

Advisory Committee on Enforcement

Eighteenth Session
Geneva, June 2 to 4, 2026

INFORMING YOUNG PEOPLE: AN ONLINE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOR TEENAGE CONSUMERS ON THE DANGERS AND IMPACT OF COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the France Anti-Counterfeiting (France Anti-Contrefaçon) mechanism, established in 2022 by the French National Industrial Property Institute (INPI), is to gain a deeper understanding of the scope of counterfeiting in France and its impact. In 2023, it facilitated a national survey of consumers in relation to counterfeiting, which led to a joint project between INPI and the Center for International Intellectual Property Studies (CEIPI). As part of that project, an e-magazine for teenagers on counterfeiting issues was launched in 2025. The results of the survey and the joint INPI–CEIPI project are presented in this contribution.

^{*} The views expressed in this document are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Secretariat or of the Member States of WIPO.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In 2022, the National Industrial Property Institute (INPI) established the France Anti-Counterfeiting (France Anti-Contrefaçon) mechanism to better understand and quantify the scope of counterfeiting in France and its economic, social and health-related ramifications. The mechanism facilitates data-driven initiatives and helps to mobilize public and private partners¹.

2. In 2023, the mechanism facilitated a national survey, led by INPI and the Manufacturers' Union (UNIFAB)², to analyze consumer perceptions and behavior in relation to counterfeiting. The survey results served as the basis for a joint project between INPI and the University of Strasbourg Center for International Intellectual Property Studies (CEIPI). INPI and CEIPI have been working together through the mechanism to identify and explore topics linked to counterfeiting that could strengthen the French intellectual property (IP) ecosystem, particularly in the field of education.

3. In that context, an e-magazine for teenagers on counterfeiting issues was launched in 2025 in partnership with Bayard Jeunesse, a publisher that targets a young readership. A special issue of the magazine was issued to coincide with Black Friday 2025. This educational tool aims to explain what counterfeiting is; highlight the risks associated with purchasing counterfeit products; raise awareness of the economic, social and health-related impact of such products; show how such products reach young consumers; and provide practical advice on how to avoid being targeted.

II. RESULTS OF INPI-UNIFAB CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOR SURVEY

A. KEY FIGURES

4. According to the results of this survey, in France:

- Forty per cent of consumers have purchased a counterfeit product. The most purchased products are clothing (excluding sports clothing) at 19 per cent, followed by perfumes (17 per cent), leather goods (16 per cent) and sports items (15 per cent).
- Among 15 to 18-year-olds, 20 per cent stated that they mainly purchased counterfeit sports items, which represents about 5 percent of the French population.
- Thirty-four per cent of consumers in general and 36 per cent of 15 to 18-year-olds state that they have previously bought a counterfeit product believing it to be authentic.
- Street vendor markets and sales are still commonly associated with selling counterfeit products, but 40 per cent of people surveyed think that such products can also be purchased through social media.
- Forty-three per cent of 15 to 18-year-olds believe that counterfeit products are purchased through social media, and 23 per cent state that they have purchased items through such channels.
- Forty-eight per cent of 15 to 18-year-olds believe that there is no difference between authentic and fake products.

¹ The mechanism is described in document WIPO/ACE/16/6, of December 12, 2023.

² The Manufacturers' Union (Union des Fabricants) is a French anti-counterfeiting association. It brings together 200 member companies from all business sectors.

- Eighty-five per cent of young people state that they would like to be educated on these issues at school.

B. OUTCOMES OF THE SURVEY

5. The results indicate a worrying trend of normalization with regard to counterfeiting, but also that young people are open to the idea of awareness raising.
6. Purchasing practices evolve rapidly, including on social media, where counterfeiters use ingenious techniques to deceive consumers. Moreover, a growing number of consumers know exactly where they can obtain counterfeit products.
7. This behavioral change calls for targeted preventative action, drawing on tools and channels that are familiar to young people. It is essential to let people know where counterfeiters operate, particularly on social media, in order to reach out more effectively to those consumers who are most exposed.
8. In addition, initiatives to raise awareness of IP-related issues remain inadequate, an observation shared by the younger generation themselves.
9. With the benefit of these observations, INPI and CEIPI developed a special counterfeiting edition of *Phosphore*, an e-magazine for schoolchildren aged 15 years and over, which was published online in November 2025.

III. SPECIAL ISSUE OF PHOSPHORE E-MAGAZINE ON COUNTERFEITING

A. PRESENTATION

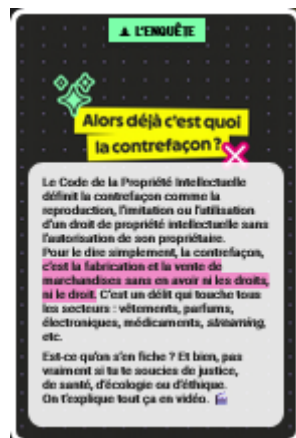
10. This special edition of *Phosphore* e-magazine aims to explain counterfeiting in simple terms and to encourage teenagers to behave responsibly.
11. Published online to coincide with Black Friday 2025, an event that marks the beginning of the end-of-year buying season, this edition covers several topics designed to help young readers better understand issues related to counterfeiting.



- The magazine begins with an introductory test to assess young people's knowledge of counterfeiting.



- Next, an explanatory section presents the legal definitions of counterfeiting and its various aspects.



- A motion-design video with voice-over gives details of the risks: economic fraud, undermining creativity, dangers to health and safety, financing of trafficking, terrorism and criminal networks, and applicable penalties.



- One article illustrates the path a counterfeit product might take to end up being purchased by a young person (online sales, influencers or unauthorized selling, such as at flea

markets). It also highlights the fact that many street vendors offer perfumes, clothing or accessories at very low prices, which points to their products being fakes.

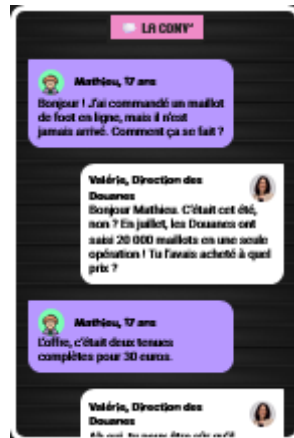
- A warning to teenagers is summarized in the central message: “If it’s too good to be true, then it’s false.”



- The magazine includes a reminder of the key figures on counterfeiting in France.
 - In 2025 in France, customs seized 20.22 million items withdrawn from the market, including toys, medicines and perfumes.



- A fictional WhatsApp conversation between a teenager and a customs official is presented.
 - Mathieu, who is 17, orders a jersey online that never arrives. The dialogue highlights the work of customs in combating counterfeiting.



- A page containing practical advice displays tips on how to detect counterfeits (vendor reputation, verified URL, linguistic errors, incoherent or unreasonably low pricing, etc.).
- The warning to teenagers is repeated and summarized in the central message: “If it’s too good to be true, then it’s false.”



- The magazine ends with a final quiz to see how much information readers have retained and to help them remember it.



B. CONCLUSION

12. This initiative illustrates the willingness of France to act, over the long term, to change attitudes on counterfeiting.

IV. OTHER AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES

13. Under the leadership of deputy Christophe Blanchet³, president of the National Anti-Counterfeiting Committee (CNAC), efforts to combat counterfeiting go hand in hand with priority activities that focus on prevention and education⁴. The Committee's communication activities – annual campaigns⁵, national days and destruction operations – are now part of a broader strategy: to inform, mobilize and instill responsibility in the younger generation. To achieve this, several courses of action have been identified.

14. First, there is a need to call for consumer responsibility and intensify efforts to raise awareness of the dangers posed by counterfeiting and of the sheer variety of counterfeit products available in physical markets and online. Communications campaigns must target the most dangerous products as a priority so as to highlight the harmful effects of counterfeiting for public health and safety.

15. To that end, in December 2024 the Committee launched a video campaign entitled “La contrefaçon, c’est non!” (“No to counterfeiting”),⁶ which aims to broaden public awareness of the risks related to counterfeiting. To supplement that message and intensify prevention efforts, a webpage dedicated to education and awareness raising has been created⁷. The Committee is also working to integrate the issue of counterfeiting into primary and secondary school programs, with a view to fostering an understanding of those issues as early as possible.

16. Investing in digital communication channels and new mobile applications is essential, as young people spend a considerable amount of time online. Conducting awareness-raising campaigns through such platforms could help to increase their visibility and reach the target audience more effectively. UNIFAB is already trying this approach, in particular through a partnership with the YouTube influencer e-penser, who has published a video on counterfeiting⁸. However, various influencers, sometimes unknowingly, have promoted the purchase of counterfeit products. Awareness of IP-related issues and of how to combat counterfeiting must therefore also be raised among those actors. Such actions are being taken in France and by the European Commission. The European Union Intellectual Property Office and the European Commission have designed training materials to help influencers address IP law issues within the European Union, guiding them on how to protect their creativity and innovation while respecting the IP rights of third parties. UNIFAB has created educational content and distributed it to companies representing influencers.

³ Assemblée Nationale. Rapport d’information. Available at https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/16/rapports/cec/l16b1846_rapport-information#.

⁴ Assemblée Nationale. Mission de suivi de l’évaluation de la lutte contre la contrefaçon. Available at <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/16/organes/delegations-comites-offices/cec/missions-suivi-evaluation/suivi-contrefacon>.

⁵ INPI. This summer, all united to block counterfeiting, July 2025. Available at <https://www.inpi.fr/a-la-une/cet-ete-tous-unis-pour-faire-barrage-la-contrefacon>.

⁶ <https://www.inpi.fr/espace-presse/la-contrefacon-cest-non-linpi-lance-une-campagne-de-sensibilisation-sur-les-risques>.

⁷ INPI, UNIFAB and CNAC. Adoptez les bonnes pratiques pour dire non à la contrefaçon! Available at <https://www.unifab.com/adoptez-les-bonnes-pratiques-pour-dire-non-a-la-contrefacon/>.

⁸ Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28rkT6TSFIg>.

V. CONCLUSION

17. The strategic use of social media and digital tools is essential for targeted communications that can counter the spread of counterfeiting effectively and raise awareness of its dangers.

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