



OFFICE FOR HARMONIZATION  
IN THE INTERNAL MARKET  
(TRADE MARKS AND DESIGNS)

# General information about the Seconded National Experts programme

## The Office

# 01

The Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM) was established in 1994 in Alicante (Spain) as a decentralised agency of the European Union (EU) to offer Intellectual Property (IP) rights protection to businesses and innovators across the EU and beyond. The OHIM is the official authority carrying out the procedures for the Community trademarks (CTM) since 1996 and for the Community registered design (RCD) since 2003. These intellectual property rights are valid in all the countries of the EU.

More recently, the remit of the Office has been extended in the form of the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights.

OHIM is the largest EU agency in terms of budget and staff and has full legal and financial autonomy.

The Office works in close partnership with national and regional IP offices in the EU member states, with national IP offices outside the EU, with International Organizations, and the European Commission on a wide range of issues affecting the owners and users of intellectual property rights (IPR).



## Key facts

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We are a young organisation with more than 1 200 staff, made up of civil servants, permanent and temporary staff and external contractors.

Management systems certificates:

- Quality Management (ISO 9001) for all activities of the Office.
- Complaints handling (ISO 10002)
- Information security management system (ISO 27001)
- Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)
- Universal accessibility (UNE 170001)
- Occupational Health and Safety (OHSAS 18001)

Number of Applications received:



Working languages



<sup>1</sup> – Data from 1996 to 2014

<sup>2</sup> – Data from 2003 to 2014– RCD figures refer to total designs received not applications.

## Working at the office

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# 03

*"At OHIM we work with ideas, with reputations, with the shape of things to come."*

OHIM has set out the strategic goals and lines of action for the period 2011-2015 in its Strategic Plan. The two pillars of the Strategic Plan are to develop "Organisational Excellence" and to foster "International Cooperation". Within this strategic framework, Line of Action No 1. 'HR Reform and Cultural Renewal - Excellence through People' is devoted to the wellbeing of its staff in order to achieve effective human resource management processes required to facilitate continual learning, improve leadership capacity and encourage consultation and collaboration with staff.

The office's staff comes from the four corners of Europe and the wider world. The Office has five working languages – English, French, German, Italian and Spanish – and processes applications in 23 official languages of the EU.

The young organisation comprises staff made up of civil servants, permanent and temporary staff and external contractors.

The role of the President of OHIM was taken on by Portuguese national António Campinos on 1 October 2010. The Vice President is Belgian national Christian Archambeau, who took on the role on 1 December 2010.



The OHIM's physical working environment has been designed to comply with the highest standards of quality, security and environmental performance. On Monday 17 November 2014, a new building of 37 000 000 square metres of additional office space was inaugurated to accommodate its increased activities and facilitate its role as a centre for international cooperation.

## Working at the office

# 03

Furthermore, the office facilities provide a large variety of services and support for staff, such as:

### Staff Welfare

- Continuous personal assistance from Human Resources;
- Legal advice on Spanish Law;
- Social Welfare Officer;
- Child psychologist at the European School.

### For health

- Medical service;
- Fitness centre.

### For everyday life

Working in a vibrant, creative and positive atmosphere, which allows for interaction between staff and encourages teamwork, OHIM benefits from a campus style environment covering more than 5000 m<sup>2</sup> of green areas, including a sport zone with 2 padel courts and a multifunctional sports court to practice basketball, volleyball and football. Moreover, seating areas spread throughout the OHIM's premises create spaces for social and cultural interaction for staff.

Staff can also benefit from the following facilities:

- Self-service restaurant and cafeteria;
- Cashpoint;
- Library with a large repository of IP books;
- International press kiosk;
- Electric-car charging station.

## Working at the office

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At OHIM we balance the need for efficient use of our resources against modern human resource policies that enable our staff to reconcile professional and family life.

**Education:** a European School was opened in Alicante to support staff moving to the city to work at OHIM. Today, the school is a well-established centre of excellence offering top-quality education in Spanish, English, German and French, as well as a pre-school nursery. Holiday camps and farm schools are organised during the school holidays. The SNE's children are entitled to enrol in the European School of Alicante free of tuition fees.

**Training:** SNEs, as any OHIM staff are entitled to attend training courses organised and paid for by the Office, when the interests of the Office requires it.

**Flexible working arrangements:** flexible working hours.

**Annual leave:** 24 days per year, with extra days possible depending on specific criteria.

**Leisure and sports:** a variety of leisure and sport clubs, which are open to everybody working at OHIM. For instance "OAM-IGOS", a club located on the OAMI grounds, which offers a wide selection of library books, DVDs and audio books in all EU languages.

## The city of Alicante

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The vibrant city of Alicante is a provincial capital and the 'seat' of OHIM. As well as its legendary beaches and perennial sunshine, our location offers newcomers a friendly, cosmopolitan lifestyle. The city of Alicante is well connected, with a new international airport, located 5 km south of OHIM and 9 km southwest of the city, offering frequent direct connections to all major European capitals and many regional centres, as well as international destinations. Furthermore, there is a daily, direct fast train to Spain's capital Madrid.

Social life in Alicante has something for everyone. For outdoor types, it is just 20kms from the mountains and peaks of the Sierra Aitana, and the sea is never far away. Alicante is also a university city offering all the cinemas, theatres and diversity of culture associated with a seat of learning.

For those who want to experience the culture, cuisine, language and heritage of Spain, the historic Roman port of Alicante is an excellent vantage point and the perfect place to start a journey.







## Aim of the Seconded National SNE programme

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OHIM is entrusted with the activity of developing and delivering specific training programmes and events for officials from the EU, candidate countries for EU membership, and EFTA countries. Within this context, the programme for seconded national experts (SNEs) supports the exchange of best practices, the development of skills and provides assistance to projects such as integration of third countries on cooperation tools or the participation in convergence projects.



## Definition and role of the Seconded National Expert (SNE)

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Seconded National experts are staff:

- Of the central industrial property offices of the Member States, the Benelux Trade Mark Office, the candidate countries for EU membership or other national and international institutions
- SNEs perform a dual role: they bring to OHIM the experience of the issues they are used to dealing with in their own offices, and take back to their home office the knowledge of CTM & RCD systems acquired during their secondment period at OHIM.

## General principles of the programme

### Eligibility

To be eligible for secondment at OHIM the SNEs:

- Shall be nationals of a member state of the EU, a candidate country for EU membership or an EFTA country.
- Must have minimum three years of professional experience equivalent to one of the administrator (advisory duties which require a university degree or equivalent professional training) or assistant (executive duties which require a post-secondary education and appropriate professional experience or equivalent training).
- Must have a thorough knowledge of one of the languages of the office to perform his/her duties

### Duration of the secondment period

- The initial period of secondment may last a minimum of 3 months and can be renewed once or more, up to a total period of secondment not exceeding 4 years.
- The secondment may be terminated at the request of the president of the office or the SNE's employer, upon the party concerned giving three months' notice to the other party.
- It may also be terminated at the SNE's request, providing the same notice.

## General principles of the programme

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### Implementation of the programme

- The secondment shall be implemented by an exchange of letters between the SNE's employer and the President of the Office.

### Situation of the SNE

- There is no employment relationship between the SNE and OHIM.
- The SNE remains under his/her current working condition with his/her employer.
- The SNE will work full time.
- The SNE will carry out the tasks assigned to him/her in accordance with the job profile and the conditions established by the Office and stated in the exchange of letters.
- SNEs may be appointed as examiners, members of an opposition division, member of cancellation division or invalidity division. They may also exercise functions within the framework of the international cooperation programmes and be entrusted duties in the best interest of the Office.
- SNEs are excluded from official managerial tasks.

## Financial principles of the programme

08 All allowances provided to the SNE are intended to cover the SNE's living expenses in the place of secondment on a flat rate basis and to facilitate a monthly return journey to the place of origin.

### Subsistence allowance

- In addition to their remuneration from their current national employer, the SNE is entitled, during the period of secondment, to a daily and monthly subsistence allowance.
- On the basis of reciprocal treatment, where the SNE is paid by his/her employer less than an OHIM official grade AD6, step 1, he or she shall receive an additional monthly flat-rate allowance equal to the difference between the SNE's gross monthly salary and the basic salary payable to an OHIM official of grade AD6, step 1 .
- The SNE shall inform the Human Resources Department of the Office of any similar payments received from other sources. Any such amounts shall be deducted from the corresponding allowances paid by the office.
- The SNEs will receive an entry and leaving allowance to cover the costs to/from the place of origin to the Office (the amount depends on the distance between the place of origin and the place of secondment).
- All payments are made in Euro.

## General principles of the programme

# 08

### Possible reimbursement of the SNE's salary

- If asked for, the office may reimburse all or part of the gross salary of an SNE (excluding social charges) during the period of secondment or the cost of arranging a substitute, to his or her employer under an agreement to be concluded in advance and recorded in the exchange of letters.
- The reimbursement of the SNE's salary may be subject to review during the period of secondment. One adaptation per year may be granted upon request.



## Annual leave, special leave and holidays

■ An SNE shall be subject to the rules on annual leave, special leave and official holidays in force at the Office, unless otherwise stated.





## Social security and Visa matters

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- From the first day of secondment, SNEs shall be covered against the risk of accident. OHIM shall provide them with a copy of the terms of this coverage on the day on which they report to the Human Resources Department.
- The SNE's employer shall certify to the office that he/she will remain responsible to the social security legislation applicable to that employer, who will assume responsibility for expenses incurred abroad.
- An SNE who cannot be covered by a public sickness insurance scheme may apply to have his risk insured by the Office. The
- SNE shall pay half the relevant insurance premium and his/her contribution shall be deducted monthly from the allowances referred to above.
- OHIM shall not take care of the SNE's social security charges.
- If applicable, the SNE is responsible for the visa application. If the duration of the secondment is for a period of 6 months or longer, the SNE must request a Spanish Visa to the appropriate Spanish Consular Office.
- OHIM may provide the appropriate Spanish Consular Office with the relevant information in advance if the secondment is for a period of one year or longer.



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