



Phone: +44 800 999 3237 | +1 800 356 6547 | +852 2965 1424 | [www.mlex.com](http://www.mlex.com) | [customerservices@mlex.com](mailto:customerservices@mlex.com)

## EU's first design-law reforms kick in today — including spike in renewal fees

By **Inbar Preiss**

May 1, 2025, 13:56 GMT | Comment

The first phase of the European Union's design law reforms takes effect today, introducing a steep increase in renewal fees alongside reduced application costs and new protections for digital and virtual designs. While the changes modernize design rights, legal experts warn that long-term costs will rise for rights holders with large portfolios, which may lead to them re-evaluating their filing strategies.

The first phase of the European Union's sweeping reform of legislation to protect designs and models enters into force today, introducing a new — and inflated — fee structure for design renewals.

Intellectual property lawyers have been bracing themselves for the steep rise in design renewal fees. While the reforms modernize design protection across the EU, some experts warn of the financial burden faced by rights holders with large portfolios.

"The significant increase in renewal costs poses a challenge, particularly for companies managing extensive portfolios," Nathalie Dreyfus, an IP lawyer and founding partner of law firm Dreyfus, told MLex. "Companies owning extensive design portfolios will be substantially impacted, especially for multi-design applications above 20, or when deferrals are involved."

Under the new rules, the cost of renewing a single design will rise from 90 euros (\$102) to 150 euros for the first renewal, and up to 700 euros for the fourth, nearly doubling the current costs. Legal advisers have urged clients to lock in lower rates by renewing existing designs ahead of the new fee structure.

But the reformed regime will reduce the initial cost of design registration. A single application fee of 250 euros now includes both registration and publication, down from a combined 350 euros. The EU has also introduced a flat fee for multiple designs, easing costs for small and medium-sized enterprises and for sectors with fast product cycles.

The soaring cost of long-term renewals may benefit digital and fashion industries whose products have shorter lifecycles, but it may increase costs for sectors that need design protection over longer periods of time.

To mitigate these effects, some IP firms advise clients to audit their portfolios, determine which designs warrant long-term protection and consider alternative filing routes, such as the international Hague System, which offers more cost-effective protection for multi-jurisdictional filings under the new EU rules.

— Timeline —

The design reform consists of two legislative acts. The European Design Regulation updates the EU's current design framework and applies directly across all EU countries. The European Design Directive requires national implementation.

After the first phase of the regulation takes effect this month, additional provisions will be introduced in stages. These are: updated procedural rules for filing multi-design applications; new requirements for visual representations; and the implementation of fast-track invalidity procedures.

Measures requiring secondary legislation will apply from July 2026, while EU member states must

fully transpose the directive by Dec. 9, 2027.

By that deadline, they are required to introduce administrative invalidity procedures and implement the new repair clause. The reform will be fully in place five years after that, when the grace period for spare-parts protection ends.

#### — Digital designs —

Beyond fees, the EU's design reform makes other key updates, such as the explicit protection of digital, animated and virtual designs — for example, app interfaces or graphical animations.

The new rules make the filing process simpler by allowing up to 50 designs to be included in a single application, without the requirement to group them by product type.

Applicants can also delay publication for up to 30 months. Only the visual features shown in the application will be protected, which provides clearer rules for enforcement.

The regulation also extends protection to digital files that enable 3D printing, closing a loophole that had caused rights holders to be exposed. Additionally, design rights may now be enforced against infringing goods transiting through the EU, in line with trademark-enforcement rules.

#### — Invalidation and repair clause —

Another important element — though not effective until 2027 — is the introduction of administrative procedures for invalidating designs. These will offer a cheaper, faster alternative to court-based invalidation. The EU has left it to member states to decide whether to adopt the procedure.

Some lawyers, such as Dreyfus, are concerned, as the effectiveness of the administrative invalidity proceedings depends on consistent application of the design law across the EU. To improve access and legal certainty, these procedures should be mandatory, experts say, to ensure that SMEs have access to affordable and efficient ways to challenge design rights.

Meanwhile, the controversial "repair clause" — which allows reproduction of design elements solely to restore a product's original appearance — will apply from December 2027.

While intended to support competition and reduce consumer costs by allowing third parties to reproduce visible design parts for repair purposes, rights holders argue that it weakens design protection and invites enforcement challenges.

The clause applies only to parts used to restore the original appearance of complex products — such as car components — and requires clear disclosure of the part's origin. Supporters view it as a step toward a more sustainable and competitive market; critics warn it could undermine incentives for innovation and lead to gray-market misuse.

*Please email [editors@mlex.com](mailto:editors@mlex.com) to contact the editorial staff regarding this story or to submit the names of lawyers and advisers.*

---

## Tags

---

**Sections:** Intellectual Property

**Industries:** Consumer Products, Manufacturing, Real Estate

**Geographies:** Europe, European Union Member States

**Topics:** Designs