

Intellectual Property Protection through University Innovation Centres: Jordan's Approach to Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Jordan's dedication to reinforcing its Intellectual Property (IP) protection framework is becoming increasingly apparent, particularly within its higher education sphere. Universities in Jordan have made commendable progress by initiating innovation and entrepreneurship centres. These establishments act as incubators, promoting a culture where creativity and innovation can thrive in academia. This discussion highlights the crucial role of IP in Jordan, advocating that bolstering IP protections is achievable through university-based centres. By embedding them into the educational fabric, Jordan not only safeguards intellectual works but also strives to meet the targets set by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, thereby investing in its future leaders. The inception of these centres within Jordanian universities marks a strategic, forward-thinking step to stimulate the inventive spirit and endorse entrepreneurial endeavours. It illustrates Jordan's resolve to create a conducive atmosphere where IP is esteemed and safeguarded, thus contributing to sustainable development in line with the UN's vision.

Keywords: Intellectual Property, Universities, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centres, Higher Education, Sustainable Development Goals

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Intellectual Property (IP) protects and encapsulates the creations of the mind in its various forms such as inventions, literary and artistic works as well as designs and symbols, names and images used in commerce.

Countries have raced to protect IP rights in its forms through harmonizing international legislation which were translated to national regulations.

Jordan is a middle-sized income country in the Middle East, which has legalized IP rights through amending and harmonizing its existing national regulations to comply with international treaties and conventions that it is a signatory to.

Jordan's national IP legislation contains an all-encompassing IP legislation as follows:

-Trademark related legislation includes the Amended Trademarks Law, the Trademarks System and its Amendments, Geographical Indications Law, Goods Marks Law and its Amendments, Instructions for the Transfer of Ownership, Pledge, and Seizure of Trademarks and the Trademark Applicable Fees;

-Patent related legislation includes Patent Law, Patent System, Amended System for Patent System No. (5) for the year 2019, Applicable Fees for Patents;

-Legislations related to industrial fees and industrial designs: Industrial Fees and Designs Law Industrial Fees and Designs System, Financial Fees for Industrial Fees and Designs, and Classifications; and

-Legislations related to the protection of integrated circuit designs includes Integrated Circuit Designs Protection Law No. 10, Integrated Circuit Designs Protection System No. 93 and the Schedule of Fees. The bodies which oversee the registration process of IP rights are the Directorate of Industrial Property Protection as part of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supply where , and the National Library Department as part of the Ministry of Culture where all protected literature is registered therein.

Jordan's IP laws and regulations are in adherence with the international agreements it has signed.

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Jordan is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and acceded to the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement on 11th April 2000. The Jordan-US Free Trade Agreement (JUSFTA) was also signed on 24th October 2000 which includes provisions related to IP rights. Further, Jordan is a signatory to the Patent Cooperation Treaty 2001, as well as the Vienna Agreement Establishing an International Classification of the Figurative Elements of Marks (as amended on 1 October 1985), the

Nice Agreement Concerning the International Classification of Goods and Services for the Purposes of the Registration of Marks 1957, and the Budapest Treaty on the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for the Purposes of Patent Procedure.

The above provides an illustrative background of Jordan's committal to IP and this paper will further delve into the importance of IP to Jordan and how it aligns with the wider vision of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This paper will also show that Jordan is continuously striving to enhance its IP status by recognizing the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship centres in Jordanian universities.

The importance of IP to Jordan

Strengthening IP protection in Jordan is crucial for various reasons, as it can have far-reaching positive impacts on the country's economy, innovation, and international competitiveness as well as the UN's SDGs.

Foreign Direct Investment

Strengthening IP protection not only enhances international collaboration and partnerships but also aligns with the objectives of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 17, titled 'Partnerships for the Goals.' This becomes particularly crucial for the global sharing of knowledge and technology to effectively address pressing challenges such as climate change, public health, and poverty reduction.

However, despite Jordan's commitment to enhancing IP protection and analysing IP where necessary, the anticipated economic outcomes and the desired influx of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country have not materialized significantly thus far. Consequently, Jordan currently holds the 71st position on the WIPO's 2023 Innovation Index. This index assesses various factors, including innovation, research and patent investment, education expenditure, and patent filing rates.

Moreover, the annual Intellectual Property Report from Jordan's Bureau of IP Protection reveals a relatively modest number of locally registered patents in 2022, totalling only six. This indicates a potential gap in the effectiveness of the current IP protection measures in developing a robust innovation ecosystem.

To attract more FDI, it is essential to recognize that IP is a critical metric for a nation's success. An effective IP regime not only lures foreign direct investment but also stimulates local entrepreneurs to invest in research and innovation. Investors are more likely to support businesses and start-ups in Jordan if they have confidence that their IP rights will be safeguarded, contributing to the overall growth and competitiveness of the nation's economy.

The researchers suggest that accomplishing this goal could be attained by means of education, specifically by endorsing and advocating the promotion of innovation and therefore nurturing the IP model from the ground up.

Education

Education and awareness initiatives focused on IP are instrumental in equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to safeguard their creative endeavours. This proactive approach not only aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, emphasizing quality education but also enhances the overall capacity for innovation.

In essence, investing and continuously reviewing basic skills during the education process, such as IP awareness, ensures that the innovators of the future will be well-equipped to deal with future challenges and harnesses their creativity as well as encourages them to flourish further.

Jordanian universities have proven their committal to IP through the WIPO initiative which included 11 Jordanian universities amending their IP policies. Jordanian universities also often boast journals which promote the dissemination of information.

We discuss further how Jordan aims, through innovation and entrepreneurship centres to equip individuals with the necessary tools to promote this goal.

Innovation

Robust IP protection plays a pivotal role in incentivizing innovation and the emergence of novel technologies, thereby fostering progress across various industries and infrastructure. This, in turn, acts as a catalyst for economic growth and the generation of employment opportunities. Such endeavours align seamlessly with the objectives outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 9, which pertains to 'industry, innovation, and infrastructure' and in this instance is interlinked with education.

Furthermore, the protection of IP can serve as a driver for economic expansion by nurturing innovation, encouraging entrepreneurial endeavours, and supporting the growth of industries reliant on intellectual property. As the economy experiences growth, it naturally leads to the creation of more job opportunities, contributing significantly to the overarching aim of promoting decent work.

Additionally, a robust IP protection framework not only incentivizes innovation and the introduction of new technologies but also becomes instrumental in shaping the trajectory of various industries and infrastructure. The ripple effect of this conducive environment acts as a powerful catalyst, propelling economic growth and harnessing the creation of numerous employment opportunities.

Moreover, the safeguarding of intellectual property serves as a driving force behind economic expansion. By nurturing innovation, furthering entrepreneurial initiatives, and providing support to industries heavily dependent on intellectual property, a nation can position itself for sustained economic growth. This growth, in turn, generates a positive feedback loop by creating more job opportunities, thereby significantly contributing to the broader goal of promoting decent work.

In essence, a well-established and protective IP landscape not only fuels the engine of innovation and economic development but also becomes a linchpin for addressing societal goals related to employment and sustainable economic practices. As nations prioritize and fortify their intellectual property protection mechanisms, they not only secure the rights of creators and innovators but also pave the way for a more resilient and dynamic economy.

Strengthening intellectual property protection in Jordan is essential for promoting innovation, economic growth, job creation, and international competitiveness. By establishing a robust IP framework, Jordan can both protect its domestic intellectual assets and position itself as a favourable destination for investment and trade, contributing to the country's overall development.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centres

The terms innovation and leadership or entrepreneurship have been synonymously used to describe the transformation of new ideas into projects that serve the community in various sectors.

Within Jordanian universities the concept of innovation and leadership has been translated into centres by virtue of the Education and Scientific Research Law No. 17 for the year 2018 as well as instructions issued by the Ministry of Higher Education's Fund. The index law promulgates creating a suitable academic platform to incentivize innovation and serves as the basis for creating an appropriate academic environment that encourages and supports innovation. Essentially, the mentioned legal framework and associated instructions aim to promote a conducive atmosphere within Jordanian universities to stimulate and promote innovative practices and leadership initiatives.

Cultivating innovation is inherently linked to IP protection, and encourages inventions by providing inventors, creators, and businesses with the confidence that their intellectual creations will be legally protected. This

incentivizes investment in research and development, which can lead to the creation of new products, services, and technologies.

Innovation and leadership centres therefore are critical factors for the development and prosperity of Jordan and their outcomes require IP protection as we will discuss later.

Consequently, promoting a culture of innovation and effective leadership, Jordan can navigate the challenges it faces and unlock its potential for long-term prosperity and stability for its generations to come.

Universities' Role in Enhancing IP in Jordan

Universities play a pivotal role in enhancing IP in Jordan through various means. Their contributions span from fostering or cradling a culture of innovation and research to supporting the commercialization of intellectual creations. Essentially universities bridge the gap between innovation and their protection.

The Innovation and leadership/ entrepreneurship framework encompasses all Jordanian universities, private and public targeting primarily university students. Universities are hubs of research and innovation. Professors, researchers, and students engage in cutting-edge research projects that can lead to the creation of valuable IP. By investing in research and development, universities contribute to the generation of patents, copyrights, and other IP assets.

For example, numerous Jordanian private universities such as Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Princess Sumayah University for Technology, and Applied Science University as well as public universities such as the University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, Balqaa University, Mutah University and Al Zarqaa University have invested in an innovation and entrepreneurship centre. These centres encourage researchers to create and innovate through providing funding, mentoring opportunities, and IP protection of the outcomes of the projects.

All Jordanian universities and their abovementioned centres, of leadership and innovation centres provide pre-incubation services to projects which support start-ups and entrepreneurs, this is also based on clearly defined and codified instructions in each institution. Other important services include patenting and licensing where universities can actively engage in patenting inventions and licensing their technology to industry partners. This not only generates revenue for the university but also encourages researchers to focus on developing patentable technologies, and most importantly provide technology transfer services which facilitates partnerships between researchers and businesses helping to bring innovative ideas to the market.

Perhaps commercialization support is the most crucial aspect of the innovation and leadership centres which includes helping researchers and start-ups navigate the complex process of bringing their innovations to market, including negotiating licenses, partnerships, and commercialization strategies. There is not enough evidence to suggest that any Jordanian university has engaged with its inventors thus far.

Universities often collaborate with industry, government, and other research institutions on joint research projects. These collaborations can lead to the creation of valuable intellectual property that benefits various stakeholders.

Through the various projects that are promoted through the innovation and entrepreneurship centres universities can advocate for favourable IP policies and regulations within Jordan. They can also engage with government agencies to shape IP-related legislation and foster an environment that is conducive to innovation and IP protection.

Furthermore, by partnering with industry, universities can help create synergies that promote innovation and the development of intellectual property. Joint research projects and partnerships with private sector companies can result in valuable IP assets.

Universities in Jordan, therefore, play a critical role in enhancing IP. Their contributions span research, education, technology transfer, and policy advocacy, all of which contribute to a culture of innovation and IP development in the country. Through effective collaboration between universities, government agencies, and industry, Jordan can strengthen its position in the global knowledge economy.

CONCLUSION

Intellectual Property holds immense significance for Jordan as it plays a pivotal role in cultivating and nurturing inventors along with their innovations. One avenue through which Jordan can enhance its IP status is by leveraging its universities, specifically through the Innovation and Entrepreneurship centres established within them.

In essence, Jordan's universities, equipped with these specialized centres, can serve as crucial hubs for advancing intellectual property. By fostering an environment that encourages innovation, these institutions become instrumental in supporting inventors and the development of their creations.

The intricate relationship between education, innovation, and IP yields numerous benefits aligned with sought-after sustainable development goals as well as attracting foreign direct investments into Jordan. However, achieving this synergy requires careful policy considerations. It is imperative to ensure that IP protection is not just a legal safeguard but is strategically utilized to promote innovation, spur economic growth and development, and simultaneously address societal challenges. Moreover, a thoughtful approach is necessary to guarantee equitable access to knowledge and technology, fostering a balanced and inclusive innovation ecosystem in Jordan.

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