

# Step by Step Guide to Register A Trademark in Rwanda

Rwanda's trademark regime is governed primarily by Law No. 055/2024, which repealed the 2009 IP law and came into force on 31 July 2024. The new law introduces enhanced clarity on registration requirements, examination procedures, and international trademark interactions under systems such as the Madrid Protocol.

## Why register your trademark in Rwanda?

It is important to register your trademark in Rwanda for several reasons: Registration grants the owner exclusive rights to use the trademark in Rwanda, preventing others from using identical or confusingly similar marks; Provides protection against infringement and unfair competition; Distinguishes a business's goods and services, building long term consumer trust and brand loyalty in the marketplace; Eases enforcement of rights through legal proceedings, including

stopping infringers and claiming damages; Rwanda's membership in the Madrid System allows businesses to extend protection internationally through a streamlined system; Registered trademarks can be licensed, assigned, or even used as collateral thereby expanding revenue opportunities and increasing business valuation; and registered trademarks in Rwanda are valid for 10 years and renewable indefinitely, providing long-term security for brands.

## Steps to registering your trademark

The Trademark registration in Rwanda is overseen by the Intellectual Property (I.P) Registry at the Rwanda Development Board (RDB).

The Procedures and requirements are as discussed below:

### 1. Conduct a Trademark Search (Optional but Highly Recommended)

Before filing, it is important to conduct a search to determine whether the proposed mark is already registered or confusingly similar to an existing

trademark. Although it is not mandatory, this is a key pre registration step.

### 2. Prepare and File the Trademark Application

The application is filed with the I.P Registry at RDB Office of the Registrar General and typically includes:

- ▶ Applicant details
- ▶ Clear representation of the trademark
- ▶ List of goods/services (using appropriate

classes): applications using only class headings attract objections

- ▶ If filing through an agent, a notarized Power of Attorney is required that is compliant with the format provided in Ministerial Order No. 26 of 17 March 2016.

### 3. Formalities Examination (14 Day Correction Window)

The I.P Registry reviews the application for completeness. If the requirements are not met, the Office informs the applicant that he or she must complete the missing elements within 14 days from the day of notification.

If the applicant complies with the requirements, the date of receipt of the missing elements is considered as the filing date and they do not comply with the requirements, the application is considered as withdrawn.

### 4. Substantive Examination

Once formalities are properly addressed, the Registry examines the application on legal grounds. It may issue an objection notice where the registry requires the applicant to make corrections to the application or a refusal notice where a mark

is descriptive or similar to an already registered mark. A refusal notice is issued on either relative or absolute grounds.

Applicants typically have 30 days to respond to refusals or objections.

### 5. Publication in the Official Gazette

The Registry publishes the registration of a mark in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda within 30 days from the date of registration of a mark.

An interested person may oppose the registration of a mark by filling the form provided for this purpose and prescribed by the Registry, within 60 days

from the date of the publication of the application for registration, on at least one of the following grounds: (a) if the mark is not distinctive; (b) if the mark is imitative; (c) if the mark is likely confusing; (d) if mark is descriptive; (e) if the application for registration of a mark was made in bad faith; (f) if the application for registration of a mark is made with the aim of unfair competition.

### 6. Registration and Issuance of Certificate

If no opposition is filed, or if one is filed but resolved in the applicant's favor, the trademark proceeds to registration. Once registered:

- ▶ The trademark is protected for 10 years
- ▶ It must be renewed every 10 years to maintain protection

## How Adili Rwanda Can Assist Companies with Trademark Registration

Adili Rwanda supports businesses throughout the entire trademark registration lifecycle. We assist with conducting comprehensive trademark searches, preparation and filing of Applications, managing formalities and substantive examination issues and representation during opposition proceedings.

## Conclusion

Registering a trademark in Rwanda involves a structured legal process governed by the modernized **Law No. 055/2024**. While the steps are clear, meeting deadlines, addressing formalities, and managing objections can be challenging, especially for businesses unfamiliar with Rwanda's evolving IP landscape.

**Adili Rwanda** provides end to end support, ensuring accuracy, compliance, and strategic protection of your brand in Rwanda's growing market.