



**PRESS RELEASE 13 MAY 2022**

**AfrIPI to help the Economic Community of Central African States develop a sub-Regional Policy to promote Intellectual Property as a tool for market integration**

The **Africa Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation Project** or **AfrIPI** (an EU-funded intellectual property (IP) development action implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office – EUIPO) has vowed to help the **Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)** promote the use of intellectual property as a tool for market integration and a vehicle for industrialisation in Central Africa.

To begin this cooperation, AfrIPI will help ECCAS **organise a tailored workshop of key regional stakeholders in a bid to propose regional policy aimed at strengthening the role of intellectual property in regional integration and facilitating economic growth within the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**. The workshop will convene in **Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo) from 18 to 20 May 2022** and will be the first time that high level officials of the Regional Economic Community (REC) are meeting to find common ground in the development of IP.

The workshop will bring together **senior officials of the ECCAS Commission, heads of IP Offices and officials involved in negotiating the IP protocol of the AfCFTA from the 11 ECCAS member states**. Ultimately, participants will seek to take stock of the varying levels of IP development in their respective countries and propose strategies for effective cooperation in view of the negotiation of the AfCFTA IP chapter. The aim is to explore coordination possibilities among national IP policies.

In recent years, regional authorities in Central Africa have made consistent efforts to eliminate the overlap of regional institutions with similar objectives, which has yielded mixed results. This situation has resulted in fragmented national markets, which inhibit the creation of an integrated regional space with optimal conditions for a larger market (African Development Bank, 2019)<sup>(1)</sup>. In this sense, the strategic focus of ECCAS is being aimed at using the region's pivotal geographical position, abundant natural resources and opportunities offered by its predominantly young population, to fuel economic and social development. This regional focus requires a coordination of IP policies to ensure that IP does not act as an obstacle to the creation of regional value chains.

Thus, aware of the vast opportunities that IP offers for sustained technological advancement and meaningful growth, **AfrIPI and ECCAS seek to take advantage of the Kinshasa event to establish a medium-term cooperation. The ultimate goal is to accompany ECCAS in creating an enabling regional environment for the creation, promotion, protection, use, administration and enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPRs), in line with best international practice and in support of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the African Union's Agenda 2063.**

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<sup>(1)</sup> African Development Bank. (2019, June 1). [www.afdb.org:  
https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central\\_africa\\_risp\\_2019-english\\_version\\_020619\\_final\\_version.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/strategy-documents/central_africa_risp_2019-english_version_020619_final_version.pdf)



## About ECCAS

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) was founded in 1983 as an organisation for the promotion of regional economic cooperation in Central Africa. It **'aims to achieve collective autonomy, raise the standard of living of its populations and maintain economic stability through harmonious cooperation'**. Its initial objective was to promote exchanges and cooperation between its members and to provide institutional and legal framework for their cooperation. However, this mission has evolved over the years to give the organisation a multifaceted mandate for economic integration and common prosperity.

ECCAS comprises the member states of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) – **Gabon, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Congo Brazzaville and Equatorial Guinea** – and of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) – **Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** –, as well as **Angola and Sao Tomé and Príncipe**. Covering an area of 66 670 000 square kilometres, ECCAS has a total population of about two hundred million people (2019).

## About AfrIPI

AfrIPI is the pioneer IP-related cooperation project which encourages joint action between the EU and Africa to boost intra-African trade, and to facilitate African-European investments for economic growth and sustainable development. The project is co-funded by the EU Commission, through the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), and by the EUIPO. It is implemented by the EUIPO in partnership with African regional and national institutions, including the African Union (AU) Commission, the OAPI and the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO).

For more information: [www.afripi.org](http://www.afripi.org)