

WIPO Intellectual Property Youth Empowerment Strategy (IP-YES!)



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Youth at the nexus of IP and innovation

Welcome to IP-YES! – WIPO's Intellectual Property Youth Empowerment Strategy.

IP-YES! arrives at a time when there are more young people on the planet than ever before. Over 1.9 billion people are between the ages of 10 and 24, with close to 90 percent residing in developing countries, where they often represent the largest share of the population. For example, in Africa, the world's youngest continent, around 70 percent of sub-Saharan Africans are aged under 30, and the region is expected to account for more than half of global population growth between now and 2050.

But as it stands, youth remain one of the most underserved groups in the global IP system. Many are unaware of the abundant opportunities that IP provides. This was highlighted recently in WIPO's first global IP perception survey, *WIPO Pulse*, which tracked global IP awareness and perception of about 25,000 people in 50 countries. We found that respondents aged between 18 and 24 had significantly lower IP awareness scores than other age groups.

Opening up the world of IP for youth will deliver significant benefits for us all. Not only are youth the future of innovation and creativity, but empowering them to bring their ideas to the world through the power of IP can transform lives, drive positive economic and social change, and help us build a better world.

WIPO's engagement with youth is not new. To deliver important messages about IP to the youngest audiences in an easy-to-understand manner, we collaborated with the creators of Pororo the Little Penguin to develop and release six IP-themed animated episodes. We are also delivering IP clubs for schoolchildren and professional development programs for young adults, including our Young Experts Program at the WIPO headquarters in Geneva, as well as a growing catalog of training and skills programs through the WIPO Academy, which has benefited 150,000 young people in the past two years alone.

IP-YES! builds upon these and other activities to provide a structured way forward for targeted and impactful initiatives that will respond to the unique aspirations and needs of youth in three key areas: sparking passion, building skills, and empowering action for youth engagement and leadership in the IP system.

While WIPO defines youth as individuals between 15 and 35 years old, we do not regard this as a monolithic group, given that it includes high school pupils, university students and young professionals. Tailoring our initiatives and activities to support these specific groups will be a feature of our work.

IP-YES! also considers the barriers faced by youth who are disproportionately affected by challenges such as a lack of quality education or adequate employment opportunities. Issues linked to gender inequalities, disabilities, and the needs of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities are also considered as part of our larger efforts to build a more inclusive global IP ecosystem.

IP rights are not just legal rights, but also powerful tools that can help youth realize their goals and create impact where it is needed the most. At the heart of IP-YES! is a critical objective: that of nurturing the boundless potential of young innovators and creators everywhere.

IP-YES! in action



To implement the strategy, we will focus our efforts on three action-oriented areas.

1. Sparking passion

One of the common stereotypes we encounter among youth is the belief that innovation and creativity only happens in parts of the world with mature and developed IP ecosystems. This is perhaps understandable, but not ideal. It is our conviction that the spirit of innovation and creativity is common to youth everywhere, and that we need to help nurture from a young age the belief that knowledge, inventiveness and creativity can change the world. Therefore, our first focal area is to help build a culture of love for, and confidence and belief in, innovation, creativity and IP.



A key part of this work will be to bring the power of IP to youth in a way that speaks to them, using channels that reach out to them best. WIPO's media strategy is to share compelling and inspiring stories of how IP can positively impact lives around the world. Broadening WIPO's social media presence, incorporating success stories on various channels popular among youth (such as the Organization's Instagram account, where most of the audience are under the age of 35), and amplifying WIPO's ability to curate and deliver tailored content will help to bring IP closer to youth, as well as inspire and promote youth-led innovation and creativity.

Beyond harnessing the power of media, WIPO will also use age-appropriate formats and employ diverse activities and communication techniques to ensure that youth see themselves as being part of the IP community, fostering a sense of representation and belonging. This outreach and engagement could include:

- Creating cartoons, animations, illustrations and games for the youngest audiences;
- Sharing short videos, character-driven documentaries and interviews with inspiring role models;
- Developing interactive online platforms for different age groups;
- Appointing “IP Youth Ambassadors” who promote IP in their communities;
- Organizing competitions, hackathons and other initiatives that showcase the innovative and creative energies of youth;
- Helping to build a network and community of youth who are passionate about innovation and creativity.

Given that youth includes different age groups, WIPO’s engagement, outreach and promotion activities will continue to be designed to appeal to a wide range of stakeholders.

2. Building skills

Education is one of the most critical enablers for youth to succeed. Alongside building confidence and sparking passion for innovation, we also need to equip youth with the right IP education, training, knowledge and skills.

Between 2019 and 2023, almost 440,000 youth participated in the WIPO Academy’s IP skills building initiatives. In the 2022/2023 biennium alone, there were over 150,000 such participants, of which over 80 percent came from developing countries and were aged between six and 34. These courses ranged from formal and technical instruction in IP through structured programs in universities and institutes of higher learning to more informal and practice-oriented workshops focusing on practical IP skills.



The participants on these courses have tended to be university undergraduates, postgraduates and young working adults. This means that there is a gap in our offering to those at a more formative stage of their education, especially at the primary, secondary and high school levels.

As such, WIPO will increase its efforts to integrate IP curricula into primary, secondary and high schools. This initiative is driven by the growing demand from national governments seeking support for IP education curricula and pedagogy, with requests received from some 50 countries in recent years. The design of these programs will draw upon initiatives already operating at the national level, such as India’s Atal Innovation Mission, which has helped more than 8 million schoolchildren in India, from as young as 12, acquire innovation and IP skills by applying a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) approach to solving everyday local problems.

The Innovation, Creativity, and IP for Youth and Teachers (IP4Youth and Teachers) initiatives encompass direct provision of curricula and training for students and educators, as well as collaboration with policymakers, particularly curriculum setters, and intermediaries in ministries responsible for education, youth and culture. This initiative will continue to focus on developing age-appropriate pedagogy and curricula for classroom instruction, along with co-curricular activities such as innovation and creativity hubs, and summer camps focused on innovation and creativity.

It must be emphasized that our efforts will not just focus on technical education, but also on imparting practical skills. While we are proud to have nurtured many IP professionals through our formal IP education courses, we also need to expand our offerings to those who are not pursuing a career in IP but still need practical IP skills to succeed.

Teaching youth about the IP system and its benefits will be done in conjunction with exposure to disciplines that will support them to become innovators and creators. For example, STEM content will also be integrated into WIPO's educational resources.

In these knowledge and skills building efforts, WIPO will collaborate closely with national and regional IP offices, together with the relevant educational authorities, as they are best positioned to promote IP education and to advance youth inclusion in the IP system at the national and regional levels.

WIPO will assist Member States by supporting the establishment of activities such as:

- Planning and deploying IP in school curricula starting at the primary school level, as well as at the secondary and high school levels;
- Establishing IP clubs and youth camps in schools as part of the extracurricular activity offered to students;
- Working with youth associations and organizations to develop innovation-centered events;
- Training of teachers and youth center facilitators;
- Continuing to partner with universities, institutes of higher learning and others to establish and deliver formal courses for undergraduates seeking to become IP professionals, as well as those only needing to acquire practical IP skills for work.

3. Empowering action

Fostering confidence in and love for innovation and creativity and building relevant skills are important aspects of the strategy, but ultimately it needs to be followed by the creation of meaningful opportunities for youth to apply their acquired knowledge and succeed in their fields of interest.



To do this, WIPO will partner with Member States, industry, civil society and other domestic stakeholders, as well as national, regional and international organizations, to develop projects for young innovators, creators and entrepreneurs.

Creating meaningful opportunities for youth is already a growing area of work at WIPO, with many new projects being piloted and others in the pipeline. For example, the "IP in a Box" project is being piloted in The Gambia. It will educate youth in a gamified manner, through card and board games, and offer them the possibility to debate policy issues concerning the innovation value chain.

Another project called TANIT, developed in collaboration with the Tunisian Ministry of Youth and Sports, aims to establish Innovation Hubs in youth centers across Tunisia. It will create a self-sustaining model enabling youth to take the lead in organizing regular activities designed to help them to become active participants in the innovation economy.

In addition, WIPO's inaugural IP Moot Competition will offer law students from universities across the world a practical courtroom simulation of an IP dispute, while an IP for Business Bootcamp for young migrant entrepreneurs in Latin America, piloted in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), will provide business challenges and pitching simulations, allowing participants to better understand how to leverage IP to enhance their business endeavors.

Good partnerships are also critical in making a difference. For example, during this year's United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meeting, WIPO worked with the International Trade Center (ITC) and the Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations in New York to host a high-level event titled "Innovate and Lead: Skills for Youth to Drive a Sustainable Future."

This event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including youth ministers, ambassadors, entrepreneurs and artists, and highlighted the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships in promoting youth empowerment and sustainable development. Similarly, WIPO's involvement in the ECOSOC Youth Forum plenary session titled "Working with Youth as Full-Fledged Partners: Youth and the Future of Work" was a multi-UN-agency endeavor. Co-led by WIPO alongside the International Labour Organization, World Organization of the Scout Movement, United Nations Major Group on Children and Youth, IOM and ITC, this session fostered meaningful dialogue on emerging trends in the future of work and strategies to support youth.

Through our engagement with youth, one of the key takeaways is that these actions fostering youth participation and leadership must be strongly aligned with their genuine needs and aspirations. Youth will need to be involved not only as beneficiaries, but also as co-creators, acknowledging the invaluable perspectives and insights they bring. In this regard, WIPO will:

- Develop and host an International IP and Youth Conference as a platform for gathering, networking, and exchanging ideas and perspectives on the IP system;
- Promote discussions on the future of creativity and innovation, as well as how IP can better serve youth;
- Work with relevant stakeholders, including youth, to design and launch meaningful pilots and projects that can form the basis for programs that can be scaled.

WIPO will launch activities and projects dedicated to youth that motivate young innovators and creators to explore groundbreaking ideas, fulfill their creative potential, and develop new pathways to a sustainable future and to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These activities will help to position youth at the forefront of social and economic advancement, and will include:

- Innovation challenges, hackathons and incubators;
- Projects focused on developing and disseminating green technology and eco-friendly practices;
- Projects focused on delivering positive social impact and sharing IP and innovation for the benefit of all;
- IP and business projects for young entrepreneurs, which will help them use IP to take their ideas to the market;
- Mentoring and assistance programs for artists and creators, among others.

IP-YES! implementation and assessment

The implementation of IP-YES! will commence immediately and run in parallel with the current Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2022–2026.

As with other areas of work, WIPO will conduct periodic assessments of IP-YES! to measure its implementation and impact. These assessments will allow for adjustments and refinements to be made as necessary to ensure the strategy's success.

Some key measures of the success of IP-YES! could include:

- A rise in the IP awareness index score among youth, to be measured by future editions of *WIPO Pulse*;
- An increase in the number of youth beneficiaries of WIPO's knowledge and skills building programs;
- An expansion in the number of WIPO projects involving youth.

It must be noted that successful implementation will require the support of, and close collaboration and cooperation with, various national agencies including IP offices, relevant ministries and government agencies, national youth associations and groups, NGOs, and civil society and other stakeholders, as well as analogous organizations at the regional and international level.

Given the wide range of needs and opportunities, our work in this area should not be limited to a one-size-fits-all approach but should be customized to the realities of the various Member States, depending on the beneficiaries, local circumstances and other grassroots-level factors.

All in all, the key to implementation will be strong partnerships with stakeholders in order to effectively scale our work and create sustainable impact.

Conclusion

WIPO's IP-YES! revolves around the fundamental goal of recognizing and amplifying the immense innovative and creative capacity of global youth as key drivers of economic growth and sustainable development everywhere.

This new policy framework will provide strategic coherence to WIPO's efforts to equip younger generations with the IP insights, resources and skills required to materialize their visions for the future and transform their ideas into tangible outcomes.

Ultimately, harnessing the innovative and creative energy of global youth will not only advance WIPO's vision of a more inclusive global IP ecosystem, but will also help us create a better and more sustainable future for all. We look forward to working closely with all Member States and stakeholders to make this vision a reality.

