

***GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINATION OF
EUROPEAN UNION TRADE MARKS***

***EUROPEAN UNION
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE
(EUIPO)***

PART D

CANCELLATION

SECTION 2

SUBSTANTIVE PROVISIONS

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1 General Remarks

1.1 The grounds for cancellation

Pursuant to Article 56(1) EUTMR, cancellation proceedings comprise applications for revocation and for declarations of invalidity.

The grounds for revocation are established in Article 51 EUTMR. The grounds for invalidity are established in Article 52 EUTMR (absolute grounds) and Article 53 EUTMR (relative grounds). The EUTMR deals with revocation and invalidity in Rules 37 to 41.

1.2 *Inter partes* proceedings

Cancellation proceedings are never initiated by the Office itself. The initiative lies with the applicant for cancellation, even in cases based on absolute grounds for invalidity.

Article 56(1) EUTMR establishes the *locus standi* that the applicant must have in order to file an application for revocation or for a declaration of invalidity. For further details, please see the Guidelines, Part D, Cancellation, Section 1, Cancellation Proceedings, paragraphs 2.1 and 4.1.

1.3 The consequences of revocation and invalidity

According to Article 55(1) EUTMR, in the event of **revocation**, and to the extent that the rights of the proprietor have been revoked, the EUTM will be deemed not to have the effects specified in the EUTMR as from the date of the application for revocation. This is particularly relevant in cases where a request for revocation on grounds of non-use is followed by the surrender of the EUTM. In this regard, the General Court has declared that the party that applies for revocation has a legitimate interest in continuing the revocation proceedings in spite of the surrender of the EUTM by its proprietor, as the continuation of the revocation proceedings may result in a declaration of non-use preventing, pursuant to Article 112(2)(a) EUTMR, the proprietor of the EUTM from requesting the conversion of their mark (order of 24/10/2013, T-451/12, Stormberg, EU:T:2013:575, § 48) (for the Office's new practice on surrenders, see the Guidelines, Part D, Cancellation, Section 1, Cancellation Proceedings, paragraphs 7.3.1 and 7.3.2).

An earlier date on which one of the grounds for revocation occurred may be fixed by the Office if this is requested by one of the parties, provided that the requesting party shows a legitimate legal interest in this respect. On the basis of information available in the relevant case file, it must be possible to determine the earlier date accurately. The earlier date should, in any event, be set after the five-year 'grace period' that the EUTM proprietor has after the registration of an EUTM pursuant to Article 15 EUTMR (see decision of 28/07/2010, 3349 C, Alphatrad, confirmed by decision of 08/10/2012, R 444/2011-1, § 48-50 and judgment of 16/01/2014, T-538/12, Alphatrad, EU:T:2014:9).

According to Article 55(2) EUTMR, in the event of a **declaration of invalidity**, the EUTM will be deemed not to have had, as from the outset, the effects specified in the EUTMR.

2 Revocation

2.1 Introduction

According to Article 51(1) EUTMR, there are three grounds for revocation.

- The EUTM has not been put to genuine use during a continuous period of five years.
- The EUTM has become generic due to acts/inactivity of its proprietor.
- The EUTM has become misleading due to the use made by its proprietor or with its consent.

These grounds are examined in further detail in the paragraphs below. According to Article 51(2) EUTMR, where the grounds for revocation exist only for some of the registered goods and services, the EUTM proprietor's rights will be revoked only for those goods and services.

2.2 Non-use of the EUTM — Article 51(1)(a) EUTMR

According to Article 51(1)(a) EUTMR, if within a continuous period of five years after the EUTM has been registered and before the filing of the application for cancellation the EUTM has not been put to genuine use, within the meaning of Article 15 EUTMR, then the EUTM must be revoked unless there are proper reasons for non-use.

Pursuant to Article 51(2) EUTMR, if the EUTM has been used for only some of the goods and services for which it is registered, the revocation will be limited to the non-used goods and services.

As regards **procedural aspects** of the submission of the evidence (time limits for submitting evidence, additional rounds for observations and submission of additional relevant evidence, translation of evidence, etc.), see the Guidelines, Part D, Cancellation, Section 1, Cancellation Proceedings.

The practice rules applicable to the **substantive assessment** of proof of use of earlier rights in opposition proceedings are applicable to the assessment of requests for revocation based on non-use (see the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, Section 6, Proof of Use, paragraph 2). However, there are a number of particularities to be taken into account in the context of revocation proceedings, which will be examined below.

2.2.1 Burden of proof

Pursuant to Rule 40(5) EUTMR, the burden of proof lies with the EUTM proprietor.

The role of the Office is to assess the evidence put before it in the light of the parties' submissions. The Office cannot determine *ex officio* genuine use of earlier marks. It has no role in collecting evidence itself. Even proprietors of purportedly well-known marks must submit evidence to prove genuine use of their marks.

2.2.2 Genuine use

According to Rule 40(5) in conjunction with Rule 22(3) EUTMR, the indications and evidence for submitting proof of use must consist of indications concerning the place, time, extent and nature of use of the contested trade mark for the goods and services for which it is registered.

As indicated above, the assessment of genuine use (including place, time, extent and nature of use) is the same in cancellation proceedings and in opposition proceedings. The detailed considerations in the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, Section 6, Proof of Use, paragraph 2 should be followed.

Lack of genuine use for some of the contested goods/services in a revocation case implies the revocation of the registered EUTM for those goods/services. Consequently, great care must be taken when assessing the evidence of use in revocation proceedings regarding **the use for the registered (and contested) goods/services**.

Case No	Comment
R 1857/2011-4 AQUOS	The EUTM was registered for <i>angling articles; angling equipment; angling accessories</i> in Class 28. The Board confirmed the Cancellation Division decision and maintained the EUTM for <i>fishing rods</i> and the unchallenged <i>fishing lines</i> in Class 28. The Board concurred with the Cancellation Division that the evidence furnished in order to prove use of the contested EUTM showed genuine use in relation to 'fishing rods' and that these goods are sufficiently distinct from the broad categories of <i>angling articles</i> and <i>angling equipment</i> to form coherent subcategories. This finding was not challenged by the appellant.

2.2.3 Period of time to be considered

The relevant date is the date on which the **application for revocation** was filed.

- The EUTM is subject to revocation only if it has been registered for more than five years on that date.
- If this condition is fulfilled, the EUTM must have been genuinely used within the five years preceding that date (i.e. the five-year period is always counted backwards from the relevant date).

There is one **exception**: where genuine use of the EUTM started or was resumed within the three months preceding the date on which the application for revocation was filed, such use will be disregarded where preparations for the commencement or resumption of use only began after the EUTM proprietor became aware that the request for revocation might be filed (Article 51(1)(a) EUTMR).

The burden of proof for this exception is on the applicant for revocation, who must file evidence that it made the EUTM proprietor **aware of its intention** to file an application for revocation.

2.2.4 Proper reasons for non-use

The detailed considerations in the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, Section 6, Proof of Use, paragraph 2 and in particular paragraph 2.11 should be followed.

2.3 EUTM becoming the common name (generic term) — Article 51(1)(b) EUTMR

An EUTM will be revoked if, as a result of action or inaction on the part of the proprietor, it has become the common name in trade for a product or service for which it was registered.

2.3.1 Burden of proof

The burden is on the applicant for revocation to prove that the term has become the common name in the trade as a result of either:

- action; or
- inaction

on the part of the proprietor.

The Office will examine the facts in accordance with Article 76(1) EUTMR within the scope of factual submissions made by the revocation applicant (judgment of 13/09/2013, T-320/10, Castel, EU:T:2013:424, § 28). In doing so, it may take into consideration obvious and well-known facts. However, it will not go beyond the legal arguments presented by the revocation applicant. If a request for revocation is based only on Article 51(1)(b) EUTMR, the trade mark could not then be revoked due to being, for example, against public order and morality.

2.3.2 Point in time to be considered

The applicant for revocation must prove that the trade mark has become the common name in trade for the product or service in question after the date of registration of the EUTM, although facts or circumstances that took place between application and registration can be taken into account. The fact that the sign was, at the date of application, the common name used in trade for the goods or services in respect of which registration was sought would only be relevant in the context of an invalidity action.

2.3.3 Relevant public

An EUTM is liable to be revoked in accordance with Article 51(1)(b) EUTMR if it has become the common name for the product or service not just among some but among the vast majority of the relevant public, including those involved in the trade for the product or service in question (judgment of 29/04/2004, C-371/02, Bostongurka, EU:C:2004:275, § 23 and 26). It is not necessary for the sign to become the common name for a product from the point of view of both sellers and end users of the product (judgment of 06/03/2014, C-409/12, Kornspitz, EU:C:2014:130, § 30). It is sufficient that the sellers of the finished product do not inform their customers that the sign has been registered as a trade mark or offer their customers assistance, which includes an indication of the origin of the goods for sale (judgment of 06/03/2014, C-409/12, Kornspitz, EU:C:2014:130, § 23-25).

2.3.4 Common name

A sign is regarded as the ‘common name in the trade’ if it is established practice in the trade to use the term in question to designate the goods or services for which it is registered (see the Guidelines, Part B, Examination, Section 4, Absolute Grounds for Refusal and European Union Collective Marks, paragraph 2.4). It is not necessary to prove that the term directly describes a quality or characteristic of the goods or services, but merely that it is actually used in the trade to refer to those goods or services. The distinctive force of a trade mark is always more likely to degenerate when a sign is suggestive or apt in some way, especially if it has positive connotations that lead others to latch on to its suitability for designating not just a particular producer’s product or service but a particular type of product or service (decision of 30/01/2007, 1 020 C, Stimulation, § 22, 32 et seq.).

The fact that a trade mark is used as a synonym for a specific product or service is an indication that it has lost its ability to differentiate the goods or services in question from those of other undertakings. One indication that a trade mark has become generic is when it is commonly used verbally to refer to a particular type or characteristic of the goods or services. However, this is not in itself decisive: it must be established whether the trade mark is still capable of differentiating the goods or services in question from those of other undertakings.

The absence of any alternative term or the existence of only one long, complicated term may also be an indication that a sign has become the common name in the trade for a specific product or service.

2.3.5 Defence for the proprietor

Where the proprietor of the EUTM has done what could reasonably have been expected in the particular case (e.g. organised a TV campaign or placed advertisements in newspapers and relevant magazines), the EUTM cannot be revoked. The proprietor must then check whether its trade mark appears in dictionaries as a generic term; if it does, the proprietor can request from the publisher that in future editions the trade mark will be accompanied by an indication that it is a registered trade mark (Article 10 EUTMR).

2.4 EUTM becoming misleading — Article 51(1)(c) EUTMR

If, as a result of use made of the mark by the proprietor or with its consent, the mark is liable to mislead the public, particularly concerning the nature, quality or geographical origin of the goods or services for which it is registered, the EUTM can be revoked. In this context, quality refers to a characteristic or attribute rather than a degree or standard of excellence.

2.4.1 Burden of proof

The Office will examine the facts in accordance with Article 76(1) EUTMR within the scope of factual submissions made by the revocation applicant (judgment of 13/09/2013, T-320/10, Castel, EU:T:2013:424, § 28). In doing so, it may take into consideration obvious and well-known facts. However, it will not go beyond the legal arguments presented by the applicant for revocation.

The burden of proof that the mark has become misleading rests on the applicant for revocation, who must further prove that it is the use made by the proprietor that causes the misleading effect. If the use is made by a third party, the burden is on the applicant for revocation to prove that the proprietor has consented to that use, unless the third party is a licensee of the proprietor.

2.4.2 Point in time to be considered

The applicant for revocation must prove that the trade mark has become liable to mislead the public, particularly concerning the nature, quality or geographical origin of the goods or services in question, after the date of registration of the EUTM. If the sign was already deceptive or liable to deceive the public at the date of application, this would be relevant in the context of an invalidity action.

2.4.3 Standards to be applied

The Guidelines concerning Examination contain details of the criteria to be applied when assessing whether an EUTM application complies with Article 7(1)(g) EUTMR (see the Guidelines, Part B, Examination, Section 4, Absolute Grounds for Refusal and European Union Collective Marks, paragraph 2.7). The criteria are comparable to those applied in revocation proceedings under Article 51(1)(c) EUTMR.


2.4.4 Examples

A trade mark composed of, or containing, a geographical indication will, as a rule, be perceived by the relevant public as a reference to the place from where the goods originate. The only exception to this rule is where the relationship between the geographical name and the products is manifestly so fanciful (e.g. because the place is not known, and unlikely to become known, to the public as the place of origin of the goods in question) that consumers will not make such a connection.

In this regard, the trade mark MÖVENPICK OF SWITZERLAND was revoked because the goods in question were produced (according to the facts) solely in Germany, not in Switzerland (decision of 12/02/2009, R 697/2008-1, MÖVENPICK OF SWITZERLAND).

Moreover, where a trade mark containing the word elements 'goats' and 'cheese' and a figurative element clearly depicting a goat is registered for 'goats' cheese', and use is proven for cheese not made from goats' milk, the EUTM will be revoked.

Where a trade mark containing the word elements 'pure new wool' is registered for 'clothing' and use is proven for clothing manufactured from artificial fibres, the EUTM will be revoked.

Where a trade mark containing the words 'genuine leather' or the corresponding pictogram is registered for 'shoe wear' and use is proven for shoes not made of leather, the EUTM will be revoked. 

3 Absolute Grounds for Invalidity

3.1 EUTM registered contrary to Article 7 — Article 52(1)(a) EUTMR

If, at the time of its application, an objection could be raised to the EUTM under any of the grounds listed in Article 7 EUTMR, it can be declared invalid.

3.1.1 Burden of proof

The purpose of invalidity proceedings is, inter alia, to enable the Office to review the validity of the registration of a trade mark and to adopt, where necessary, a position that it should have adopted of its own motion in the registration process in accordance with Article 37(1) EUTMR (judgment of 30/05/2013, T-396/11, Ultrafilter international, EU:T:2013:284, § 20).

Article 76(1) EUTMR, second sentence, explicitly states that in invalidity proceedings pursuant to Article 52 EUTMR, the Office will **limit its examination to the grounds and arguments submitted by the parties**. The EUTM enjoys a **presumption of validity and it is for the invalidity applicant to invoke before the Office the specific facts that call the validity of a trade mark into question** (judgment of 13/09/2013, T-320/10, Castel, EU:T:2013:424, § 27-29).

Consequently, the Office will examine the facts in accordance with Article 76(1) EUTMR, second sentence, within the **scope of factual submissions** made by the applicant for the declaration of invalidity (judgment of 13/09/2013, T-320/10, Castel, EU:T:2013:424, § 28). In doing so, it may take into consideration obvious and well-known facts. However, it will **not go beyond the legal arguments presented by the applicant** for the declaration of invalidity.

One of the arguments that the EUTM proprietor may put forward against the invalidity applicant's claim is evidence that the EUTM has acquired distinctive character following use. See paragraph 3.2 below.

3.1.2 Points in time to be considered

The General Court has held that whether a trade mark should be registered or should be declared invalid must be assessed on the basis of the situation at the date of its application, not of its registration (judgment of 03/06/2009, T-189/07, Flugbörse, EU:T:2009:172; confirmed by order of 23/04/2010, C-332/09 P, Flugbörse, EU:C:2010:225).

Generally speaking, any developments or events after the date of application or priority date will not be taken into consideration. For example, the fact that a sign has, after the date of application, become the common term used in the trade for the goods or services for which registration was sought is in principle irrelevant for the purposes of examining an invalidity action (it would only be relevant in the context of a revocation action). However, such facts can nevertheless be taken into account where and to the extent that they allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the situation at the date of application of the EUTM.

3.1.3 Standards to be applied

The Guidelines concerning Examination contain details of the criteria to be applied when assessing whether an EUTM application complies with Article 7 EUTMR. The criteria are identical to those applied in invalidity proceedings under Article 52(1)(a) EUTMR.

3.2 Defence against a claim of lack of distinctiveness

A trade mark that falls foul of Article 52(1)(a) in conjunction with Article 7(1)(b), (c) or (d) EUTMR will not be declared invalid where it has acquired distinctiveness through use (Articles 7(3) and 52(2) EUTMR).

The distinctive character acquired following use is, in the context of invalidity proceedings, an exception to the grounds for invalidity of Article 52(1)(a) in conjunction with Article 7(1)(b), (c) and (d) EUTMR. Since it is an exception, the **onus of proof** is on the party seeking to rely on it, namely the proprietor of the contested mark. The proprietor of the contested mark is best placed to adduce evidence in support of the assertion that its mark has acquired a distinctive character following the use which has been made of it (e.g. concerning the intensity, geographical extent, duration of use, promotional investment). Consequently, where the proprietor of the contested mark is requested to adduce evidence of distinctive character acquired through use, but fails to do so, the mark must be declared invalid (judgment of 19/06/2014, joined cases C-217/13 and C-218/13, *Oberbank e.a.*, EU:C:2014:2012, § 68-71).

The situation will be assessed in accordance with the relevant part of the Guidelines concerning Examination.

The proprietor must demonstrate that either:

- the trade mark acquired distinctive character on or before the date of application, or the priority date (Article 7(3) EUTMR); or
- distinctive character was acquired after registration (Article 52(2) EUTMR).

Evidence of use during the period between the date of application and the date of registration can serve to support a finding of acquired distinctiveness after registration.

3.3 Bad faith — Article 52(1)(b) EUTMR

The EUTMR considers bad faith only as an absolute ground for the **invalidity** of an EUTM, to be relied on either before the Office or by means of a counterclaim in infringement proceedings. Therefore, bad faith is not relevant in examination or opposition proceedings (for opposition proceedings, see judgment of 17/12/2010, T-192/09, *Seve Trophy*, EU:T:2010:553, § 50).

3.3.1 Relevant point in time

The relevant point in time for determining whether there was bad faith on the part of the EUTM owner is the **time of filing of the application for registration**. However, it must be noted that:

- facts and evidence dated prior to filing can be taken into account for interpreting the owner's intention at the time of filing the EUTM. Such facts include, in particular, whether there is already a registration of the mark in a Member State, the circumstances under which that mark was created and the use made of it since its creation (see paragraph 3.3.2.1, point 3 below).
- facts and evidence dated subsequent to filing can sometimes be used for interpreting the owner's intention at the time of filing the EUTM, in particular whether the owner has used the mark since registration (see paragraph 3.3.2.1, point 3 below).

3.3.2 Concept of bad faith

As observed by Advocate General Sharpston (opinion of 12/03/2009, C-529/07, Lindt Goldhase, EU:C:2009:361, § 36), the concept of bad faith referred to in Article 52(1)(b) EUTMR is not defined, delimited or even described in any way in the legislation. However, the Court of Justice provided some guidance on how to interpret this concept in its judgment in the same case, as did the General Court in several cases (judgments of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39; 14/02/2012, T-33/11, BIGAB, EU:T:2012:77; and 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689). In its preliminary ruling of 27/06/2013, C-320/12, Malaysia Dairy, EU:C:2013:435, the Court of Justice declared that the concept of bad faith is an autonomous concept of European Union law, which must be given a uniform interpretation in the European Union.

One way to describe bad faith is 'conduct which departs from accepted principles of ethical behaviour or honest commercial and business practices' (opinion of Advocate General Sharpston of 12/03/2009, C-529/07, Lindt Goldhase, EU:C:2009:361, § 60; similar decision of 01/04/2009, R 529/2008-4, FS (fig.), § 14).

In order to find out whether the owner had been acting in bad faith at the time of filing the application, an **overall assessment** must be made in which all the relevant factors of the individual case must be taken into account. A **non-exhaustive** list of such factors is given below.

3.3.2.1 Factors likely to indicate the existence of bad faith

Case-law shows three cumulative factors to be particularly relevant:

1. **Identity/confusing similarity of the signs:** The EUTM allegedly registered in bad faith must be identical or confusingly similar to the sign to which the invalidity applicant refers. Although the fact that marks are identical or confusingly similar is not in itself sufficient to show bad faith (regarding identity, see judgment of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39, § 90), a dissimilar or not confusingly similar mark will not support a finding of bad faith.

2. **Knowledge of the use of an identical or confusingly similar sign:** The EUTM owner knew or must have known about the use of an identical or confusingly similar sign by a third party for identical or similar products or services.

There is knowledge, for example, where the parties have been in a business relationship with each other ('could not ignore, and was probably aware that the invalidity applicant had been using the sign for a long time', judgment of 11/07/2013, T-321/10, Gruppo Salini, EU:T:2013:372, § 25), or when the reputation of the sign, even as a 'historical' trade mark, is a well-known fact (judgment of 08/05/2014, T-327/12, Simca, EU:T:2014:289, § 50).

Knowledge may be presumed to exist ('must have known') on the basis, *inter alia*, of general knowledge in the economic sector concerned or duration of use. The longer the use of a sign, the more likely it is that the EUTM owner had knowledge of it (judgment of 11/06/2009, C-529/07, Lindt Goldhase, EU:C:2009:361, § 39). However, a presumption of knowledge is less likely if the sign was registered in a non-EU country and there was only a short time between the application for registration in that non-EU country and an application for registration in an EU country (judgment of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39, § 61).

Knowledge of an identical or similar earlier sign for identical or similar goods or services is not sufficient **in itself** to support a finding of bad faith (judgment of 11/06/2009, C-529/07, Lindt Goldhase, EU:C:2009:361, § 40, 48 and 49). For example, it cannot be excluded that, where a number of producers use, on the market, for identical or similar goods, identical or similar signs that could give rise to confusion with the sign for which registration is sought, the EUTM owner's registration of the sign may be in pursuit of a legitimate objective. This could be the case where the EUTM owner knows, at the time of filing the EUTM application, that a third undertaking is making use of the mark covered by that application by giving its clients the impression that it officially distributes the goods sold under that mark, even though it has not received authorisation to do so (judgment of 14/02/2012, T-33/11, Bigab, EU:T:2012:77, § 27).

Similarly, the fact that the applicant knows or should know that, at the time of filing of its application, a third party is using a mark **abroad** that is liable to be confused with the mark whose registration has been applied for is not sufficient, **in itself**, to permit the conclusion that the applicant is acting in bad faith within the meaning of that provision (preliminary ruling of 27/06/2013, C-320/12, Malaysia Dairy, EU:C:2013:435, § 37).

Knowledge or presumption of knowledge of an existing sign is not required where the EUTM owner misuses the system with the intention of preventing **any** similar sign from entering the market (see, for example, the artificial extension of the grace period for non-use in paragraph 3.3.2.1, point 3(c) below).

3. **Dishonest intention on the part of the EUTM owner:** This is a subjective factor that has to be determined by reference to objective circumstances (judgment of 11/06/2009, C-529/07, Lindt Goldhase, EU:C:2009:361, § 42). Again, several factors can be relevant. See, for example, the following case scenarios:
- (a) Bad faith is found when it can be inferred that the purpose of the EUTM applicant is to 'free-ride' on the reputation of the invalidity applicant's registered marks and

to take advantage of that reputation (judgment of 08/05/2014, T-327/12, Simca, EU:T:2014:289, § 56).

- (b) While it is not a requirement of the EUTM system that an EUTM owner must at the time of applying for an EUTM also have the intention of using it, it could be seen as an indication of dishonest intention if it subsequently becomes apparent that the owner's sole objective was to prevent a third party from entering the market (judgment of 11/06/2009, C-529/07, Lindt Goldhase, EU:C:2009:361, § 44).

On the other hand, if there is commercial logic to the filing of the EUTM and it can be assumed that the EUTM owner intended to use the sign as a trade mark, this would tend to indicate that there was no dishonest intention. For example, this could be the case if there is a 'commercial trajectory', such as the registration of an EUTM after registration of the mark in a Member State (judgment of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39, § 58), if there is evidence of the EUTM owner's intention to develop its commercial activities, for example by means of a licensing agreement (judgment of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39, § 67), or if the EUTM owner had a commercial incentive to protect the mark more widely, for example an increase in the number of Member States in which the owner generates turnover from goods marketed under the mark (judgment of 14/02/2012, T-33/11, Bigab, EU:T:2012:77, § 20 and 23).

The existence of a direct or indirect relationship between the parties prior to the filing of the EUTM, for example a pre-contractual, contractual or post-contractual (residual) relationship, can also be an indicator of bad faith on the part of the EUTM owner (judgment of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39, § 85 to 87; judgment of 11/07/2013, T-321/10, Gruppo Salini, EU:T:2013:372, § 25 to 32). The EUTM owner's registration of the sign in its own name in such cases can, depending on the circumstances, be considered a breach of honest commercial and business practices.

- (c) One example of a situation that may be taken into account in order to assess whether the proprietor acted in bad faith is where an EUTM owner tries to artificially extend the grace period for non-use, for example by filing a repeat application of an earlier EUTM in order to avoid the loss of a right as a result of non-use (judgment of 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689, § 27).

This case needs to be distinguished from the situation in which the EUTM owner, in accordance with normal business practice, seeks to protect variations of its sign, for example, where a logo has evolved (judgment of 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689, § 36 et seq.).

In addition to the three factors mentioned above, **other potentially relevant factors** identified in case-law and/or Office practice to assess the existence of bad faith include:

- (i) the circumstances under which the contested sign was created, the use made of it since its creation and the commercial logic underlying the filing of the application for registration of that sign as an EUTM (judgments of 14/02/2012, T-33/11, Bigab, EU:T:2012:77, § 21 et seq.; 08/05/2014, T-327/12, Simca, § 39).

- (ii) the nature of the mark applied for. Where the sign for which registration is sought consists of the entire shape and presentation of a product, the fact that the EUTM owner was acting in bad faith at the time of filing might more readily be established where the competitor's freedom to choose the shape of a product and its presentation is restricted by technical or commercial factors, with the result that the EUTM owner is able to prevent its competitors not merely from using an identical or similar sign, but also from marketing comparable products (judgment of 11/06/2009, C-529/07, Lindt Goldhase, EU:C:2009:361, § 50).
- (iii) the degree of inherent or acquired distinctiveness enjoyed by the invalidity applicant's sign and the EUTM owner's sign, as well as its degree of reputation, even if this is only residual (judgment of 08/05/2014, T-327/12, Simca, EU:T:2014:289, § 40, 46 and 49).
- (iv) the fact that the national mark on which the EUTM owner has based a priority claim has been declared invalid due to bad faith (decision of 30/07/2009, R 1203/2005-1, BRUTT).
- (v) a request for financial compensation made by the EUTM owner to the invalidity applicant if there is evidence that the EUTM owner knew of the existence of the earlier identical or confusingly similar sign and expected to receive a proposal for financial compensation from the invalidity applicant (judgment of 08/05/2014, T-327/12, Simca, EU:T:2014:289, § 72). However, in a previous case, the Court considered that even a seemingly disproportionate request for compensation does not **in itself** establish bad faith if the invalidity applicant does not provide evidence that the EUTM owner could not have been unaware of the existence of the earlier mark. In this particular case, the Court took into account the fact that in 1994, the EUTM owner had registered a trade mark identical to the contested EUTM in the Spanish trade mark office (judgment of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39, § 1-22 and 88).

Finally, the case-law and/or the Office have identified a number of factors that, considered in isolation, are not enough to find bad faith but that, in combination with other relevant factors (to be identified on a case-by-case basis), might indicate the existence of bad faith:

- The fact that an earlier, very similar, EUTM was revoked for goods or services in a number of classes is not, in itself, sufficient to allow any conclusions to be drawn as to the EUTM owner's intentions at the time of filing the EUTM application for the same goods or services (judgment of 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689, § 45).
- The fact that the application for registration of the contested EUTM is filed three months before expiry of the period of grace for the earlier EUTMs is not sufficient to counteract factors that show that the EUTM owner's intention was to file a modernised trade mark covering an updated list of services (judgment of 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689, § 50 and 51).
- The filing of applications for declarations that the invalidity applicant's marks are invalid constitutes the legitimate exercise of an EUTM owner's exclusive right and cannot in itself prove any dishonest intent on its part (judgment of 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689, § 66).

- The fact that, after successfully registering the EUTM at issue, the EUTM owner serves formal notice on other parties to cease using a similar sign in their commercial relations is not in itself an indication of bad faith. Such a request falls within the scope of the rights attaching to the registration of an EUTM; see Article 9 EUTMR (judgment of 14/02/2012, T-33/11, Bigab, EU:T:2012:77, § 33). However, in circumstances where this request is connected with other factors (e.g. the mark is not being used), it might be an indication of the intention to prevent another party from entering the market.
- The fact that the signs at issue are identical does not establish bad faith where there are no other relevant factors (judgment of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39, § 90). Furthermore, the mere fact that the differences between the EUTM at issue and the previous EUTM registered by the same proprietor are so insignificant as not to be noticeable to the average consumer cannot establish that the contested EUTM is a mere repeat application made in bad faith (judgment of 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689, § 33-34). The evolution over time of a logo intended as the graphic representation of a mark constitutes normal business practice (judgment of 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689, § 36).

3.3.2.2 Factors unlikely to indicate the existence of bad faith

Case-law has identified several factors that, in general, are unlikely to prove bad faith.

- Extending the protection of a national mark by registering it as an EUTM falls within a company's normal commercial strategy (judgment of 14/02/2012, T-33/11, Bigab, EU:T:2012:77, § 23; judgment of 01/02/2012, T-291/09, Pollo Tropical chicken on the grill, EU:T:2012:39, § 58).
- Bad faith cannot be found on the basis of the length of the list of goods and services set out in the application for registration (judgment of 07/06/2011, T-507/08, 16PF, EU:T:2011:253, § 88). As a rule, it is legitimate for an undertaking to seek registration of a mark not only for the categories of goods and services that it markets at the time of filing the application but also for other categories of goods and services that it intends to market in the future (judgment of 14/02/2012, T-33/11, Bigab, EU:T:2012:77, § 25; judgment of 07/06/2011, T-507/08, 16PF, EU:T:2011:253, § 88).
- The fact that the owner of several national marks decides to apply for an EUTM for only one and not all of them cannot be an indication of bad faith. The decision to protect a mark at both national and EU level is a choice dictated by the proprietor's marketing strategy. It is not for the Office or the Court to interfere with this choice (judgment of 14/02/2012, T-33/11, Bigab, EU:T:2012:77, § 29).
- If a sign enjoys a reputation at national level and the owner applies for an EUTM, the extent of the sign's reputation might justify the owner's interest in ensuring broader legal protection (judgment of 11/06/2009, C-529/07, Lindt Goldhase, EU:C:2009:361, § 51 and 52).

3.3.3 Proof of bad faith

Article 76(1) EUTMR, second sentence, explicitly states that in invalidity proceedings pursuant to Article 52 EUTMR, the Office will **limit its examination to the grounds and arguments submitted by the parties**. Good faith is presumed until proof to the contrary is adduced (judgment of 13/12/2012, T-136/11, Pelikan, EU:T:2012:689, § 57). The invalidity applicant needs to prove that there was bad faith on the part of the EUTM owner at the time of filing the EUTM, for example that the EUTM owner had no intention of using the EUTM or that its intention was to prevent a third party from entering the market.

3.3.4 Relation to other EUTMR provisions

Whilst Article 8(3) EUTMR is a manifestation of the principle that commercial transactions must be conducted in good faith, Article 52(1)(b) EUTMR is the general expression of that principle (see p. 4 et seq. of the Guidelines on Article 8(3) EUTMR).

3.3.5 Extent of invalidity

When bad faith of the EUTM owner is established, the whole EUTM is declared invalid, even for goods and services that are unrelated to those protected by the invalidity applicant's mark. The only exception is where the applicant has directed its invalidity application against only some of the goods and services covered by the contested EUTM, in which case a finding of bad faith will invalidate the EUTM only for the goods and services that have been contested.

For example, in its decision R 219/2009-1 (GRUPPO SALINI / SALIN'), the Board of Appeal concluded that bad faith had been proven and declared the contested EUTM invalid in its entirety, that is to say also for services (insurance, financial and monetary services in Class 36 and software and hardware-related services in Class 42) that were dissimilar to the invalidity applicant's building, maintenance and installation services in Class 37.

The General Court confirmed the Board of Appeal's decision and stated that a positive finding of bad faith at the time of filing the contested EUTM could only lead to the invalidity of the EUTM in its entirety (judgment of 11/07/2013, T-321/10, Gruppo Salini, EU:T:2013:372, § 48).

Whereas the Court did not expand on the reasons for this conclusion, it can be safely inferred that it took the view that the protection of the general interest in business and commercial matters being conducted honestly justifies invalidating an EUTM also for goods/services that are dissimilar to the invalidity applicant's ones and do not even belong to an adjacent or neighbouring market.

Therefore, it seems only logical that the invalidity, once declared, should extend to all the goods and/or services covered by the contested EUTM, even those that, in a pure Article 8(1)(b) scenario, would be found to be dissimilar.

4 Relative Grounds for Invalidity

4.1 Introduction

Article 53 EUTMR enables proprietors of earlier rights to apply for a declaration of invalidity of an EUTM in a range of situations (grounds), which are detailed below.

- The same grounds as in opposition proceedings.
 - An earlier trade mark, within the meaning of Article 8(2) EUTMR, is identical or similar to the contested EUTM and covers identical or similar goods and services or is reputed (Article 53(1)(a) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(1)(a) or (b) and Article 8(5) EUTMR).
 - A trade mark has been filed without authorisation by an agent or representative of its proprietor (Article 53(1)(b) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(3) EUTMR).
 - A non-registered trade mark or other sign used in the course of trade can invalidate an EUTM registration if EU or national legislation allows the proprietor of the earlier sign to prohibit the use of the subsequent EUTM (Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4) EUTMR).
 - A designation of origin or a geographical indication can invalidate an EUTM registration if EU or national legislation allows the person authorised under the relevant law to exercise the rights arising from a designation of origin or a geographical indication to prohibit the use of the subsequent EUTM (Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4a) EUTMR).
- An additional ground based on **another earlier right**, to the extent that EU law or national law (including rights deriving from international agreements having effect in a Member State) entitle the proprietor to prohibit the use of the contested EUTM (Article 53(2) EUTMR), in particular:
 - a right to a name
 - a right of personal portrayal
 - a copyright
 - an industrial property right.

These **grounds** are further developed below (paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3).

As in opposition proceedings, the proprietor of the contested EUTM may require the invalidity applicant to submit **proof of genuine use** of its earlier trade mark. The particularities regarding the relevant period for assessing genuine use in invalidity proceedings are explained in paragraph 4.4.

Finally, the EUTMR includes a number of provisions that can be invoked by the EUTM proprietor against the invalidity application, depending on the type of earlier right invoked (e.g. whether or not it is an earlier EUTM or national trade mark). These provisions are dealt with under paragraph 4.5.

4.2 Grounds under Article 53(1) EUTMR

4.2.1 Standards to be applied

The substantive conditions for considering an earlier right referred to in Article 53(1) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8 EUTMR as a relative ground for a declaration of invalidity are the same as in opposition proceedings. The practice rules in the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, in particular Section 2, Double Identity and Likelihood of Confusion; Section 3, Unauthorised Filing by Agents of the TM Proprietor, paragraph 4; Section 4, Rights under Articles 8(4) and 8(4a) EUTMR; and Section 5, Trade Marks with Reputation (Article 8(5) EUTMR) should be applied accordingly.

4.2.2 Points in time to be considered

4.2.2.1. For the assessment of enhanced distinctiveness or reputation

In line with opposition proceedings, in invalidity proceedings an invalidity applicant relying on enhanced distinctiveness or reputation must prove that its earlier right has acquired **enhanced distinctiveness or reputation** by the **filing** date of the contested EUTM, taking account, where appropriate, of any priority claimed. In addition, the reputation or the enhanced distinctive character of the earlier mark must still exist when the **decision on invalidity is taken**.

In opposition proceedings, due to the short time span between the filing of the EUTM application and the opposition decision, it is normally presumed that the enhanced distinctiveness or reputation of the earlier trade mark still exists at the time of the decision¹. In invalidity proceedings, however, the time span can be considerable. In this case, the invalidity applicant must show that its earlier right continues to enjoy enhanced distinctive character or reputation at the time the decision on invalidity is taken.

4.2.2.2. Application based on Article 53(1)(c) in conjunction with Article 8(4) EUTMR

In the event of an application for invalidity based on Article 53(1)(c) in conjunction with Article 8(4) EUTMR, the invalidity applicant must show the earlier sign's **use in the course of trade of more than local significance** by the **filing date** of the contested EUTM (or the priority date if relevant). In **invalidity proceedings**, the applicant also has to prove that the sign was used in the course of trade of more than local significance at another point in time, namely **at the time of filing of the invalidity request**. This condition stems from the wording of Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR, which states that an EUTM will be declared invalid 'where there **is** an earlier right as referred to in Article 8(4) and the conditions set out in that paragraph are fulfilled' (decisions of 05/10/2004, 606 C, ANKER, and 03/08/2011, R 1822/2010-2, Baby Bambolina (fig.), § 15). Once proved, this requirement is considered still to be fulfilled at the **time the decision on invalidity is taken** unless there is evidence to the contrary (e.g. a company name is invoked but the company has ceased to exist).

There are further particularities regarding **substantiation and admissibility**, which are dealt with in the Guidelines, Part D, Section 1, Cancellation Proceedings.

¹ See the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, Section 5, Trade Marks with Reputation (Article 8(5) EUTMR).

4.2.2.3 Temporal scope of application of Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4a) EUTMR and relationship to Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4) EUTMR

Regulation (EU) 2015/2424 amending Regulation No 207/2009 on the Community trade mark (Amending Regulation) introduced Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4a) EUTMR as a specific ground of invalidity for designations of origin and geographical indications (GIs) protected under EU or national law.

Prior to that, GIs could form the basis of an application for invalidity pursuant to Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4) EUTMR. However, the introduction of this specific ground means that as of the entry into force of Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR, GIs can only be invoked under the new ground. GIs can no longer form the basis of an application for invalidity under Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR, even though the wording of that provision has not changed. Nevertheless, if an invalidity request based on a GI is filed after entry into force of the Amending Regulation, incorrectly indicating Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR as a ground for invalidity, the Office will examine the request to the extent that it is clearly based on a GI, as if the ground invoked were Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR. In such a case, there is no doubt as to the intention of the invalidity applicant to invoke the provision protecting earlier GIs.

Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4) EUTMR continues to apply in invalidity proceedings based on GIs pending at the time of entry into force of the Amending Regulation.

As stated above, only Article 8(4a) EUTMR can be invoked in applications for invalidity based on GIs as of the date of entry into force of the Amending Regulation. In the absence, on the one hand, of any transitory provisions and temporal restrictions as regards contested European Union trade marks in the Amending Regulation, and, on the other hand, considering that GIs were also a ground for refusal under the previous regime and that their use in the course of trade is inherent in their function, as of its entry into force, Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4a) EUTMR can be invoked against EUTMs regardless of their filing or priority date, and therefore even against EUTMs filed and registered with the Office before the entry into force of the Amending Regulation.

The protection afforded to GIs by Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4a) EUTMR is therefore a continuation of the protection previously afforded by Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4) EUTMR. GIs thus invoked under Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 8(4a) EUTMR had to already be protected at the time of filing the contested EUTM and be entitled to prohibit use of a subsequent trade mark. Furthermore, the essential conditions for protection of such earlier GIs as provided for by relevant EU or national legislation (that is, for example, protection against any direct or indirect commercial use; misuse, imitation or evocation; false or misleading indication or other misleading practice) applied already at the filing or priority date of the contested EUTM, even if filed before the entry into force of the Amending Regulation. Article 8(4a) EUTMR better reflects the requirements of EU legislation, which does not require that a GI is used in the course of trade in order for it to be entitled to prevent unauthorised use.

Nevertheless, Article 56(3) EUTMR prevents an applicant whose previous request for invalidity based on a GI under Article 53(1)(c) EUTMR has been adjudicated on its merits from filing a new application for invalidity under Article 53(1)(d) EUTMR on the basis of the same GI against the same contested mark.

4.3 Grounds under Article 53(2) EUTMR — other earlier rights

An EUTM is liable to be declared invalid on the basis of the rights below where use of the trade mark could be prohibited under the EU or national law governing their protection. This is **not an exhaustive list** of such earlier rights.


Article 53(2) EUTMR applies only where the rights invoked are of such a nature that they are not considered typical rights to be invoked in cancellation proceedings under Article 53(1) EUTMR (decision of 13/12/2011, 4 033 C, § 12).

4.3.1 A right to a name/right of personal portrayal

Not all Member States protect the right to a person's name or portrayal. The exact scope of protection of the right will follow from the national law (e.g. whether the right is protected irrespective of the goods and services the contested mark covers).

The invalidity applicant will have to provide the necessary **national legislation in force** and put forward a **cogent line of argument** as to why it would succeed under the specific national law in preventing the use of the contested mark. A mere reference to the national law will not be considered sufficient: it is not for the Office to make that argument on the applicant's behalf (see, by analogy, judgment of 05/07/2011, C-263/09 P, Elio Fiorucci, EU:C:2011:452).

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
TELESIS	TELESIS	R 134/2009-2
<i>Right to a name under Austrian law</i>		
<p>Under Austrian law (Section 43 AGBG), 'the person whose right to use his name has been contested or whose name is used without due [cause] to his detriment, infringing his protectable interests, can request the infringer to cease and desist and to compensate any damages. Such protection extends as well to distinctive designations of traders, even if they deviate from the civil name of that trader ... Even if Section 43 AGBG may also apply to a trader's name, the scope of protection does not go beyond the field of activity of the sign used. The remaining contested services are dissimilar to the services of the earlier right as ... they concern different branches of activity (paras 61-63)'. Thus, the requirements under Austrian law were not fulfilled and the request for invalidity based on Article 53(2)(a) EUTMR in conjunction with Austrian law was rejected.</p>		

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
'MARQUÉS DE BALLESTAR' Nobility title (título nobiliario)	 MARQUÉS DE BALLESTAR	R 1288/2008-1
<p><i>Right to a name under Spanish law</i></p> <p>In Spain, noble titles are protected under Law 1/1982 as if they were persons' names. The applicant for cancellation proved that this noble title exists and that it is held by her. The European Union trade mark comprises a small coat of arms and the words MARQUÉS DE BALLESTAR in large letters. The wine could not be correctly identified in any business transaction without mentioning the words MARQUÉS DE BALLESTAR. The right conferred by the EUTM consists of using this in the following ways: placing it on the product container, putting the product bearing the trade mark onto the market, and using it in publicity (Article 9 EUTMR). Consequently, trade mark use is use 'for publicity, commercial or similar purposes', within the meaning of Article 7(6) of Law 1/1982. Since these uses are considered by this Law as 'unlawful intrusions', the protection provided by Article 9(2) of that same Law would be admissible. This Article allows the adoption of measures to 'put an end to the unlawful intrusion'. The EUTM must be declared invalid because its use can be prohibited as a result of a right to a name in accordance with the Spanish legislation on protection of the right to honour, personal and family privacy and own image (paras 14 et seq.).</p>		

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
DEF-TEC	DEF-TEC	R 871/2007-4
<p><i>Right to a name under German law</i></p> <p>The Board considers that 'what could eventually be protected under § 12 BGB is the name of the cancellation applicant, which is 'DEF-TEC Defense Technology GmbH', but not the sign 'DEF-TEC' which is not the cancellation applicant's name ... the registration, and eventual use as a trade mark, of the designation 'DEF-TEC' on pepper sprays cannot infringe the right to the cancellation applicant's name. ... § 12 BGB protects the names of physical persons and as there is no absolute prohibition to bear a name which is similar to another person's name, its protection is limited to cases where the right to the other person's name is denied or misappropriated ... and nothing else applies to the extended application of § 12 BGB to the names of legal persons ... The request for declaration of invalidity fails on account of all the earlier rights invoked' (para. 38 et seq.).</p>		

4.3.2 Copyright



According to Article 53(2)(c) EUTMR, a European Union trade mark will be declared invalid on application to the Office where the use of such trade mark may be prohibited pursuant to another earlier right under the EU legislation or national law governing its protection, and in particular copyright.



Pursuant to Rule 37 EUTMR, the application for a declaration of invalidity must contain particulars of the right on which the application is based and particulars showing that the applicant is the proprietor of an earlier right as referred to in Article 53(2) EUTMR or that it is entitled under the applicable national law to claim that right.



Although the EU legislator has harmonised certain aspects of copyright protection (see Directive 2001/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22/05/2001 on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society, OJ L 167, 22/06/2001, pp 10-19), so far there is no full-scale harmonisation of the copyright laws of the Member States, nor is there a uniform EU copyright. However, all the Member States are bound by the *Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works* and the *Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights* (TRIPS).

The invalidity applicant will have to provide the necessary **national legislation in force** and put forward a **cogent line of argument** as to why it would succeed under the specific national law in preventing the use of the contested mark. A mere reference to the national law will not be considered sufficient: it is not for the Office to make that argument on the applicant's behalf (see, by analogy, judgment of 05/07/2011, C-263/09 P, Elio Fiorucci, EU:C:2011:452).

The notion of copyright protection is applicable irrespective of the goods and services the contested mark covers and merely requires a 'copying' of the protected work without a requirement that the contested mark **as a whole** has to be 'similar' to the protected work.

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
		R 1235/2009-1
<p><i>Copyright under Italian law</i></p> <p>The Board indicates that this ground of invalidity is relative and, therefore, only holders of earlier rights — or other parties, if allowed by the law governing those rights — are entitled to invoke it (Article 56(1)(c) EUTMR). The right relied upon here is copyright. Therefore, the party entitled to act is the holder of the copyright in the flower design or another party authorised by the law governing copyright. The invalidity applicant acknowledges that ownership of the copyright in the design 'belongs to third parties' (in fact to one third party: Corel Corporation, the graphic design company). The invalidity applicant does not own the right it seeks to rely upon. It solely has the right to use clip art with the flower shape and use it for purely private purposes. The ground was rejected (para. 32 et seq.).</p>		

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
		R 1757/2007-2
<p><i>Copyright under French law</i></p> <p>'... the mere fact that the stylization of the letter 'G' is 'simple', does not exclude its protection under French copyright law ... Indeed, for a work of the mind to be protected, it is sufficient for it to be "original" ... While it is true that the contested EUTM is not an exact copy of the earlier work, it must be borne in mind that the partial reproduction and adaptation without the consent of the owner of the copyright is also prohibited. The Board considers this to be the case here. The contested EUTM has taken all the essential characteristic features of the prior work: a stand-alone capital 'G' in straight, thick, black lines, in a perfectly square flattened shape ... the 'G' of the contested EUTM is drawn in a thick, black line of equal width and its inner part reaches further inside, than is the case in the prior work. However, the difference in these minor details constitute minimal modifications which do not affect the overlap in the essential characteristic features of the earlier work, namely, a stand-alone capital 'G' with a perfectly rectangular form, a flattened shape and thick, black lines ... As the partial reproduction or adaptation of the prior work has been done without the owner's consent, it is unlawful. Therefore, the contested decision must be annulled and the request for a declaration of invalidity ... must be upheld' (para. 33 et seq.).</p>		



Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
		<p>R 1925/2011-4</p>
<p><i>Copyright under German law</i></p> <p>'Pursuant to § 1 of the German Copyright Act, copyright protection is granted to the 'authors' of 'works of literature, science, or art'. § 2 of the Act lists various types of work considered works of art. Pursuant to §§ 16 et seq., the copyright law protects the author. Under the assumption that the claimed subject-matter constituted a 'work' in the sense of those provisions, the cancellation applicant failed to demonstrate and to prove who was its author, and, how the cancellation applicant (a legal person with its seat in Japan) acquired the exclusive rights from the author' (paras 12-13). The Board examined each of these aspects. Moreover, it describes the differences between trade mark similarity and copying for the purposes of copyright infringement. The cancellation applicant had mixed up both concepts (paras 22-24).</p>		

4.3.3 Other industrial property rights

Other industrial property rights and prior works at national or EU level, such as a Registered Community design (RCD), may be invoked.

The invalidity applicant will have to provide the necessary **national legislation in force** and put forward a **cogent line of argument** as to why it would succeed under the specific national law in preventing the use of the contested mark. A mere reference to the national law will not be considered sufficient: it is not for the Office to make that argument on the applicant's behalf (see, by analogy, judgment of 05/07/2011, C-263/09 P, Elio Fiorucci, EU:C:2011:452).

In the case of an RCD there is no need to prove what protection is given under the law. The Cancellation Division will apply the standards of the RCD.

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
 <p>(earlier RCD)</p>	 <p>(shape of a teabag)</p>	<p>R 2492/2010-2</p>
<p>'Article 19(1) Council Regulation CDR states that a registered Community design confers on its holder the exclusive right to use it and to prevent any third party not having his consent from using it. The aforementioned use covers, in particular, the making, offering, putting on the market, importing, exporting or using of a product in which the design is incorporated or to which it is applied, or stocking such a product for those purposes. According to Article 10(1) CDR the scope of the protection conferred by a Community design includes any design which does not produce on the informed user a different overall impression. The earlier RCD and the contested EUTM provoke a different overall impression. ... Furthermore, it is observed that the earlier RCD introduces additional differences, such as the presence of a remarked base that does not form part of the contested EUTM. Consequently, the Board confirms the Cancellation Division finding that the rights conferred by RCD No 241 427 pursuant to Article 19(1) CDR cannot be invoked against the contested EUTM' (paras 59-64).</p>		

4.4 Non-use of the earlier mark

According to Article 57(2) and (3) EUTMR, where the **earlier mark has been registered for five years or more** when the application for a declaration of invalidity is filed, the proprietor of the EUTM may request that the proprietor of the earlier mark submit proof that the earlier mark has been put to genuine use in the EU in connection with the goods or services for which it is registered or that proper reasons for non-use exist.

According to Rule 40(6) in conjunction with Rule 22(3) EUTMIR, the indications and evidence for submitting proof of use must consist of indications concerning the place, time, extent and nature of use of the earlier trade mark for the goods and services for which it is registered and on which the application for a declaration of invalidity is based.

The practice rules applicable to the **substantive assessment** of proof of use of earlier rights in opposition proceedings are applicable to the assessment of proof of use in invalidity proceedings (see the Guidelines, Part C, Opposition, Section 6, Proof of Use, paragraph 2). In particular, when the EUTM proprietor requests proof of use of the earlier rights, the Office will examine whether, and to what extent, use has been proved for the earlier marks, provided this is relevant for the outcome of the decision.

Finally, there is a particularity to be taken into account in the assessment of proof of use in the context of invalidity proceedings. It regards the **relevant time of use**. Pursuant to Article 57(2) EUTMR in conjunction with Article 42(2) EUTMR, in contrast to opposition proceedings, there are two relevant periods during which use has to be established.

- In all cases where the earlier trade mark had been registered for more than five years prior to the application for invalidity: the period of five years preceding the date of **filing** of the application for a declaration of invalidity (first relevant period).
- Additionally, in cases where the earlier trade mark had been registered for at least five years on the date of filing or, where applicable, the date of priority, of the contested EUTM application: the period of five years preceding that date (second relevant period).

These two relevant periods do not necessarily overlap: they may totally or partially overlap or follow on from each other (with or without a gap).


4.5 Defences against an invalidity application based on relative grounds

4.5.1 Consent to registration

According to Article 53(3) EUTMR, the EUTM may not be declared invalid if the owner of the earlier right consents expressly to the registration of the EUTM before filing the application for a declaration of invalidity.

Consent does not have to be given before the date of registration of the EUTM. It is sufficient if it is given before the application for invalidity is filed. For these purposes,

the Office will take into account, for instance, a contract to this effect between the parties.

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
SKYROCK		R 1736/2010-2
<p>The EUTM proprietor argued that by virtue of the coexistence agreement, the cancellation applicant had effectively consented to the registration of the contested EUTM pursuant to Article 53(3) EUTMR. BoA examined the coexistence agreement and the interpretation thereof by the French courts. It concluded that the French courts construed the coexistence agreement as conferring a right on the part of the EUTM proprietor to register marks, other than 'SKYROCK' and 'SKYZIN', that contain the prefix 'SKY'. 'That agreement has a worldwide scope of application and therefore applies to EUTM applications or registrations, such as the one in dispute in the present case' (para. 32).</p>		

Evidence of express consent must take the form of a statement (and not of conduct). The statement must come from the applicant (and not from third parties). The consent must be 'express' (and not implicit or presumed) (decision of 23/07/2009, R 1099/2008-1, § 46)

Merely withdrawing an opposition unilaterally does not necessarily imply that the opponent consents to the registration of the EUTM application (decision of 14/10/2008, R 946/2007-2 and R 1151/2007-2, VISION, § 26). As Article 53(3) EUTMR requires express consent, the withdrawal of the opposition has not been considered as consent for registration (decision of 01/12/2012, R 1883/2011-5, PENSA PHARMA, § 30, appealed).

4.5.2 Earlier applications for declaration of invalidity or counterclaims

According to Article 53(4) EUTMR, where the proprietor of an earlier right has previously made an application for a declaration of invalidity of an EUTM or has made a counterclaim for invalidity in infringement proceedings on the basis of rights in Article 53(1) or (2) EUTMR before an EUTM court, it may not submit a new application for a declaration of invalidity on the basis of other rights referred to in Article 53(1) or (2) EUTMR that it could have invoked in the original proceedings.

Article 100 EUTMR imposes an obligation on EUTM courts or the interested party to notify the Office of the initiation of counterclaims for invalidity and their outcome. Where this is not done, an EUTM proprietor wishing to rely on the defence provided for by Article 53(4) EUTMR must submit evidence from the EUTM court to support its claim.

4.5.3 Acquiescence

According to Article 54 EUTMR, where the proprietor of an earlier EUTM or national trade mark has acquiesced in the use of the EUTM for a period of five successive years, while being aware of the use, the EUTM is not liable to be declared invalid, unless registration of the later EUTM was applied for in bad faith.

The aim of Article 54 EUTMR is to penalise the proprietors of earlier trade marks that have acquiesced, for a period of five successive years, in the use of a later EUTM while being aware of such use, by excluding them from seeking a declaration of invalidity of that trade mark, which will then therefore be able to coexist with the earlier

trade mark (judgments of 28/06/2012, T-133/09, B. Antonio Basile 1952, EU:T:2012:327, and T-134/09, B. Antonio Basile 1952, EU:T:2012:328, § 32).

The burden of proof is on the proprietor of the contested EUTM to show that:

- the contested EUTM was used in the European Union (or in the Member State where the earlier trade mark is protected) during a period of at least five successive years;
- the invalidity applicant was aware of this or could reasonably be presumed to be aware of it;
- although the invalidity applicant could have stopped the use, it nevertheless remained inactive. This is not the case where there was a licence or distribution relationship between the parties, so that use by the EUTM proprietor was for goods it lawfully obtained from the invalidity applicant (judgment of 22/09/2011, C-482/09, Budweiser, EU:C:2011:605, § 44; decision of 20/07/2012, R 2230/2010-4, AQUA FLOW).

All three conditions must be fulfilled. If they are, the limitation on acquiescence will apply only to the contested goods or services for which the later EUTM has been used.


The period of limitation in consequence of acquiescence starts running from the time when the proprietor of the earlier trade mark **becomes aware** of the use of the later EUTM. It is at this point that it has the option of not acquiescing in its use and, therefore, opposing it or seeking a declaration of invalidity of the later trade mark (judgment of 28/06/2012, T-133/09, B. Antonio Basile 1952, EU:T:2012:327, and T-134/09, B. Antonio Basile 1952, EU:T:2012:328, § 33).

An example of where the proprietor could reasonably be presumed to be aware of the use of the contested EUTM is where both proprietors have exhibited goods or services under the respective marks at the same event.


Article 54 EUTMR is not applicable when the contested EUTM was filed in bad faith. This exception will only be considered if it is argued and proven by the applicant.


Article 54 EUTMR does not refer to the possible consequences of acquiescence by a person authorised to exercise the rights arising from a designation of origin or a geographic indication. Therefore, the proprietor of an EUTM cannot rely on acquiescence where an invalidity application is based on an earlier designation of origin or a geographical indication pursuant to Article 8(4a) EUTMR.

4.5.3.1 Examples rejecting the acquiescence claim

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
BASILE		T-133/09 and T-134/09 (C-381/12 P dismissed the action)
<p>The appeal applicant did not adduce 'any evidence capable of establishing when the intervener became aware of the use of the contested trade mark after its registration. It merely stated that the contested trade mark had been used for more than five years in Italy and that the intervener must have been aware of that use. Nevertheless, ... less than five years had elapsed between the date of registration of the contested trade mark and the date when the application for a declaration of invalidity was filed, as use of that mark prior to its registration is not relevant since it had not yet been registered' (para. 34).</p>		


Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
DIABLO	DIABLO	R 1022/2011-1
<p>'In the case at hand, the contested European Union trade mark was registered on 11 April 2007 and the request for invalidity was filed on 7 July 2009. Thus, the contested mark had been registered as a European Union trade mark for less than five years. Given that one of the conditions provided for in Article 54(2) EUTMR is not fulfilled, the Board concludes that the Cancellation Division was right in holding that the applicant has not acquiesced in the use of the EUTM' (paras 25-26).</p>		

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
VAGUA FLOW		R 2230/2010-4 (confirmed by T-417/12)
<p>'The late evidence [filed] by the EUTM proprietor shows that in 2005 'AQUA FLOW' branded products were being distributed by various companies in Spain including Hydro Sud. It is claimed that the cancellation applicant was aware of that use. The EUTM proprietor furnished three invoices to third companies located in Spain: 'Hydro Sud', 'Tonocolor SL Hydro Sud' and 'H2O Problematica del Agua'. These invoices are dated 18 June 2004, 31 May 2005 and 31 July 2006 and contain headings with a representation of the mark 'AQUA FLOW'. However, all these invoices postdate May 2004. Under the assumption that the cancellation applicant had knowledge of them, or of the underlying commercial transactions, this would not be enough for the finding that there was an uninterrupted period of five years preceding the cancellation request in the meaning of Article 54(2) EUTMR' (paras 21-22). Therefore, the EUTM proprietor's claim of acquiescence was dismissed.</p>		

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
	PURELL	R 1317/2009-1
<p>'Article 54(2) EUTMR requires that the contested European Union trade mark be used for five successive years in Germany and that the cancellation applicants have acquiesced in this use for this period. In the present case, the arguments and materials submitted by the parties do not allow for the conclusion that the contested mark was used in Germany and that the cancellation applicants could reasonably be presumed to be aware of that use and to have acquiesced, for five successive years, in that use ... the sole elements that would suggest some connection with Germany and on which the EUTM proprietor relies primarily on appeal (i.e. the figures related to the unique local distributor and the Internet excerpts examined in light of the correspondence of 2001 between the parties) are insufficient to hold that the cancellation applicants have acquiesced in the long and well-established honest use of the contested mark in Germany' (para. 47).</p>		

4.5.3.2 Examples (partially) accepting the acquiescence claim

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
CITYBOND	CITIBOND	3971 C R 1918/2011-5 (appeal withdrawn; the Cancellation Division decision has become final)
Taking the evidence as a whole, it showed that all the conditions for acquiescence were met for some of the contested services. In particular, the exchange of letters between the parties showed that the applicant was aware of the existence of the EUTM 'CITIBOND' for some of the services. Moreover, the extracts and the statutory declaration (2003) included in proceedings in the UK, and the rest of the financial information, demonstrated that the applicant was conscious of the use of the EUTM 'CITIBOND' in the UK, bearing in mind that the financial market is very specific and highly specialised.		

Earlier right	Contested sign	Case No
Ghibli Et al		R 1299/2007-2
The cancellation applicant acknowledged that he was aware of the use of this sign, in Italy. The legal issue was whether — for the purposes of applying Article 53(2) EUTMR — the cancellation applicant also had to be aware of the legal status of the sign used, namely, that it had been used as a registered EUTM in Italy. In the Board's view, Article 53(2) EUTMR cannot be interpreted to require the EUTM proprietor to prove — in addition to the five years' concurrent use, knowingly tolerated by the proprietor of the earlier right — that the cancellation applicant also knew, for at least five years, that the later mark was protected as an EUTM. What matters in this context is the objective circumstance that the sign (the use of which has been knowingly tolerated by the cancellation applicant), must have existed, for at least five years, as an EUTM. In view of the evidence in the file, it was proven that when the request for a declaration of invalidity was filed, the cancellation applicant had been aware and tolerated the use of the contested EUTM in Italy for more than five years, irrespective of whether or not he was aware of the fact of registration (para. 35 et seq.).		

5 Res Judicata

Pursuant to Article 56(3) EUTMR, in addition to any particular defence that an EUTM proprietor may raise against an application for a declaration of invalidity or against a revocation application (see paragraphs above), an invalidity or revocation application is inadmissible where an application relating to the **same subject matter and cause of action, and involving the same parties**, has been adjudicated on its own merits by an EUTM court or by the Office and a final decision has been taken. This is what is known as the 'triple-identity' requirement.

The defence of res judicata only applies where there is a previous **final decision on the substance** in a counterclaim or cancellation application. The bar to admissibility does not apply, for instance, when a cancellation application was withdrawn before the corresponding decision became final (decision of 12/05/2014, R 1616/2013-4, PLAYSEAT, § 13) or when the previous final decision declared the application inadmissible (e.g. because the contested EUTM was not yet registered) and did not adjudicate on the substance.

(i) Same subject matter

Res judicata does not apply to a request for revocation where the previous final decision refers to another request for revocation submitted on a different date. This is because the points in time at which the circumstances leading to the revocation have to be established (lack of use, EUTM becoming generic or

subject to misleading use) are different and the subject matter cannot therefore be deemed to be the same (decision of 31/01/2014, 7 333 C).

(ii) Same cause of action

A prior decision by the Office in **opposition proceedings** between the same parties and relating to the same mark does not preclude a later cancellation request based on the same earlier rights (judgment of 14/10/2009, T-140/08, TiMiKinderjoghurt, EU:T:2009:400, § 36, appeal to the Court dismissed, and judgment of 23/09/2014, T-11/13, Mego, EU:T:2014:803, § 12), since the cause of action is different. However, a different outcome in invalidity or revocation proceedings is unlikely to arise except where one or more of the following conditions is fulfilled.

- New facts are proven (e.g. proof of use or reputation of the earlier mark, not made available during opposition proceedings).
- The manner in which key legal assessments are made has changed (e.g. with regard to the standards for assessing likelihood of confusion), for example as a result of intervening judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

(iii) Same parties

The triple identity required by *res judicata* also means that the parties to both proceedings (the one in question and the one that led to the previous final decision) have to be the same.