

Directive 2008/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 to approximate the laws of the Member States relating to trade marks (Codified version) (Text with EEA relevance) (repealed)

DIRECTIVE 2008/95/EC OF THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 22 October 2008

to approximate the laws of the Member States relating to trade marks

(Codified version)

(Text with EEA relevance) (repealed)

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 95 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee⁽¹⁾,

Acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 251 of the Treaty⁽²⁾,

Whereas:

- (1) The content of Council Directive 89/104/EEC of 21 December 1988 to approximate the laws of the Member States relating to trade marks⁽³⁾ has been amended⁽⁴⁾. In the interests of clarity and rationality the said Directive should be codified.
- (2) The trade mark laws applicable in the Member States before the entry into force of Directive 89/104/EEC contained disparities which may have impeded the free movement of goods and freedom to provide services and may have distorted competition within the common market. It was therefore necessary to approximate the laws of the Member States in order to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market.
- (3) It is important not to disregard the solutions and advantages which the Community trade mark system may afford to undertakings wishing to acquire trade marks.
- (4) It does not appear to be necessary to undertake full-scale approximation of the trade mark laws of the Member States. It will be sufficient if approximation is limited to those national provisions of law which most directly affect the functioning of the internal market.
- (5) This Directive should not deprive the Member States of the right to continue to protect trade marks acquired through use but should take them into account only in regard to the relationship between them and trade marks acquired by registration.

- (6) Member States should also remain free to fix the provisions of procedure concerning the registration, the revocation and the invalidity of trade marks acquired by registration. They can, for example, determine the form of trade mark registration and invalidity procedures, decide whether earlier rights should be invoked either in the registration procedure or in the invalidity procedure or in both and, if they allow earlier rights to be invoked in the registration procedure, have an opposition procedure or an *ex officio* examination procedure or both. Member States should remain free to determine the effects of revocation or invalidity of trade marks.
- (7) This Directive should not exclude the application to trade marks of provisions of law of the Member States other than trade mark law, such as the provisions relating to unfair competition, civil liability or consumer protection.
- (8) Attainment of the objectives at which this approximation of laws is aiming requires that the conditions for obtaining and continuing to hold a registered trade mark be, in general, identical in all Member States. To this end, it is necessary to list examples of signs which may constitute a trade mark, provided that such signs are capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one undertaking from those of other undertakings. The grounds for refusal or invalidity concerning the trade mark itself, for example, the absence of any distinctive character, or concerning conflicts between the trade mark and earlier rights, should be listed in an exhaustive manner, even if some of these grounds are listed as an option for the Member States which should therefore be able to maintain or introduce those grounds in their legislation. Member States should be able to maintain or introduce into their legislation grounds of refusal or invalidity linked to conditions for obtaining and continuing to hold a trade mark for which there is no provision of approximation, concerning, for example, the eligibility for the grant of a trade mark, the renewal of the trade mark or rules on fees, or related to the non-compliance with procedural rules.
- (9) In order to reduce the total number of trade marks registered and protected in the Community and, consequently, the number of conflicts which arise between them, it is essential to require that registered trade marks must actually be used or, if not used, be subject to revocation. It is necessary to provide that a trade mark cannot be invalidated on the basis of the existence of a non-used earlier trade mark, while the Member States should remain free to apply the same principle in respect of the registration of a trade mark or to provide that a trade mark may not be successfully invoked in infringement proceedings if it is established as a result of a plea that the trade mark could be revoked. In all these cases it is up to the Member States to establish the applicable rules of procedure.
- (10) It is fundamental, in order to facilitate the free movement of goods and services, to ensure that registered trade marks enjoy the same protection under the legal systems of all the Member States. This should not, however, prevent the Member States from granting at their option extensive protection to those trade marks which have a reputation.
- (11) The protection afforded by the registered trade mark, the function of which is in particular to guarantee the trade mark as an indication of origin, should be absolute in the

case of identity between the mark and the sign and the goods or services. The protection should apply also in the case of similarity between the mark and the sign and the goods or services. It is indispensable to give an interpretation of the concept of similarity in relation to the likelihood of confusion. The likelihood of confusion, the appreciation of which depends on numerous elements and, in particular, on the recognition of the trade mark on the market, the association which can be made with the used or registered sign, the degree of similarity between the trade mark and the sign and between the goods or services identified, should constitute the specific condition for such protection. The ways in which likelihood of confusion may be established, and in particular the onus of proof, should be a matter for national procedural rules which should not be prejudiced by this Directive.

- (12) It is important, for reasons of legal certainty and without inequitably prejudicing the interests of a proprietor of an earlier trade mark, to provide that the latter may no longer request a declaration of invalidity nor may he oppose the use of a trade mark subsequent to his own of which he has knowingly tolerated the use for a substantial length of time, unless the application for the subsequent trade mark was made in bad faith.
- (13) All Member States are bound by the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property. It is necessary that the provisions of this Directive should be entirely consistent with those of the said Convention. The obligations of the Member States resulting from that Convention should not be affected by this Directive. Where appropriate, the second paragraph of Article 307 of the Treaty should apply.
- (14) This Directive should be without prejudice to the obligations of the Member States relating to the time limit for transposition into national law of Directive 89/104/EEC set out in Annex I, Part B,

HAVE ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

Status: This is the original version (as it was originally adopted).

- (1) [OJ C 161, 13.7.2007, p. 44.](#)
- (2) Opinion of the European Parliament of 19 June 2007 ([OJ C 146 E, 12.6.2008, p. 76](#)) and Council Decision of 25 September 2008.
- (3) [OJ L 40, 11.2.1989, p. 1.](#)
- (4) See Annex I, Part A.