

# INTA – BRINGING THE INTERNATIONAL TRADEMARK COMMUNITY TO BARCELONA

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**Hundreds of delegates will debate developments and issues in European and global trademark protection and enforcement in Barcelona later this year.**

This December will see INTA, the International Trademark Association, host its European Conference in Barcelona. Delegates drawn from across Europe, the US, Latin America and Asia are expected to attend the gathering, says its Executive Director, Alan C Drewsen, with the focus very much towards cross-border trademark issues.

“Our members are telling us that they have concerns over the protection and use of

## trademarks across Europe, the applicability and effectiveness of the EU Community Trademark scheme, and the potentially contrasting or conflicting roles of European Union and national regulatory bodies.”

The aim of the Conference, entitled National Marks and CTMs: Enforcement and Future Harmony, is therefore to reflect those issues that most currently affect or impact on trademark holders, says Drewsen. “A significant topic of debate is likely to be the results of the European Commission’s study on the overall functioning of Europe’s trademark systems, the relationship between the national and Community trademark systems, the types of changes recommended for them and whether there will be future harmony.”

Conference sessions will address these issues through the specific analysis of the protection and dilution of luxury brands, European trademark strategies, acquired distinctiveness, the jurisdiction of Community Trademark Courts as well as the remedies available to mark holders. What is significant about INTA gatherings is the focus on the practical impact of market and regulatory changes, he believes.

“Around a fifth of our members are corporations, and these include the top 100 brand owners. As these organisations continue to expand globally and to diversify their international manufacture, sales and distribution operations, they are coming up against novel legal and business challenges. The aim of the conference is to help raise awareness of potential remedies and of future issues.”

Other members of INTA include law firms, academic and other institutions. The Association also takes an interest in the research of bodies analysing intellectual property issues, and so has followed with interest the work of the Max Planck Institute for Intellectual Property, Competition, and Tax Law (MPI) after the award of the European Commission contract to carry out its European trademark system study.

“Such research is critical because it offers a unique opportunity for European Union institutions, trademark offices, and users to engage in an in-depth review of the legal environment – in this instance assessing the impact of developments since the introduction of the Community Trade Mark in 1996. It is an issue of importance for trademark users both within and outside of Europe,” says Drewsen.

Originally founded in 1878, INTA is a not-for-profit membership association of 5,700 trademark owners, professionals and academics, from more than 190 countries. The substantive side of INTA is a vital element of the membership package, with a training and update programme that runs throughout the year and around the world.

“In addition, an equally important aspect of what we do is to influence public policy and regulation on behalf of members’ interests. Our collective voice, international membership and the diversity of the business sectors we represent, means that we are able to wield much more weight and influence than any one business.” Companies, organisations and individual members are therefore able to play a participatory part in everything that INTA does, says Drewsen.

“We are able to help our members steer the debate on the matters that impact them — these may be current or future issues. We really want to get down to the ‘nuts and bolts’ issues that affect the way, how and where our member organisations do business.”

But an important side also of Conferences like that forthcoming in Barcelona is the social and networking side, he insists. “It is important for practitioners to connect globally, to meet like-minded individuals and businesses, and to find law firms and other advisers that may be able to help them overcome localised challenges. Fundamentally the most important thing we do is bring people together.”

