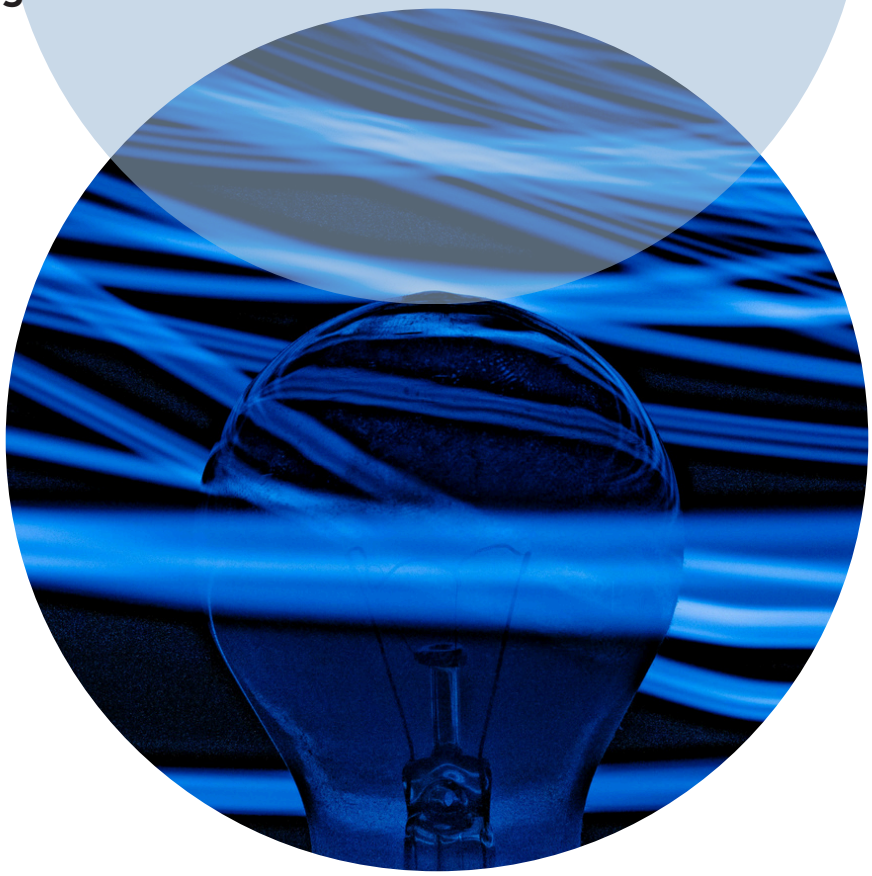
Industrial Property in Timor-Leste: Preparing to Protect Business Assets

info@abreuadvogados.com
abreuadvogados.com



Law No. 12/2026, approving the Industrial Property Code of Timor-Leste, was published on October 28th, 2026, following its final approval by Parliament on 22 September 2026.

The legislation establishes a specific legal framework for the protection of assets relevant to business activities, complementing the legal framework for the protection of industrial and intellectual property initiated with the Copyright and Related Rights Law, enacted in 2022.

This reform forms part of Timor-Leste's efforts to fulfil its international commitments in the field of intellectual property, particularly within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), through the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement), and its integration into ASEAN.

Alignment with international standards of industrial property protection will contribute to strengthening legal certainty for investors and facilitating commercial relations between Timorese companies and international partners.

What is covered by the new legislation?

The law provides for the protection of inventions through patents, as well as other industrial property rights, including trademarks, industrial designs, topographies of semiconductor products and geographical indications. It also provides for the protection of trade secrets and undisclosed information, as well as measures against unfair competition.

Its scope is relevant to economic activity and innovation across different business sectors. Patented inventions (technical solutions to technical problems), trademarks identifying goods and/or services, industrial designs and confidential, undisclosed business information are all valuable business assets. Their protection requires an individual assessment in accordance with the specific requirements established by law.

Key provisions include:

- Legal protection of trademarks for periods of 10 years, renewable indefinitely; patents for 20 years from the filing date; and industrial designs for five years, renewable up to a maximum of 25 years.

- Legal protection of geographical indications for an unlimited period, potentially contributing to the differentiation and enhancement of the value of Timorese products in domestic and international markets.

- Legal protection of trade secrets, provided that the information is secret, has commercial value because it is secret, and is subject to reasonable measures to maintain its confidentiality.

- Enforcement mechanisms against infringements, including the enforcement of industrial property rights through interim measures and legal proceedings, the possibility of claiming compensation for losses and damages arising from infringements, as well as criminal or administrative sanctions, depending on the nature of the conduct.

- Mandatory local representation for applicants without domicile in Timor-Leste, through the appointment of a representative domiciled in the country, who may be a lawyer or an official industrial property agent, whose professional regime will be established by Parliamentary Law.

What should businesses prepare?

For companies operating or intending to invest in Timor-Leste, preparation for the new legal framework may begin with identifying the industrial property assets used in their business activities and organising the documentation relating to their ownership and exploitation. Businesses should identify the trademarks they already use or intend to use in Timor-Leste and begin preparing registration applications so that these can be filed as soon as the relevant administrative procedures become available.

This assessment may take into account the legal and financial implications of protecting such rights, particularly trademarks. It may also justify reviewing agreements with employees, service providers, distributors and business partners, especially regarding ownership of assets, conditions governing their use and confidentiality obligations.

The protection of undisclosed information also deserves particular attention. Identifying who has access to confidential technical or commercial know-how, and under what conditions such information is shared, constitutes an important business management measure.

What opportunities does the new framework create for domestic production?

Trademarks and geographical indications may play a particularly important role in differentiating Timorese products and enhancing their reputation and market value.
The choice of the appropriate protection mechanism will depend on the characteristics of the product, the interests to be protected and the legal requirements established under the new framework.

When will the Code enter into force?

The Industrial Property Code will produce effects on October 29th, 2027, one year after the law enters into force. This transitional period allows businesses to assess their assets and prepare the necessary measures for their protection, while monitoring the adoption of implementing regulations and the availability of the relevant administrative procedures.

At the institutional level, Timor-Leste is also developing a partnership with the Republic of Korea in the field of intellectual property, through a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation, particularly through technical assistance, human resources training, and support for the establishment of the country's first dedicated intellectual property office.

Thinking about tomorrow? Let's talk today.



Elisa Pereira
elisa.pereira@abreuadvogados.com



António Andrade
antonio.andrdade@abreuadvogados.com



Manuel Durães Rocha
manuel.rocha@abreuadvogados.com



Ricardo Henriques
ricardo.henriques@abreuadvogados.com



Catarina Mata
catarina.mata@abreuadvogados.com



info@abreuadvogados.com
abreuadvogados.com

Abreu advogados