

Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP)

Twenty-Seventh Session
Geneva, November 22 to 26, 2021

PROJECT PROPOSAL BY TUNISIA ON REDUCING WORK-RELATED ACCIDENTS AND OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES THROUGH INNOVATION AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

prepared by the Secretariat

1. In a letter dated October 21, 2021, the National Institute for Standardization and Industrial Property of Tunisia submitted a project proposal on “*Reducing Work-Related Accidents and Occupational Diseases through Innovation and Intellectual Property*”, for consideration at the twenty-seventh session of the CDIP.

2. The letter and project proposal are contained in the Annex hereto.

3. *The CDIP is invited to consider the information contained in the Annex to this document.*

[Annex follows]

Republic of Tunisia
Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mines

October 21, 2021

Sir,

The National Institute for Standardization and Industrial Property (INNORPI) has the pleasure herewith to formally submit a pilot project on using innovation and intellectual property to reduce work-related accidents and occupational diseases, as part of the work of the Committee on Development and Intellectual Property.

Please find attached a draft of the project.

Counting on your invaluable cooperation and ongoing interest in the work of our institution, we ask you to accept, Sir, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Riadh **Soussi**

Director General

National Institute for Standardization and Industrial Property

Mr. Daren Tang

Director General

World Intellectual Property Organization

1. SUMMARY	
<u>Project Code</u>	DA_1_10_19_30_31
<u>Title</u>	<i>Project Proposal by Tunisia on Reducing Work-related Accidents and Occupational Diseases through Innovation and Intellectual Property</i>
<u>Development Agenda Recommendations</u>	<p><i>Recommendation 1:</i> WIPO technical assistance shall be, <i>inter alia</i>, development-oriented, demand-driven and transparent, taking into account the priorities and the special needs of developing countries, especially LDCs, as well as the different levels of development of Member States and activities should include time frames for completion. In this regard, design, delivery mechanisms and evaluation processes of technical assistance programs should be country specific.</p> <p><i>Recommendation 10:</i> To assist Member States to develop and improve national intellectual property institutional capacity through further development of infrastructure and other facilities with a view to making national intellectual property institutions more efficient and promote fair balance between intellectual property protection and the public interest. This technical assistance should also be extended to sub-regional and regional organizations dealing with intellectual property.</p> <p><i>Recommendation 19:</i> To initiate discussions on how, within WIPO's mandate, to further facilitate access to knowledge and technology for developing countries and LDCs to foster creativity and innovation and to strengthen such existing activities within WIPO.</p> <p><i>Recommendation 30:</i> WIPO should cooperate with other IGOs to provide to developing countries, including LDCs, upon request, advice on how to gain access to and make use of intellectual property-related information on technology, particularly in areas of special interest to the requesting parties.</p> <p><i>Recommendation 31:</i> To undertake initiatives agreed by Member States, which contribute to transfer of technology to developing countries, such as requesting WIPO to facilitate better access to publicly available patent information.</p>
<u>Brief description of Project</u>	<p>The pilot project aims at helping to reduce work-related accidents and occupational diseases in Tunisia and three other developing countries through innovation and the use of intellectual property tools.</p> <p>As explained below, the prevention of occupational risks and the improvement of working conditions is a key concern for Tunisia and</p>

	<p>other developing countries. Efforts are being made to improve the safety and health conditions of work.</p> <p>One of the challenges encountered in this area is the lack of appropriate technologies that can help prevent accidents and diseases in each specific sector and industry. Appropriate technology is necessary to ensure the safety of the tools and machinery used by workers, as well as their personal protection equipment (PPE). Some of this technology might already be available, despite the lack of knowledge of potential users in developing countries or the difficulties to access it. Moreover, generating new innovative solutions for the risks encountered by workers of a particular industry or sector could also prove crucial. Collaboration between users, producers and suppliers of tools, machinery and PPE could contribute to ensure the availability of and the access to adequate material. This would reduce the risk of accidents and, in doing so, contribute to increasing the competitiveness of enterprises.</p> <p>An additional challenge rests on the use of counterfeit tools, machinery and PPE that do not meet the necessary safety and health standards. Awareness raising about the risks that this counterfeit material might entail for the well-being of workers is also essential to prevent occupational accidents and diseases.</p> <p>To achieve these objectives, this pilot project proposes to implement the strategies and actions described above, on the basis of cooperation among the main stakeholders who can contribute to improving the working conditions and the security of workers through innovation and the use of intellectual property tools.</p>
<p><u>Programs under which Project Implementation Falls</u></p>	
<p><u>Links with other Development Agenda Programs and Projects</u></p>	<p>DA Projects: Developing Tools for Access to Patent information – Phases I and II (CDIP/4/6 and CDIP/10/13); Capacity-Building in the Use of Appropriate Technology-Specific Technical and Scientific Information as a Solution for Identified Development Challenges (CDIP/5/6 Rev.)</p>
<p><u>Link with Expected Results in Program and Budget</u></p>	
<p>Project Duration</p>	<p>36 months</p>
<p>Project Budget</p>	<p>Total budget: To be developed</p>

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1. Introduction

Since independence in 1956, Tunisian authorities have devoted a significant share of national income to economic and social development and, above all, to improving the living conditions of the population through unprecedented school attendance, an active policy of women's emancipation, an ambitious and revolutionary family planning program launched in 1966 to limit births, and the introduction of a compensation and price control instrument to help the poor and low-income families. This policy of national solidarity was further stepped up among the poor, especially as from the 1980s, with the advent of the Structural Adjustment Programme, which followed structural changes in the world economy and the advent of a new era of globalization. Thus, the social security sector occupies an important place in Tunisia's social policy as a vector of economic and social development and one of the main elements for the preservation of social peace.

However, despite these efforts by public authorities to create healthy and peaceful working environments, the number of days lost as a result of accidents at work or occupational diseases remains high. This is likely to be detrimental both to the well-being of employees and to the growth and competitiveness of an enterprise. Indeed, a total of approximately 1,500,000 employees are involved, with an average of 46,000 work-related accidents recorded annually. The vast majority of these incidents (94.5%) occur at the workplace, while the remaining 5.5% are commuting accidents. The total number of days of work stoppage is also a parameter for assessing the severity of accidents with a deleterious impact on productivity. Thus, approximately 1,000,000 days of work stoppage are reported annually. Added to these are cases of occupational diseases, which amount to approximately 1,600 cases where the work stoppage is either permanent or long term, depending on the severity of the disease.

This is likely to be the case for other developing countries as well. According to the International Labor Organization,¹ more than 2.78 million people die every year as a result of occupational accidents or work-related diseases worldwide. There are also 374 million non-fatal work-related injuries each year, resulting in more than 4 days of absences from work. Not only the human cost is incredibly high, but also the economic burden of poor occupational safety and health practices is estimated at almost 4 per cent of the annual global Gross Domestic Products.

In developing countries, occupational safety and health issues are generally less visible, but the risks are often greater than in industrialized countries. The expansion of the informal economy, as well as the counterfeit of tools, machinery and personal protective equipment, exacerbate this issue and the risks involved.

Policies aimed at addressing this problem are manifold and efforts are required from different actors. In this context, the ILO implements projects aimed at improving safety and health at work and preventing work-related accidents and occupational diseases in developing countries. A project titled "*Strengthening Labour Governance in MSMEs and Supporting the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy in Africa*" is currently being implemented in Tunisia, among other countries, with a twofold strategy: (i) supporting national labour inspectorates to better ensure compliance; and (ii) build the capacity of Governments, employers, workers and their representatives to promote and implement the existing regulations in the field of occupational safety and health.

¹ <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/lang--en/index.htm>

Intellectual property can also contribute to those efforts, by providing a safer environment to workers through innovative technologies. The knowledge of and access to appropriate technology is necessary to ensure the safety of the tools and machinery used by workers, as well as their PPE. Awareness about the risks involved in counterfeited goods that do not meet the necessary safety and health standards is also essential.

2.2. Objectives

Overall objective:

The project aims to help reduce occupational accidents and diseases through innovation and the use of intellectual property tools.

Specific objectives :

1. Assessment of the needs of a specific industry or sector in relation to work-related accidents and occupational diseases.
2. Identification of the available innovative technology that could respond to the needs of that specific industry or sector to reduce work-related accidents and occupational diseases.
3. Awareness raising of intellectual property and its impact on the improvement of working conditions.
4. Establishment of effective and sustainable networks to promote better collaboration between those who use and those who generate innovation and technology transfer in order to reduce accidents at work and occupational diseases.

2.3. Strategy

2.3.1. Scope of project

The project will be implemented in Tunisia and in three other pilot countries.

2.3.2. Criteria for selection of beneficiary countries

The selection of three other pilot countries will focus on the following criteria, among others:

- existence of institutionalized national policies on social security and the fight against accidents at work and occupational diseases;
- demonstrated willingness of political authorities to increase the competitiveness of enterprises through value chain improvement and innovation capacity; and
- commitment of the country to allocate the necessary resources for the effective implementation of the project and its sustainability.

Member States wishing to participate in the project must submit a proposal containing a brief statement regarding the above-mentioned points. They must also mention the institution in charge of managing the project and appoint a person responsible for monitoring the project.

2.3.3. Implementation strategy

The objectives of the project will be achieved through the implementation strategy detailed below. Each of the activities would be implemented in each of the pilot countries.

- ✓ Economic study that analyses the impact of work-related accidents and occupational diseases on the productivity of a specific industry or sector of the pilot country, as well as outlines the potential benefits of using appropriate technology.
- ✓ Mapping of the technology needs of the specific industry or sector to combat work-related accidents and occupational diseases. In order to develop this mapping, information would be gathered from all stakeholders involved, e.g.: national institutions in charge of matters relating to work-related accidents and occupational diseases; managers and workers of enterprises of the industry or sector; suppliers; universities, research centers, technical centers and other innovation generators.
- ✓ Landscaping of the existing most appropriate technology available to address the needs of that industry or sector, using patent, scientific and technical sources.
- ✓ National seminars to raise awareness among all stakeholders (public entities, generators of innovation and technology, suppliers, users, workers) about the impact of innovation, the importance of access and use of appropriate technology, and the risks of counterfeit in this field. The seminars will also help to establish effective networks to foster better collaboration between the users and the generators of innovation in this field.
- ✓ Production of awareness-raising material.

[End of Annex and of document]