY-ND-NC**
 - Attribution required
 - Can distribute only
 - No commercial use allowed**

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Follow the steps to select the appropriate license for your work. This site does not store any information.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☒ license abbreviation | ☐ full license name |
|--|--|

<https://chooser-beta.creativecommons.org/>

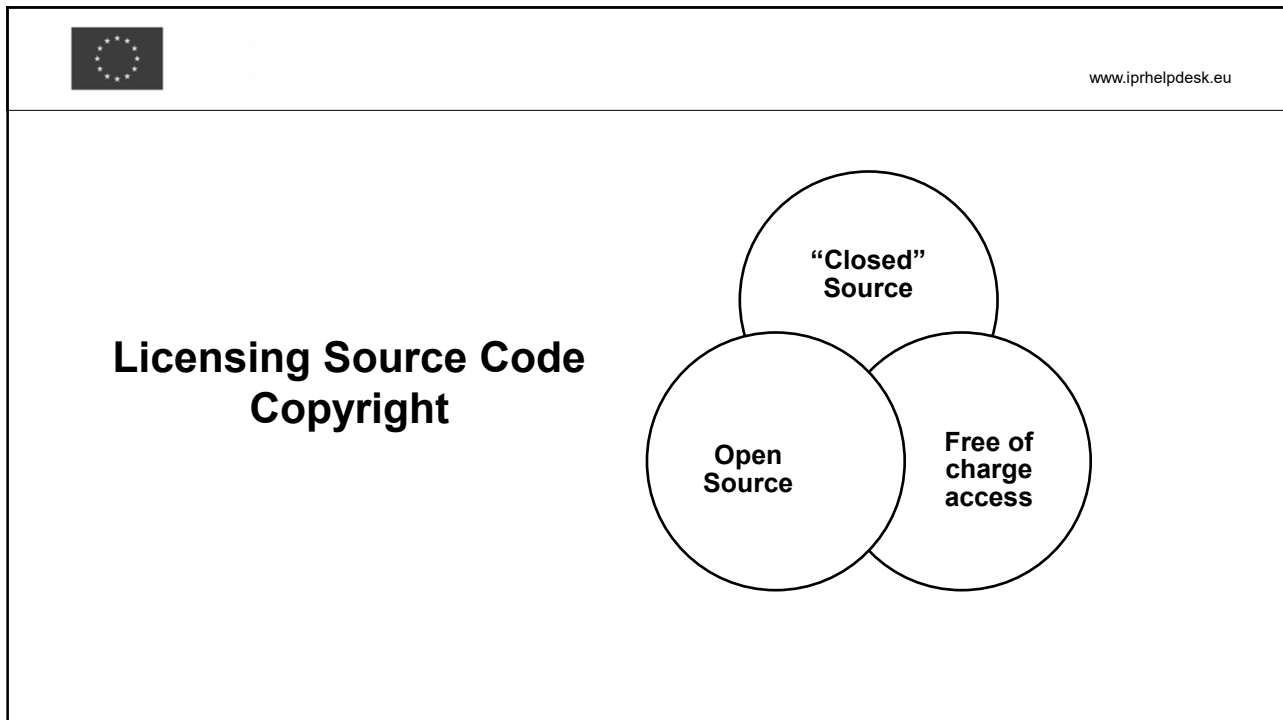
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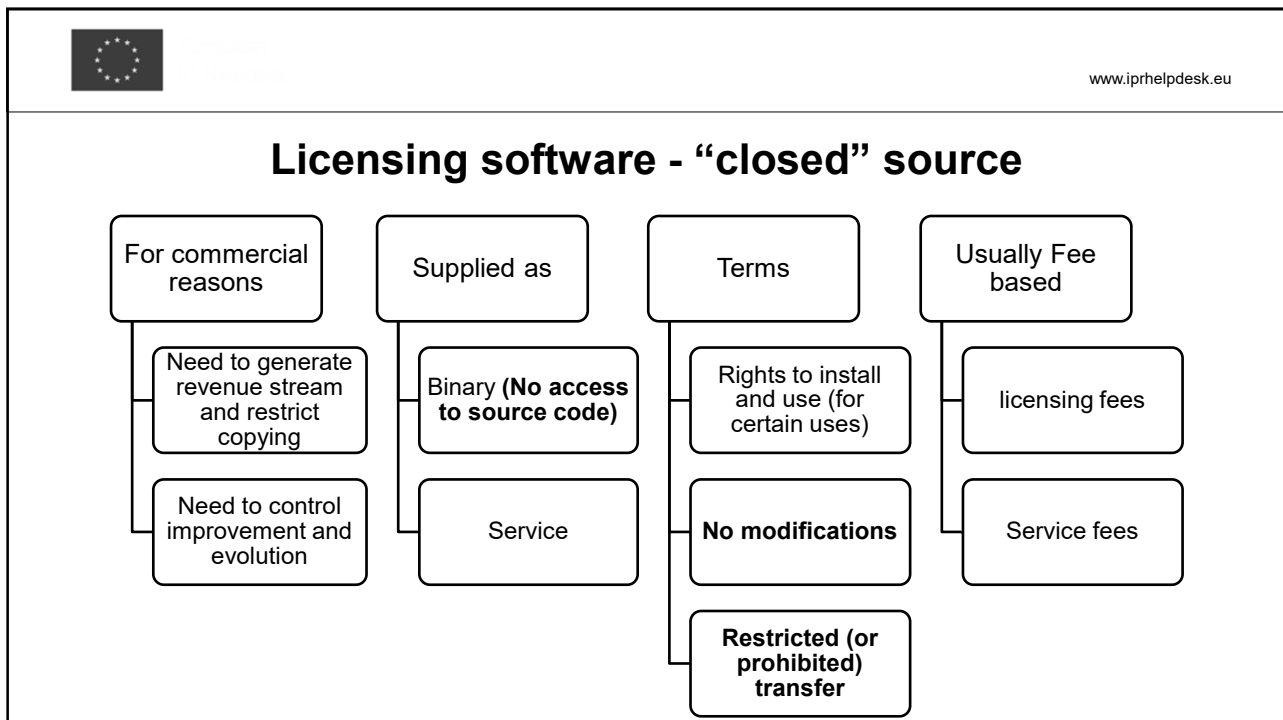
47

A presentation slide comparing patent and copyright. The top left features the European Union flag and the URL 'www.iprhelpdesk.eu' on the top right. The title 'Software patent OR/AND Software copyright' is centered. Below it, two columns are shown: 'Patent' with the subtitle 'What it does (regardless of how expressed)' and 'Copyright' with the subtitle 'What it is (its expression)'. The patent column contains a sample of a European Patent Specification (EP 2 097 841 B1) with technical details. The copyright column contains a large copyright symbol (©).

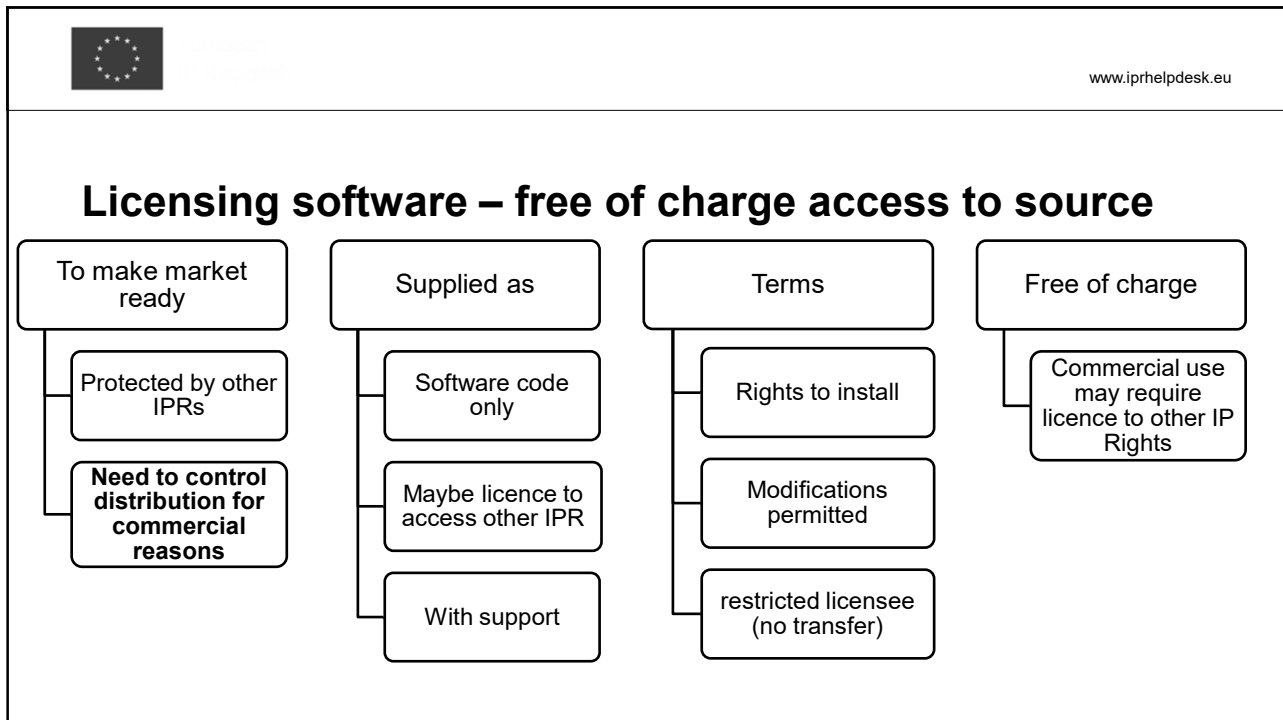
48



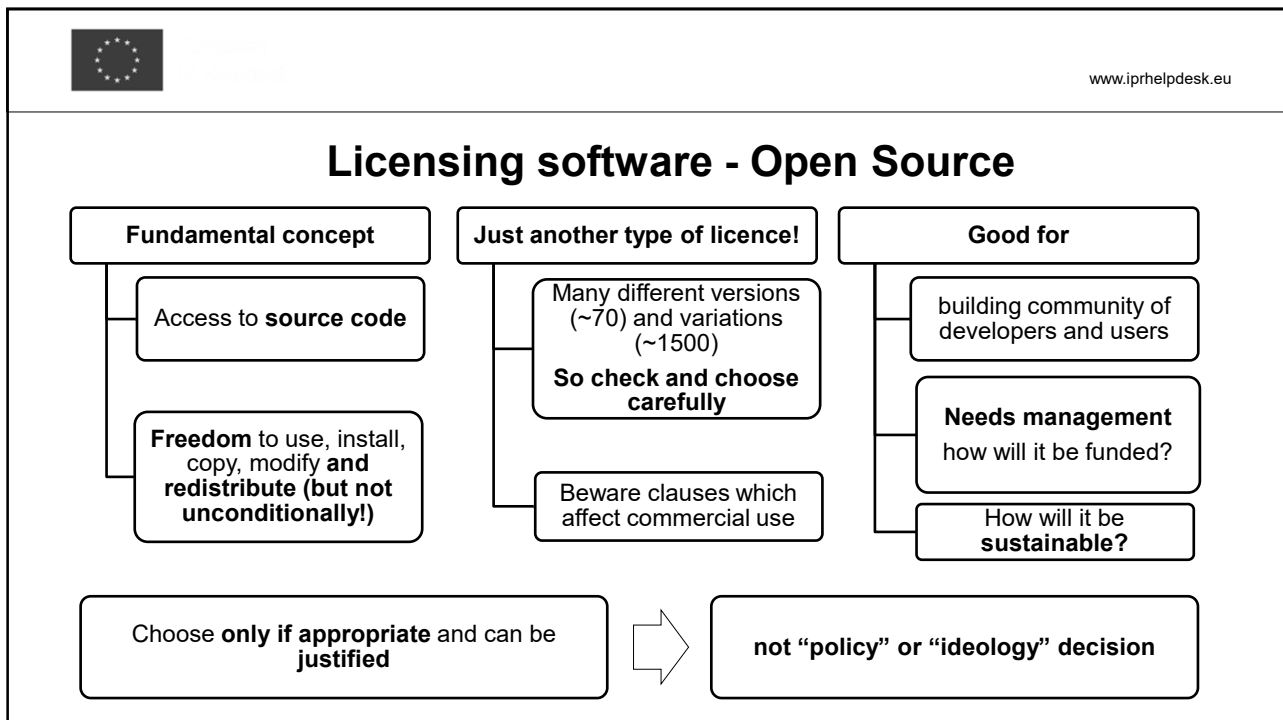
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Two main types of Open Source licence

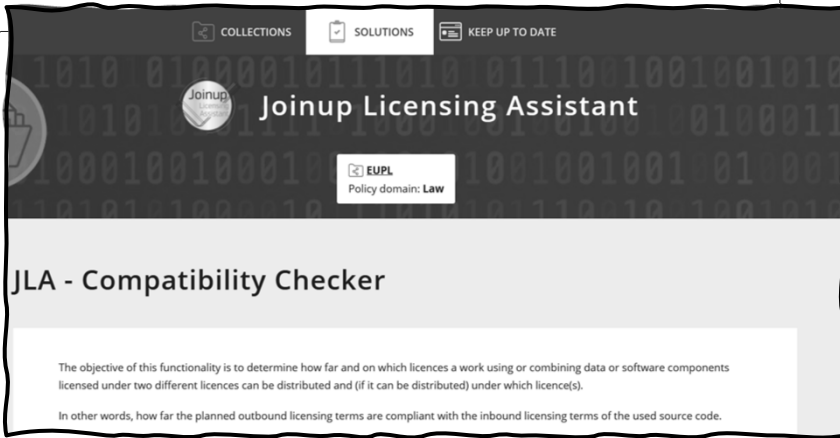
Permissive Licences (e.g. MIT, Apache, BSD...)	Copyleft Licences (e.g. GPL, MPL, EUPL...)
• Do not control how modified code is licensed • Modifications can be released under any licence, open source or not • Must include attribution, permission and copyright notices	• Additional conditions about derivative works • Same rights included in derivative works (Strong) - GPL • No restrictions on derivative works, but original code must have same rights (Weak) – EUPL, LGPL, MPL

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JLA - Compatibility Checker

How compatible are:
the (planned) outbound
licensing terms
with the
inbound licensing terms



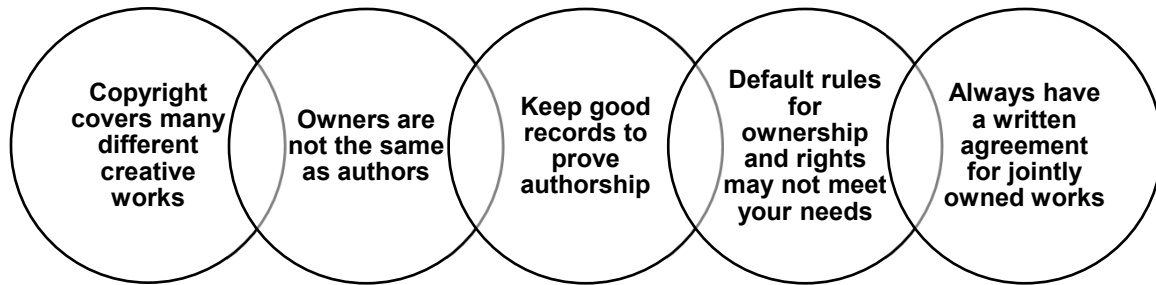
The objective of this functionality is to determine how far and on which licences a work using or combining data or software components licensed under two different licences can be distributed and (if it can be distributed) under which licence(s).
In other words, how far the planned outbound licensing terms are compliant with the inbound licensing terms of the used source code.

<https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/eupl/solution/joinup-licensing-assistant/jla-compatibility-checker>

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Summary



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Presentation produced by Dr. Eugene Sweeney, Iambic Innovation Ltd.

DISCLAIMER

The European IP Helpdesk provides free-of-charge first-line support on IP-related issues aiming to help current and potential beneficiaries of EU-funded projects, as well as EU SMEs, manage their Intellectual Property assets.

The European IP Helpdesk is managed by the European Commission's Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), with policy guidance provided by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG Grow).

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