

# commons@ip

Harnessing the knowledge commons  
for open innovation



For companies, innovation is key to succeed in a global market. Therefore, innovation system development must be seen as a crucial part of economic development and trade promotion in emerging & developing countries. However, current international regimes on intellectual property rights (IPR) increasingly impose higher standards of IPR-protection at the expense of developing countries. As a consequence, increasing costs for licenses or royalties in key areas like IT, health, agriculture and renewable energy hamper the development of the private sector in Africa and beyond. Local innovation is at risk, as researchers and enterprises lack access to innovation-relevant information and open learning. In this context, the knowledge commons provides alternative opportunities for open local innovation and global collaboration.

## Objective of commons@ip:

Harnessing the knowledge commons for open innovation in the SADC region

## Region of implementation:

Southern Africa (SADC)

## Beneficiaries:

Small and medium-sized enterprises, IPR experts, private sector and its constitutional bodies, civil society

## Duration:

2010 - 2012

## Web:

[www.inwent.org/train4trade/](http://www.inwent.org/train4trade/)

## Strategic Partners:

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

open innovation commons-based  
peer production intellectual  
Property creative  
commons knowledge  
commons open source  
software SADC sustainable  
development collaborative  
learning copyright Open access  
per-poor innovation

## For further information please contact

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## About commons@ip:

As part of InWEnt's capacity building program Train for Trade, commons@ip focuses on the interaction of **intellectual property rights** and **open innovation**, the **knowledge commons**, **open licences** and **collaborative innovation** in Africa. It provides capacity building and networking on the following themes:

- Equipping the private and public sector in Southern Africa with key knowledge on how the knowledge commons can be harnessed for open innovation
- Fostering a more enabling legal environment for open innovation across the region, and mapping trade policy impacts on knowledge for innovation
- Collaboration for open innovation & international exchange of private sector actors

## Main initiatives of commons@ip:

- (1) Networking of African experts on intellectual property rights around the issue of open innovation and dialogue with private sector and other stakeholders
- (2) Advanced training on developing national versions of international open licences
- (3) Exchange between like-minded countries and regions such as South Africa, India and Brazil.

## About Train for Trade:

The InWEnt programme "Train for Trade" aims at strengthening the private sector and its constitutional bodies in the SADC region through capacity building and advanced training. Small and medium enterprises are supported to make use of the opportunities of a globalising market. Train for Trade has five components: 1) Export Promotion and Economic Partnership Agreements, 2) Quality for the World Market, 3) commons@ip - Harnessing the Knowledge Commons for Open Innovation, 4) Innovative Local / Regional Economic development and trade promotion (RED TRADE) and 5) Networking / Alumni Dialogue. For more information, see [www.inwent.org/train4trade/](http://www.inwent.org/train4trade/)

## Open Innovation, Collaborative Innovation and the Knowledge Commons

Through **open innovation** firms can use both external and internal ideas to innovate. Often, competing companies co-operate inside an open innovation network to jointly build a base of products shared through copyleft licences ("commons-based peer production"), see the joint development of Free and Open Source Software. Through **collaborative innovation**, a wide range of stakeholders (companies, research facilities) collaborate across borders and sectors – e.g. through use of patent pools or the knowledge commons. The **digital knowledge commons** encompasses immaterial collectively owned goods in the information age, ranging from digital media like Wikipedia, Open Educational Resources, Open Source Software like Linux to Open scientific collections such as the Public Library of Science (PLoS). The knowledge commons provides goods under copyleft licences / open licences as an alternative to the "all rights reserved" copyright, giving users the freedom of usage, creation, remix and redistribution - in short: the freedom to innovate.

On behalf of



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development