From Risk to Trust: How the OECD FTZ Certification Can Promote Innovation and Respect for IP

Free Trade Zones as trusted hubs for IP-intensive industries

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Some FTZs are strategic trade and IP/innovation hubs

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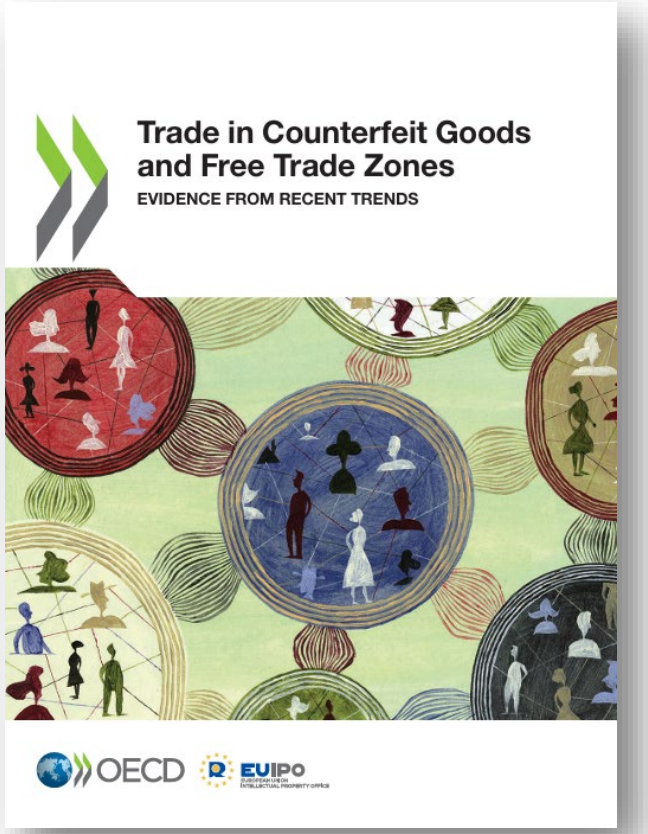
The challenge: some FTZs are exploited by illicit actors

- Certain FTZs have been misused for:
  - counterfeit trade,
  - relabeling,
  - repackaging,
  - origin concealment,
  - e-commerce transshipment.
- Risks stem from governance gaps, not from FTZs themselves.



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The policy gap → The OECD FTZ Certification

How do we distinguish "trusted" FTZs from risky ones?

- Many FTZs operate at high standards.
- Yet there has been no recognized mechanism to identify and reward them.
- Investors and IP-intensive industries need credible signals.

The OECD FTZ Certification

- Voluntary.
- Built on the 2019 OECD Recommendation.
- Public–private partnership.
- Focused on transparency, governance, and compliance.

Why this matters for IP and innovation?

Building Respect for IP through FTZ governance

From enforcement only → to prevention and trusted ecosystems

- Certification complements traditional enforcement.
- Embeds IP awareness into operational trade environments.
- Supports “Building Respect for IP” approach.

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Why innovative / IP-intensive industries care?

Innovative industries look for:

- secure supply chains,
- trusted logistics environments,
- compliance culture,
- reputational certainty.

IP-intensive industries do not invest where they fear leakage, diversion, or reputational risks.

Pilot FTZs -- IP/innovation hubs

- Host IP-intensive industries.
- Certification reinforced credibility and international positioning.
- Demonstrate compatibility between FTZs and strong IP protection.

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Looking forward

An opportunity for IP authorities

- Tailored training modules
- Practical IP risk management toolkits
- Joint awareness programs
- Integration into existing WIPO capacity-building activities
- Engagement with FTZ operators and industry

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Trusted FTZs can
support IP creation
instead of undermining it.

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