

was discontinued after collection societies and publishers refused to support it. Other projects, such as the International Music Registry, backed by WIPO, have had the same fate.

Can the decentralized nature of Blockchain open new perspectives in this regard? One could imagine the creation of IP-specific global registries linking all national registries and relevant stakeholders. Information added to a blockchain-based IP registry would be accessible to everyone, but only national authorities or other relevant stakeholders would be able to write on the blockchain.

While this is theoretically possible, such initiatives may face the same hurdles as previous attempts in the area of copyright. They would require the engagement and political will of all those involved, as well as a considerable amount of coordination. While this is not impossible, it will not be an easy endeavour, and is compounded by the technical limitations that still affect the technology itself. The push may come from the private sector; several startups are already working on such initiatives. For example, the startup IPwe⁶³ aspires to create a blockchain-based Global Patent Registry, and several startups formed the consortium Concensum to develop a Global Copyright Register.⁶⁴

Whether these initiatives, which are still in their infancy, will succeed in bringing greater transparency to the IP rights landscape remains to be seen, but they have the merit of putting the question of global transparency of IP rights on the table. It also remains to be seen whether national jurisdictions will be willing to recognize IP rights entered in a blockchain as valid.

One thing is certain: the disruptive nature of Blockchain, the opportunities that the technology opens, as well as its potential legal implications, deserve the attention of regulators and legislators.

(iv) Fighting piracy and counterfeiting

In April 2018, the French museum Terrus dedicated to painter Etienne Terrus, a close friend of painter Henri Matisse, discovered that more than half of its collection was fake (France24, 2018). Counterfeit products are legion and affect all areas of intellectual property – artistic and creative works, inventions and brands alike. Blockchain offers interesting opportunities when it comes to fighting piracy and counterfeiting, as Blockchain's immutable and transparent nature makes it easy to check the origins of products. Hashes of digitizable IP works, such as books, on blockchain can serve as a proof of existence and origin, while the concomitant use of Blockchain and smart contracts can allow IP rights-holders to control and track the rightful use of their IP rights, as mentioned above.