

BULGARIAN AND FOREIGN TRADEMARK ACTIVITY IN BULGARIA AND BULGARIAN TRADEMARK ACTIVITY ABROAD FOR THE PERIOD 2000-2019²

This study presents the state and dynamics of Bulgarian and foreign trademark activity in Bulgaria, measured by the number of trademark applications and the number of registered trademarks for the period 2000 – 2019. We also show Bulgarian trademark activity abroad. Some of the existing trends in trademark research and their role as an indicator of the business development environment are also considered. We have defined the impact of legislative changes on trademark activity during the examined period. We have confirmed the existence of a relationship between the trademark activity and the state of the business environment.

Keywords: trademark activity; applicant activity; trademark registration; foreign trademark activity; state of business environment

JEL: F23; M31; O34

1. Introduction

The importance of trademarks has increased in recent years along with other objects of industrial property. In the conditions of increasing competition, trademarks and their commercial value assume a critical role in the market success and competitiveness of trademark owners.

The object of this study is the legal protection of trademarks.

The subject of the study is the Bulgarian and foreign trademark activity over the period 2000-2019 and the mutual commitment between trademark activity and business environment.

The purpose of this study is to: within the period 2000-2019 to investigate the state and dynamics of Bulgarian and foreign trademark activity in Bulgaria, measured with trademark applications and registered trademarks; establish the impact of legislative changes on trademark activity in trademarks and unpredictable economic changes; analyse the existence

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of mutual commitment between trademark activity and the state of the business environment. The study period includes twenty years during which the impact of important economic events such as the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union in 2007 and the Global economic crisis in 2008-2009. This allows the dynamics of trademark activity to be taken into account compared to these specific events and reveal a link between trademark activity and the changing business environment.

With regards to the above, the formulated objective is achieved through the following tasks:

1. Analysing trademark application activity for the period 2000 – 2019 of Bulgarian and foreign applicants.
2. Following up the registered trademarks for the period 2000 – 2019.
3. Conducting an empirical analysis revealing the mutual commitment between trademark activity and the state of the business environment.

The author's **hypothesis** is: There is a mutual commitment between trademark activity and the business environment for business development.

In order to prove or reject the author's hypothesis, data has been used for the number of trademark applications and registered trademarks, considering that the application for and registration of a trademark can be done in the following ways:

- *Direct registration (national registration)* – at the competent national intellectual property office of the state where legal protection is sought. The owner's rights have a limited territorial scope in the country where the application has been submitted.
- *International registration* – the Madrid System for international registration of a trademark provides a wider scope of protection. Through an application, the applicant may seek protection on the territory of more than one Member State under the Madrid Agreement and the Protocol to the Madrid Agreement.
- *Regional trademark registration systems* – one of the most famous regional systems is that of the European Union Intellectual Property Office, EUIPO. A "Community Trademark" is registered via EUIPO, which is common for all EU Member States. In 2017 the "Community Trademark" was replaced by European Union TradeMark (EUTM) according to Regulation (EU) 2017/1001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 June 2017 on the European Union trademark.

The source of analyses is the WIPO Statistic Database supported by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), including submitted applications and registered trademarks through the Madrid Registration System and the national intellectual property offices of the countries included in the study.

The data provided by WIPO offer a different perspective for consumers. For the purposes of this study, the information for the number of submitted applications and registered trademarks is categorised according to the following criteria:

- **Count by filling office** – provides information about where the legal protection is sought and which national intellectual property office makes the decision to register a trademark.

- Count by applicant's origin – the count shall be carried out according to the nationality of the applicant/trademark owner. The criteria show the number of trademark applications/trademark registrations at an equivalent count.
- Equivalent count – the data is received, with one trademark application taken into account many times according to the number of territories where legal protection is sought. “Applications at regional offices are equivalent to multiple applications, one in each of the states member of those offices” (WIPO, 2020, p.15).
- Resident – applications/registrations of trademarks from Bulgarian citizens at the Bulgarian Patent Office.
- Non-resident – applications/registrations of trademarks from foreign citizens in the Bulgarian Patent Office.
- Abroad – applications/registrations of trademarks from Bulgarian citizens in a foreign intellectual property office.

Indicators used for trademark activity analysis are:

1. Total number of Bulgarian and foreign trademark applications:
 - 1A – direct application at the Bulgarian Patent Office;
 - 1B – applications submitted via the Madrid System.
2. Total number of registered trademarks by Bulgarian and foreign owners:
 - 2A – direct application at the Bulgarian Patent Office;
 - 2B – application submitted via the Madrid System.
4. Foreign activity measured by a total number of trademark applications submitted by foreign applicants in Bulgaria.
5. Foreign activity measured by a total number of registered trademarks by foreign owners in Bulgaria.

Indicators 1 and 2 are measurements of trademark activity, which, by a number of submitted applications and registered trademarks, are indicators of the business environment stability and the aspirations of companies to develop and expand their market share.

Indicators 3 and 4 testify to the existence of a foreign interest in carrying out economic activity on the territory of Bulgaria and imply the existence of an adequate and appropriate legal framework for carrying out this activity complying with the international trademark legislation.

1. Existing Trademark Research

The specialised economic literature analysis testifies to the increasing interest of researchers towards trademarks as an indicator with a strong impact on business development (Millot,

2009; Çela, 2015; Graham et al., 2018). The increasing attention to trademarks has been addressed in several aspects (Castaldi, 2019). *First*: the role of symbols and signs used by companies for attracting consumer attention is increasing. *Second*: the increasing role of services nowadays encourages the use of objects of industrial property other than patents to protect non-technological assets and forms of innovation. *Third*: the share of strategic intangible assets of companies is increasing, and in a number of cases, the market value of trademarks is more than half of the market value of some global companies (Corrado & Hulten, 2010).

The founding works in which trademarks are subject of study are organised in the following categories:

- *Using a historical and legal or economic approach* – Higgins & Rubin (1986) examine the replicas of “snobbish” goods; Wilkins (1992) demonstrates the relationship between the number of registered trademarks and the clustering of large companies in the US; Huntley & Stephen (1995) explore the copying of trademarks in the context of unfair competition.
- *Focused on the presentation of trademarks on the oligopolistic markets* – Rozek (1982) analyses the impact of advertising strategies in the trademark transformation process in a generic trademark and distinguishes trademarks from brands by examining their interaction; Perry & Groff (1986) present the role of trademarks in differentiating products but do not clarify its specificity; Veall (1992) examines patents and trademarks as equivalent legal protection instruments.
- *Focusing on the relationship between trademarks and the market value of companies and their innovation ability* – Bosworth, Rogers (2001), Feeny, Rogers (2003), Mendonça, Pereira & Godinho (2004), Griffiths, Jensen, Webster (2005), Fink, Javorcik, Spatareanu (2005), Malmberg (2005), Greenhalgh & Rogers (2007), Helmers & Rogers (2008), Krasnikov, Mishra, & Orozco (2009), L. Davies, J. Davies (2011), Brahem, El Harbi, Grolleau (2013), Çela (2015).
- *Focusing on the relationship between trademarks activity and the business environment for business development* – Ovaska & Sobel (2005) explore the relationship between entrepreneurial activity and business environment conditions. The authors consider key to entrepreneurial activity indicators, including patent and trademark applications. In its study on types of innovations, which can be measured by market-based indicators, Götsch and Hipp (2012) reveal a number of factors influencing the use of trademarks, including the competitive business environment. Authors deGrazia, Charles and Myers, Amanda and Toole, Andrew A. (2019) present trademark activity as an indicator of business cycles. The latest researches in the field emphasise the importance of trademark as an indicator of the influence of COVID-19 on environmental and business activity (Reading, 2020).

These research directions on the specificity of trademarks and their relationship with business do not exhaust the possible fields for trademark analysis as an indicator of the business environment for business development. Moreover, turning into a source of reputation and consumer loyalty, trademarks are a strategic asset for companies and a prerequisite for

generating high revenues. This determines the growing interest of researchers in trademarks and opportunities for sustainable development they provide to companies.

The economic functions of trademarks to differentiate products of one trademark owner from those of another by distinguishing them with high quality and encouraging consumers to buy them, make trademarks a major competitive advantage for companies.

Flikkema, De Man, Wolters (2010) indicate four main motivations for trademark registration:

First: sustainability of other company assets. The approach is used in cases where, by registering trademarks, the company seeks to increase the value of the owned assets.

Second: strengthening the importance of innovation. The aim is by registering a trademark to “inform” stakeholders (natural and legal persons) that the company is capable of expanding its innovation activity.

Third: improving market competitiveness of company assets. “The trademarking” of an asset increases its recognition and indicates its “value”. The registered trademark also hampers direct imitation by competitors.

Fourth: the company’s management opinion that the increase in registered trademarks is an indicator of the company’s striving for acquisitions of sustainable market benefits (Greenhallgh, Rogers, 2007).

By confirming the conclusions of the abovementioned authors and for the purposes of this paper, the author assumes that: **Trademark application activity is an indicator of the business environment’s state and also an indicator of foreign interest in the registration of trademarks.**

2. General Analysis of Trademark Applicant Activity

The state and dynamics of trademark activity of Bulgarian and foreign citizens, measured by the number of submitted trademark applications in Bulgaria for the period 2000-2019, are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1.

The data in Table 1 illustrate trademark activity, measured by a number of applications submitted to the Bulgarian Patent Office by both Bulgarian and foreign applicants. There is also information on how to submit a request – direct application or via the Madrid System.

The total number of applications during the study period submitted to the Bulgarian Patent Office is 168,773, with 44.03% of them by foreign applicants. These data testify to the greater interest of Bulgarian trademarks applicants for the submission of direct trademark applications at the Bulgarian Patent Office (55.97%).

The image (see Figure 1) presenting the Bulgarian and foreign applications outlines two periods: 2000-2006 and 2006-2019. During the first period, foreign trademark activity predominates, and after 2006, Bulgarian trademark activity prevails. By 2006, the total number of applications increased with an average annual of 9.02%. After 2006 and until 2019, total activity decreased with an average annual of 7.05%.

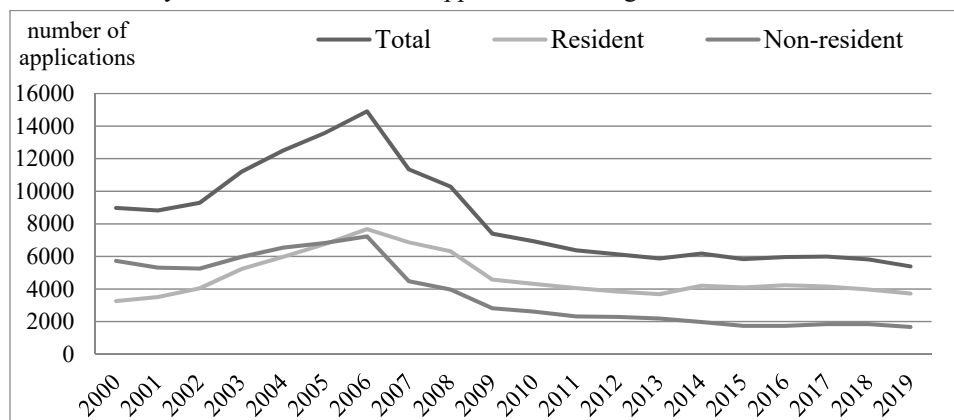
Table 1
General (Bulgarian and foreign) trademark application activity in Bulgaria (number of applications)

Indicator: 1 - Total trademark applications (direct and via the Madrid system)										Reporting type: Total count by filing office												
Office	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	8982	8820	9293	11197	12510	13587	14906	11348	10282	7391	6921	6374	6124	5868	6178	5836	5965	5989	5815	5387
2	Bulgaria	Resident	3256	3308	4043	5225	5974	6757	7677	6868	6315	4578	4308	4058	3840	3680	4205	4096	4234	4150	3969	3721
3	Bulgaria	Non-resident	5726	5512	5250	5972	6536	6830	7229	4480	3967	2813	2613	2316	2284	2188	1973	1740	1731	1839	1846	1666
Indicator: 1a- Direct applications																						
Office	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	4547	4398	4926	6148	7060	8009	9173	7542	7068	5139	4831	4490	4258	4120	4625	4508	4648	4536	4345	4109
2	Bulgaria	Resident	3256	3308	4043	5225	5974	6757	7677	6868	6315	4578	4308	4058	3840	3680	4205	4096	4234	4150	3967	3717
3	Bulgaria	Non-resident	1291	1090	883	923	1086	1252	1496	674	753	561	523	432	418	440	420	412	414	386	378	392
Indicator: 1b- Applications via the Madrid system																						
Office	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	4435	4222	4367	5049	5450	5578	5733	3806	3214	2252	2090	1884	1866	1748	1553	1328	1317	1453	1470	1278
2	Bulgaria	Resident	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
3	Bulgaria	Non-resident	4435	4222	4367	5049	5450	5578	5733	3806	3214	2252	2090	1884	1866	1748	1553	1328	1317	1453	1468	1274

Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

Figure 1

Dynamic of the trademark application in Bulgarian Patent Office



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

2.1. Bulgarian Trademark Applicant Activity

Bulgarian trademark applicant activity can be traced by the number of applications submitted by Bulgarian citizens in Bulgaria and abroad (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

The total number of trademark applications during the study period increases continuously, with the trend being analogical for the number of trademark applications submitted abroad (by equivalent count). The trademark applications on the territory of Bulgaria increased by 2006, after which, by 2009, the number of applications was 1.5 times lower. From 2009 to 2019, submitted trademark applications in Bulgaria are approximately 4,000 to 5,000 and maintain a relatively constant level.

Table 2
Bulgarian trademark application activity in Bulgaria and abroad (number of applications)

Indicator: 1 - Total trademark applications (direct and via the Madrid system)												Reporting type: Total count by applicant's origin (equivalent count)										
Origin	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	5199	5143	5852	8350	9863	12276	13418	18232	18511	16894	18912	20413	21947	20111	26333	25616	29275	26309	30231	32044
2	Bulgaria	Resident	3256	3508	4043	5225	5974	6757	7677	7127	6622	4906	4734	4523	4353	4155	4886	4751	4977	4843	4731	4550
3	Bulgaria	Abroad	1943	1635	1809	3125	3889	5519	5741	11105	11889	11988	14178	15890	17594	15956	21447	20865	24298	21466	25500	27494
Indicator: 1a- Direct applications																						
Origin	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	3575	3995	4342	5617	6169	7409	8454	12669	13558	12724	13355	16407	16754	15567	21572	21420	22688	22723	22671	25054
2	Bulgaria	Resident	3256	3508	4043	5225	5974	6757	7677	7076	6551	4843	4676	4475	4281	4080	4804	4677	4880	4784	4620	4461
3	Bulgaria	Abroad	319	487	299	392	195	652	777	5393	6807	7881	10679	11932	12473	11487	16768	16743	17808	17939	18051	20593
Indicator: 1b- Applications via the Madrid system																						
Origin	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	1624	1148	1510	2733	3694	4867	4964	5563	5153	4170	3557	4006	5193	4544	4761	4196	6587	3586	7560	6990
2	Bulgaria	Resident	-	-	-	-	-	-	51	71	63	58	48	72	75	82	74	97	59	111	89	
3	Bulgaria	Abroad	1624	1148	1510	2733	3694	4867	4964	5512	5082	4107	3499	3958	5121	4469	4679	4122	6490	3527	7449	6901

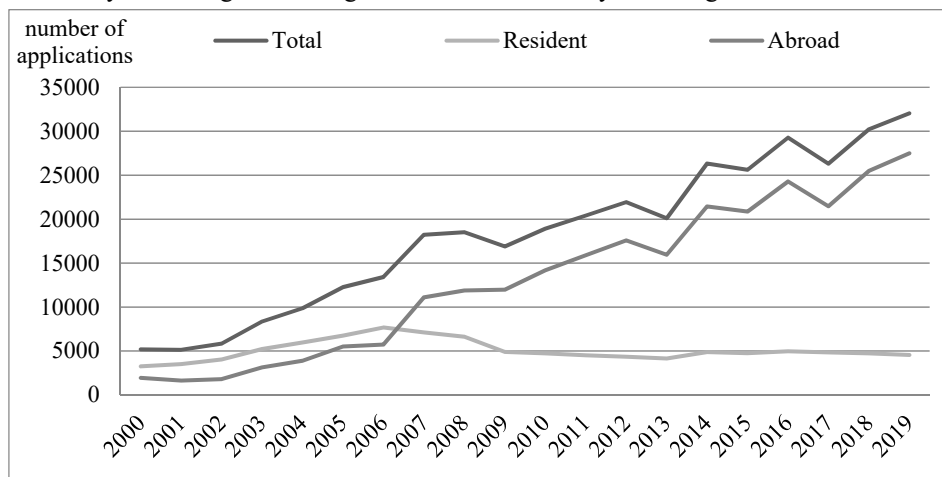
Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

The dynamics of Bulgarian activity (see Figure 2) clearly outlines two trends:

- Trademark applicant activity of Bulgarian citizens on the territory of Bulgaria marks a slight increase by 2006, from 2006 to 2009 – some decline, and then it hit a relatively sustainable level until the end of the period.
- Bulgarian applicant activity abroad has an increasing trend throughout the surveyed period, which gives reason to argue that the total Bulgarian applicant activity is mainly influenced by the activity abroad.

Figure 2

Dynamic of general Bulgarian trademark activity – in Bulgaria and abroad



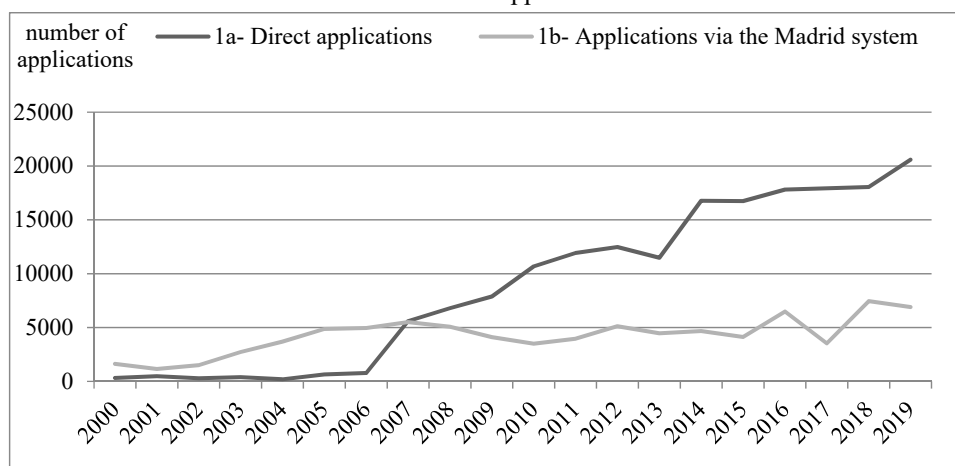
Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

From the beginning till the end of the period 2000-2019, the total Bulgarian applicant activity increased 6.16 times, with an average annual growth of 10.96%. Bulgarian activity abroad

throughout the surveyed period marked a significant average annual growth of 17.58%. This indicates the aspirations of Bulgarian trademark applicants for business development, market expansion and targeting their activity abroad.

A comparison between the methods for submitting trademark applications abroad by Bulgarian applicants is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Dynamic of general Bulgarian applicant activity abroad by the methods for submitting the trademark application



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

For the entire surveyed period, direct applications abroad dominate (177,875) over those submitted through the Madrid System (85,456). The national applications increase is 3.76 times more than the submitted applications via the Madrid System.

For the period 2000-2007, trademark applications via the Madrid System increased with an average annual of 25.35%, while direct applications at foreign intellectual property offices maintained a low level (Figure 3). In 2007, trends differed. There was a significant increase (62.89%) of trademark applications from 2006 to 2019 and a decrease in the applications submitted via the Madrid System that remained relatively constant with more significant fluctuations from 2015 to 2019 when the growth was 27.77%.

Information about the territories where Bulgarian applicants are looking for legal protection is provided in Table 3 and Figure 4. Please note that the data do not cover all countries in which Bulgarian applicants are interested. Out of a total of 139 countries where more than 70,000 trademark applications have been submitted for the specified period 2000 – 2019, those (19 territories) are presented where trademark activity exceeds 1,000 trademark applications. They form a 54.24% share.

Table 3

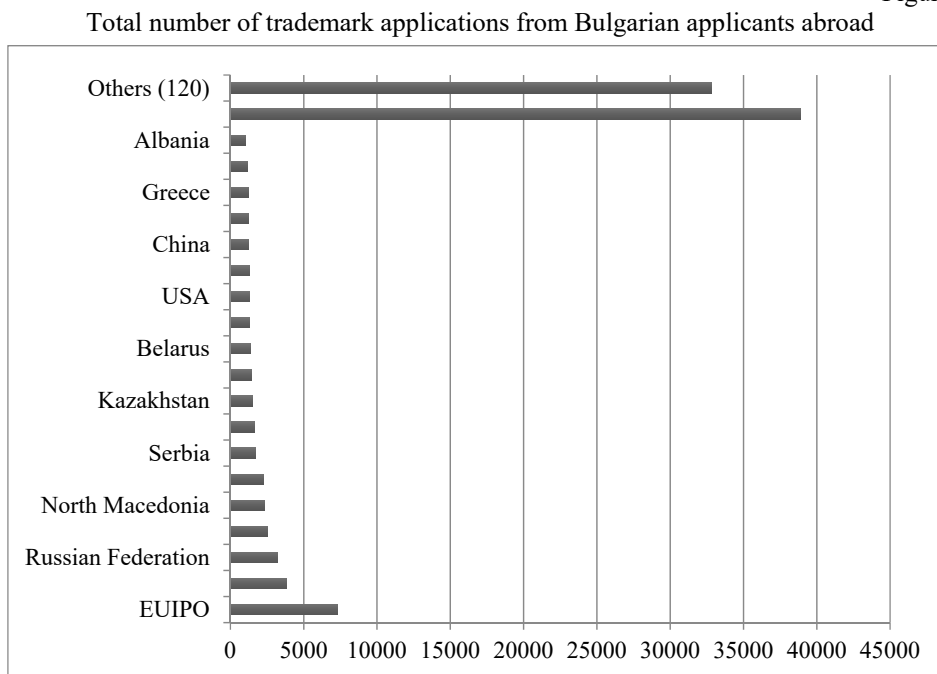
Bulgarian trademark applicant activity abroad (number of applications)

Office	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	ALL
1. EUIPO	4	8	1	5	4	53	77	259	307	328	426	465	513	475	681	655	743	693	762	829	7288
2. DE	33	31	41	58	96	161	99	111	528	391	640	752	443	39	37	30	66	86	88	79	3809
3. RU	124	100	89	170	220	235	248	217	182	163	121	158	170	200	151	103	126	124	137	149	3187
4. UA	102	78	77	163	194	185	199	181	148	153	113	114	157	117	121	78	99	68	103	107	2557
5. MG	101	61	70	125	152	166	191	218	222	136	109	103	91	92	87	79	88	56	103	81	2331
6. RO	63	65	74	127	191	215	191	233	219	120	82	75	87	75	69	46	82	51	101	94	2260
7. RS	-	-	-	-	-	-	112	215	225	150	111	116	111	104	111	86	101	76	119	97	1734
8. TR	-	4	38	64	122	144	122	145	134	88	78	82	104	76	99	68	69	56	81	67	1641
9. KZ	73	50	46	77	72	66	84	67	56	118	91	85	98	86	92	53	85	58	73	82	1512
10. AT	23	21	21	41	59	62	54	68	30	491	316	31	26	22	12	13	43	14	58	54	1459
11. BY	79	56	45	85	95	73	108	85	71	51	44	54	78	58	50	29	80	64	74	89	1368
12. MC	76	43	42	69	81	76	84	98	82	65	65	52	76	60	48	30	73	36	77	94	1327
13. US	5	3	3	10	50	35	56	63	53	43	32	43	85	80	95	90	127	103	165	164	1305
14. BA	24	20	22	61	61	93	77	82	106	86	66	62	62	62	68	46	73	43	90	80	1284
15. CN	29	33	64	35	37	49	48	60	85	61	67	97	96	79	97	84	66	56	49	44	1236
16. PL	54	37	55	76	116	106	87	124	57	41	33	43	62	37	26	32	59	29	71	70	1215
17. GR	4	10	32	62	106	137	112	140	122	58	44	46	36	26	30	18	48	31	74	65	1201
18. HR	25	22	27	75	77	110	83	108	82	55	63	64	61	53	42	25	46	23	58	62	1161
19. AL	42	23	25	59	77	47	51	65	80	61	58	81	61	54	69	41	35	38	41	20	1028
TOP 19	861	665	772	1362	1810	2013	2083	2539	2789	2659	2559	2523	2417	1795	1985	1606	2109	1705	2324	2327	38903
Others (120)	966	812	957	1583	1843	2098	1713	1975	1359	1093	937	1684	2300	1625	1604	1677	2027	1493	2384	2687	32817
ALL	1827	1477	1729	2945	3653	4111	3796	4514	4148	3752	3496	4207	4717	3420	3589	3283	4136	3198	4708	5014	71720

Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

The data in Table 3 and Figure 4 testify that Bulgarian trademark applicants are mainly oriented towards neighbouring Balkan and European countries and the period 2006-2007 is a turning point with regards the number of applications to EUIPO. From 2007 to 2019, submitted trademark applications via EUIPO increased more than 3 times. Thus, Bulgarian applicant activity abroad for the period 2000 – 2019 was mostly targeted at the registration of an “EU TradeMark/Community trademark” (7,288). Germany ranks second among the preferred territories for business expansion by submitting trademark applications (3,809) and Russia ranks third (3,187). The countries that follow them are Ukraine (2,557), Northern Macedonia (2,331), Romania (2,260), Serbia (1,734), Turkey (1,641), Kazakhstan (1,512), Austria (1,459), Belarus (1,368), Moldova (1,327), USA (1,305), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1,284), China (1,236), Poland (1,215), Greece (1,201), Croatia (1,161), Albania (1,028). The other countries in which Bulgarian trademark applicants are interested to form a 45.76% share.

Figure 4



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

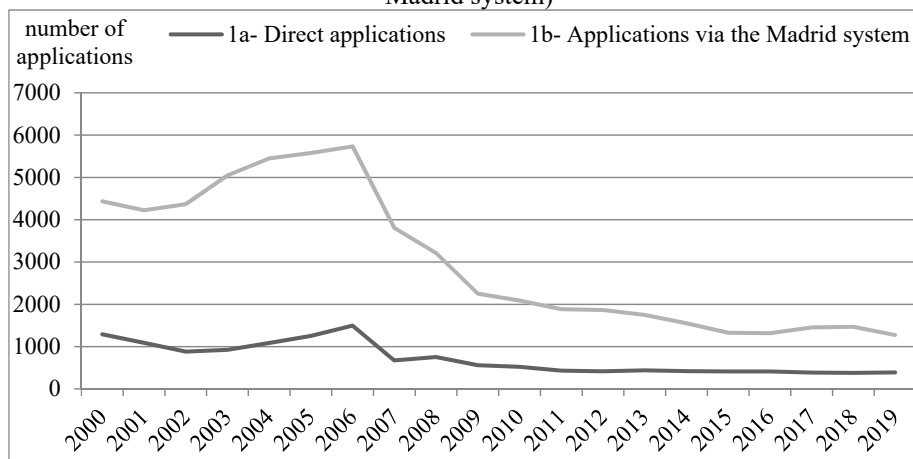
2.2. Foreign Trademark Applicant Activity

The image in Figure 5, drawn up according to Table 2, presents foreign trademark applications in Bulgaria via the Madrid System and direct applications at the Bulgarian Patent Office.

Throughout the studied period, the submitted applications via the Madrid System (60,087) significantly outnumber those submitted by direct application (14,224). From 2000 to 2006, submitted applications via the Madrid System were 34,834, and direct applications were 8,021 (nearly 4.5 times less). After 2006, the gap between the two types of application decreased significantly. For the period 2007 – 2019, the trademark applications via the Madrid System are 25,253, whereas direct applications are 6,203. During the period 2015-2019, the gap remained at a relatively constant level – the applications via the Madrid System were about 3.5 times more.

The described trends in the dynamics of the ways of submitting trademark applications give rise to the conclusion that direct applications, for which a slow decline has been observed from 2000 to 2002 followed by an increase in 2006, retained a relatively constant level after 2007 till the end of the study period. This trend is due to foreign trademark applications outside the Member States via the Madrid System, which submits direct applications to the Bulgarian Patent Office.

Figure 5
Dynamic of foreign trademark registration activity in Bulgaria (direct registration and via Madrid system)



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

Application submitted via the Madrid System mark a decline in 2001 and an increase by 2006. The image presents two periods of decrease in activity: 2006 – 2009, during which the decrease was with an average annual of 26.37%, and after 2009 to 2019, when activity dropped with an average annual of 5.27%. The reasons for these trends can be found in:

- Macroeconomic stability, improving the institutional environment and high investment activity in Bulgaria prior to 2007 – the basis for accelerated economic development in the years before the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union (EU). These, along with the harmonisation of trademark legislation, are a prerequisite for high foreign trademark application activity in the period 2000-2006, with applications submitted via the Madrid System.
- Following Bulgaria's accession to the EU (2007), foreign application activity declined compared to the 2006 level. The data in Table 3 clearly shows that, for the most part, this decrease is due to the redirection of applicants from the EU Member States to submit an EU TradeMark/Community trademark application.
- Highly impacted by the global economic crisis (2008-2009) and the subsequent contraction of markets, the instability of the environment, as well as the reduced business costs and investments during a crisis, foreign trademark applications in Bulgaria maintained a downward trend for the period 2008-2015.

An analysis was carried out for the study period of foreign trademark application activity in Bulgaria of applicants from 122 countries, and Table 4 and Figure 6 show data for 18 of them who submitted more than 1,000 applications for the specified period, with a total share of 84.55%. The information is also indicative of pinpointing the countries for which the business environment in Bulgaria is an economic interest and an opportunity for development.

Table 4

Foreign trademark applicant activity (number of applications)

Origin	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	ALL
1. DE	1409	1180	1003	1371	1357	1401	1244	660	529	334	253	199	177	178	216	141	134	120	99	97	12102
2. UA	532	433	339	368	528	719	896	309	210	149	153	132	124	150	134	142	121	119	109	82	5749
3. FR	687	510	536	540	523	494	615	300	269	173	127	111	104	120	95	88	96	107	64	72	5631
4. CH	561	592	452	378	379	407	477	295	294	237	196	173	168	140	101	130	143	152	135	124	5534
5. IT	511	455	384	477	551	553	553	230	256	114	89	69	58	52	51	39	21	38	32	24	4557
6. TR	41	107	245	261	326	331	328	331	341	232	235	195	201	214	189	158	154	137	116	111	4253
7. CN	58	73	96	97	189	219	250	196	202	193	225	240	221	186	197	118	237	384	503	227	4111
8. RU	42	58	90	136	179	140	172	216	165	157	183	210	188	166	153	114	114	156	123	147	2909
9. CZ	158	161	167	170	216	166	225	219	196	131	86	84	150	146	28	54	67	43	47	44	2558
10. AT	224	227	185	158	234	267	274	186	146	113	67	57	76	43	37	32	60	37	21	33	2477
11. GB	204	139	182	220	205	252	234	108	56	68	36	22	36	58	48	30	33	49	65	161	2206
12. NL	310	224	270	219	214	167	175	80	68	43	53	48	27	17	30	25	23	11	14	22	2040
13. PL	84	102	132	135	190	240	127	152	156	112	91	101	75	44	46	47	31	24	31	45	1965
14. HU	74	131	70	76	155	47	72	162	118	109	86	115	105	133	165	95	21	64	51	35	1884
15. ES	133	143	158	262	189	134	165	82	76	21	16	15	13	14	17	14	11	10	9	13	1495
16. BE	145	191	134	148	112	129	115	69	42	24	23	17	26	22	6	9	11	2	13	12	1250
17. SI	34	33	63	49	56	76	58	76	97	81	92	50	78	35	31	45	21	33	23	24	1055
18. JP	47	66	69	120	118	134	130	47	42	31	36	30	41	29	23	26	14	19	16	16	1054
TOP 18	5254	4825	4575	5185	5721	5876	6110	3718	3263	2322	2047	1868	1868	1747	1567	1307	1312	1505	1471	1289	62830
Others (103)	472	487	675	787	815	954	1119	762	704	491	566	448	416	441	406	433	419	334	375	377	11481
ALL	5726	5312	5250	5972	6536	6830	7229	4480	3967	2813	2613	2316	2284	2188	1973	1740	1731	1839	1846	1666	74311

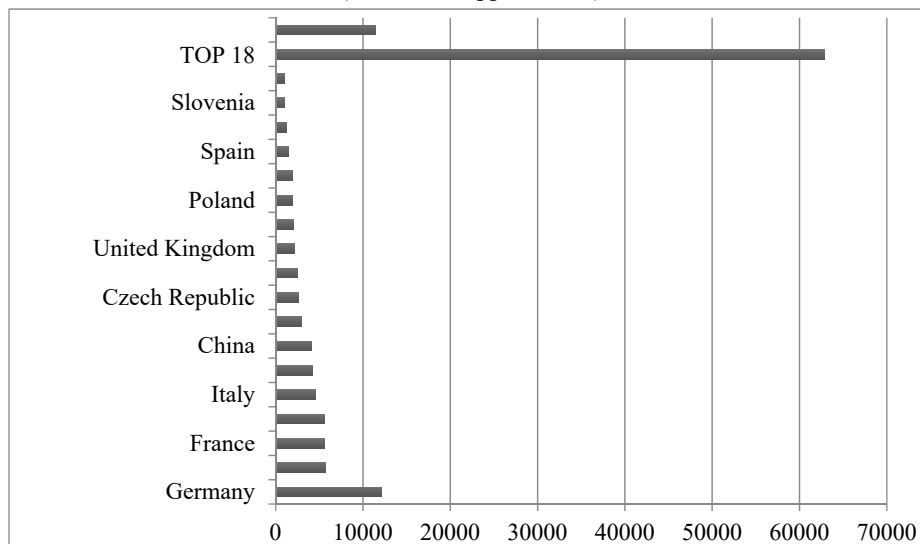
Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

The data show a high foreign activity of EU applicants by 2006, after which the number of trademark applications from the Member States decreased. A comparatively sustainable number of applications for the analysed period was submitted by persons (both natural and legal) from non-EU countries.

The image in Figure 6 shows a total number of submitted trademark applications from those countries for the period 2000 – 2019 ranged by activity. The data highlight the applicants from Germany as the most active when submitting trademark applications on the territory of Bulgaria. The country that follows is the USA, although, for the analysed period, trademark applicant activity is twice as low (5,749) compared to Germany (12,102). The third country whose citizens are interested in business development on the territory of Bulgaria is France (5,631). That is followed by Switzerland (5,534), Italy (4,557), Turkey (4,253), China (4,111), Russia (2,909), the Czech Republic (2,558), Austria (2,477), the United Kingdom (2,206), the Netherlands (2,040), Poland (1,965), Hungary (1,884), Spain (1,495), Belgium (1,250), Slovenia (1,055) and Japan (1,054). The share of foreign trademark applicant activity from other countries is 15.45% (11,481).

Figure 6

Foreign trademark applicant activity in Bulgaria according to the applicants' nationality (number of applications)



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

3. General Analysis of Trademark Activity, According to the Number of Registered Trademarks

In order to assess to what extent these trends are also observed in registered trademarks, a similar analysis of registered trademarks during the period 2000 – 2019 has been carried out in Bulgaria.

Table 5 presents data on registered trademarks at the Bulgarian Patent Office by Bulgarian and foreign trademark owners.

By comparing the number of registered trademarks for the period 2000 – 2019 and the number of trademark applications submitted for the same period, the impression is that the applications submitted (168,773) exceed the registered trademarks (140,765) by only 16%. Unlike trademark applicant activity, different trends (see Figure 7) are observed in registered trademarks.

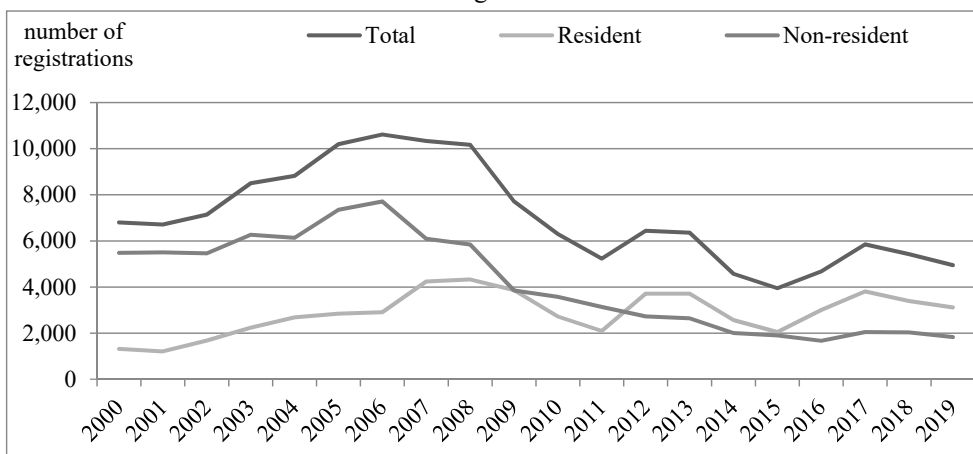
From 2000 to 2006, total activity is largely determined by foreign activity and by average annual growth of 7.93%. During this period, a total of 58,790 trademarks were registered, with those owned by foreigners (43,913) being 2.95 times more than the trademarks with Bulgarian owners (14,877). Since 2006, with some fluctuations, the number of registered trademarks of Bulgarian and foreign trademark owners decreased with an average annual of 4.32% by the end of 2019, with the decrease being more significant by 2011 (7.95%). From 2012 till the end of the period, Bulgarian trademark owners outnumber the foreign owners.

Table 5
General (Bulgarian and foreign) trademark activity in Bulgarian Patent Office (number of registrations)

Indicator: 2 - Total trademark registrations (direct and via the Madrid system)													Reporting type: Total count by filing office									
Office	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	6802	6709	7145	8503	8820	10194	10617	10337	10172	7712	6292	5235	6440	6360	4575	3948	4675	5853	5428	4948
2	Bulgaria	Resident	1318	1208	1681	2233	2687	2845	2905	4241	4329	3862	2718	2098	3715	3713	2567	2049	3007	3808	3393	3115
3	Bulgaria	Non-resident	5484	5501	5464	6270	6133	7349	7712	6096	5843	3850	3574	3137	2725	2647	2008	1899	1668	2045	2035	1833
Indicator: 2a- Registrations for direct applications																						
Office	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	2138	1919	2464	3058	3417	3600	3711	5342	6397	4955	3977	3095	4363	4294	3000	2317	3423	4297	3784	3467
2	Bulgaria	Resident	1318	1208	1681	2233	2687	2845	2905	4241	4329	3862	2718	2098	3715	3713	2567	2049	3007	3808	3391	3111
3	Bulgaria	Non-resident	820	711	783	825	730	755	806	1101	2068	1093	1259	997	648	581	433	268	416	489	393	356
Indicator: 2b- Registrations for applications via the Madrid system																						
Office	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	Bulgaria	Total	4664	4790	4681	5445	5403	6594	6906	4995	3775	2757	2315	2140	2077	2066	1575	1631	1252	1556	1644	1481
2	Bulgaria	Resident	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	
3	Bulgaria	Non-resident	4664	4790	4681	5445	5403	6594	6906	4995	3775	2757	2315	2140	2077	2066	1575	1631	1252	1556	1642	1477

Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations

Figure 7
Dynamic of registered trademarks in Bulgaria from Bulgarian and foreign trademark registrar



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

Until 2008 the activity of Bulgarian trademark owners increased with an average annual of 17.5%, after which strong fluctuations were reported until the end of the study period. In 2015, Bulgarian and foreign trademark activity marked similar levels.

3.1. Activity of Bulgarian trademark owners in Bulgaria and abroad

Registered trademarks by Bulgarian citizens for the period 2000-2019 on the territory of the country and abroad are presented in Table 6 and Figure 8. Numbers of registered trademarks were obtained at “equivalent count”.

Table 6

Bulgarian trademark owners in Bulgaria and abroad (number of registrations)

Indicator :													Reporting type :									
2 - Total trademark registrations (direct and via the Madrid system)													Total count by applicant's origin (equivalent count)									
	Origin	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	Bulgaria	Total	3321	2708	3671	5184	5951	8205	8155	9337	11827	12839	13938	13604	16438	16787	19266	19804	19469	26939	23943	29175
2	Bulgaria	Resident	1318	1208	1681	2233	2687	2845	2905	4301	4493	4113	3057	2432	4058	4060	3071	2568	3531	4468	3980	3831
3	Bulgaria	Abroad	2003	1500	1990	2951	3264	5360	5250	5036	7334	8726	10881	11172	12380	12727	16195	17236	15938	22471	19963	25344
Indicator :																						
2a- Registrations for direct applications																						
	Origin	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	Bulgaria	Total	1652	1430	2039	2438	2916	3068	3376	4991	7760	9861	11117	9992	11794	12286	15208	14992	16844	19866	17974	20616
2	Bulgaria	Resident	1318	1208	1681	2233	2687	2845	2905	4260	4448	4077	3021	2382	4004	4003	2999	2497	3484	4366	3900	3723
3	Bulgaria	Abroad	334	222	358	205	229	223	471	731	3312	5784	8096	7610	7790	8283	12209	12495	13360	15500	14074	16893
Indicator :																						
2b- Registrations for applications via the Madrid system																						
	Origin	Type	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	Bulgaria	Total	1669	1278	1632	2746	3035	5137	4779	4346	4067	2978	2821	3612	4644	4501	4058	4812	2625	7073	5969	8559
2	Bulgaria	Resident	-	-	-	-	-	-	41	45	36	36	50	54	57	72	71	47	102	80	108	
3	Bulgaria	Abroad	1669	1278	1632	2746	3035	5137	4779	4305	4022	2942	2785	3562	4590	4444	3986	4741	2578	6971	5889	8451

Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

The dynamics of the total Bulgarian activity – registered trademarks in the country and abroad throughout the study period are determined by and, to a large degree, depend on Bulgarian activity abroad (see Figure 8). Registered trademarks abroad are 207,721 – 3.3 times more than those registered in Bulgaria.

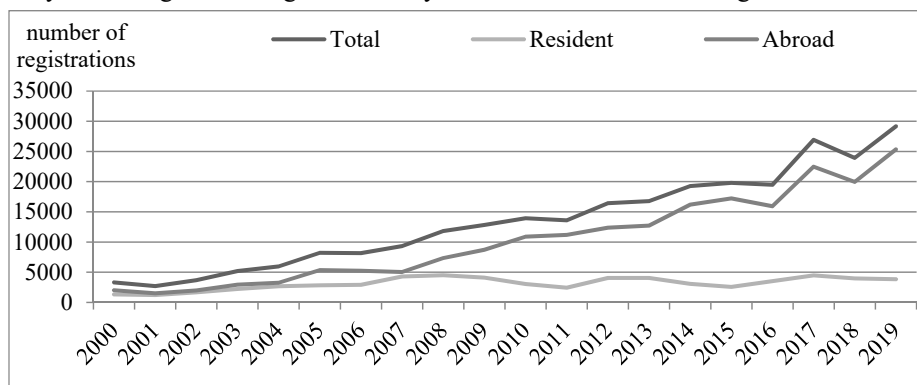
Registered trademarks on the territory of Bulgaria during the study period increased with an average annual of 8.71% and in 2000 were 1,318, increasing to 3,831 in 2019 (a total number for the period – 62,840).

Registered trademarks by Bulgarians abroad also increased during the study period. In 2000 they were 2003, and in 2019 their number was 25,344, which is 12.65 times more – the average annual growth was 16.48%. This gives reason to argue that the total Bulgarian activity – registered trademarks – is mainly influenced by Bulgarian activity abroad (207,720 in total).

Analysing the methods of trademark registration (see Figure 9), we observe the trends outlined in the process of submitting trademark applications – preference to the use of the Madrid System by 2008. In 2008, trends turned in favour of direct applications until the end of the study period. From 2007 to 2010, there was a sharp increase in direct applications, with an average annual of 130.72%. After 2010 and until 2019, the growth was 9.58%.

Figure 8

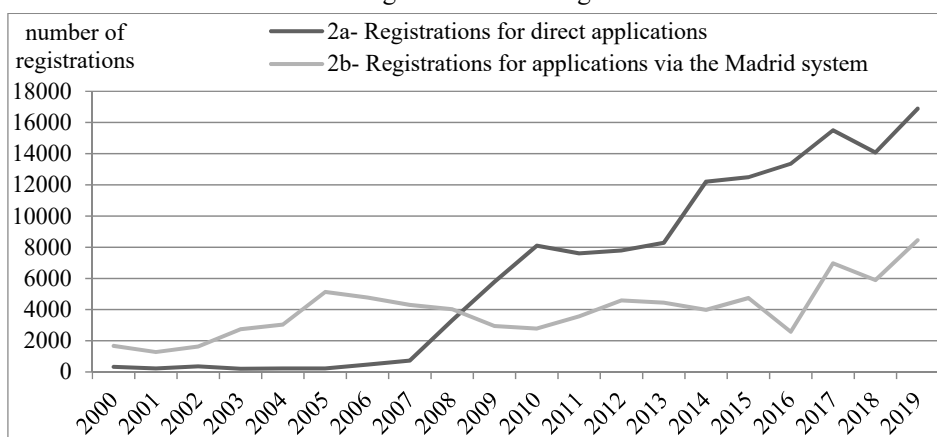
Dynamic of general Bulgarian activity of trademark owners in Bulgaria and abroad



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

Figure 9

Dynamic of general Bulgarian activity (in Bulgaria and abroad) by the methods for submitting the trademark registration



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

Typical of the trademarks registered via the Madrid System is their significant increase after 2016 and until 2019, with an average annual of 66.13%.

The activity of trademark owners abroad is largely oriented towards neighbouring Balkan countries and European countries, and there is a strong orientation towards economically significant countries such as the United States of America and China. Table 7 and Figure 10 provide information on 18 (47.73% share) of 143 territories in which Bulgarian trademark owners have submitted more than 1,000 trademark applications for the study period 2000-2019. Bulgarian trademark owners express the greatest interest in registering an “EU TradeMark/Community trademark” via EUIPO.

Table 7

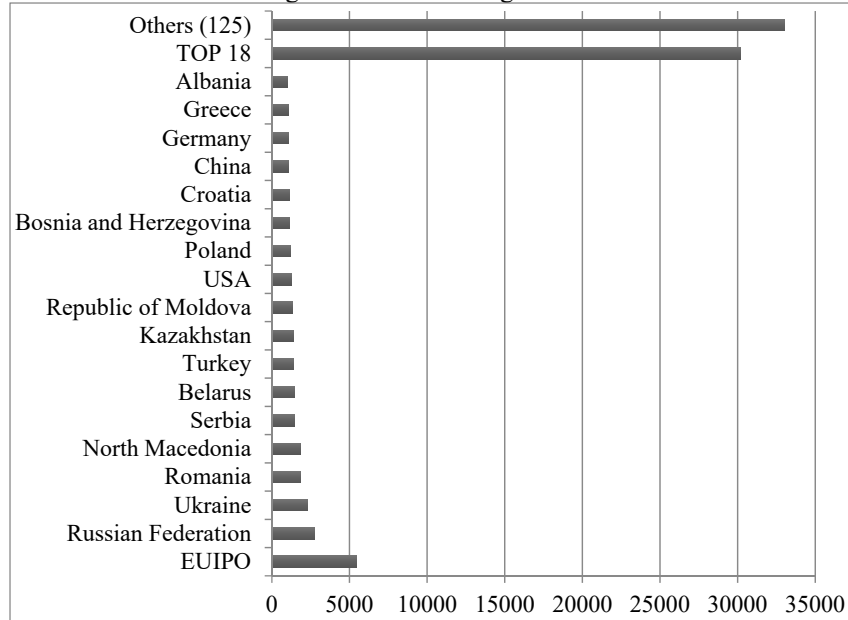
Number of trademark registrations from Bulgarian trademark owners abroad

Office	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	ALL
1.EUIPO	5	-	-	-	1	48	55	60	164	251	339	334	343	347	504	519	524	660	587	716	5457
2.RU	141	71	105	147	198	182	211	192	150	122	105	98	148	151	139	110	64	157	129	145	2765
3.UA	87	80	97	147	163	176	157	157	131	99	107	102	125	126	90	77	62	127	80	126	2316
4.RO	62	63	63	108	119	186	150	150	133	103	83	56	81	73	52	55	33	85	89	104	1848
5.MG	58	55	64	94	129	136	106	126	149	104	86	87	92	74	58	91	46	100	86	105	1846
6.RS	-	-	-	-	-	-	99	138	164	114	94	94	112	79	81	93	64	114	110	114	1470
7.BY	117	69	43	87	87	94	93	91	62	56	42	49	73	49	70	44	28	110	67	102	1433
8.TR	-	2	44	57	77	125	95	94	96	77	68	71	79	86	71	91	62	56	67	69	1387
9.KZ	72	41	53	86	82	72	84	66	49	44	55	63	111	76	59	48	34	114	75	90	1374
10.MC	71	45	39	74	77	90	84	83	77	59	54	51	72	66	53	42	19	80	66	97	1299
11.US	2	1	7	2	28	52	83	86	48	55	47	54	63	74	77	82	77	123	114	164	1239
12.PL	54	32	49	86	107	120	105	97	72	47	33	34	55	48	20	24	24	63	60	89	1219
13.BA	25	22	27	40	50	64	56	57	97	54	51	66	85	60	38	69	28	91	71	89	1140
14.HR	27	23	36	50	87	84	84	74	101	55	52	65	76	54	30	36	8	53	49	79	1123
15.CH	25	41	23	40	18	43	50	40	47	59	65	58	79	94	100	84	48	82	53	46	1095
16.DE	42	25	43	60	58	140	96	73	72	40	44	22	39	33	30	25	22	66	59	92	1081
17.GR	8	12	40	61	71	121	86	82	85	49	46	30	38	35	26	33	10	59	61	85	1038
18.AL	38	36	32	51	71	60	47	56	77	55	50	78	62	56	40	61	28	53	49	25	1025
TOP 18	834	618	765	1190	1423	1793	1741	1722	1774	1443	1421	1412	1733	1581	1538	1584	1181	2193	1872	2337	30155
Others (125)	1033	844	1155	1667	1703	2257	2073	1726	1392	974	965	1364	2008	1952	1439	1886	973	2304	2113	3195	33023
ALL	1867	1462	1920	2857	3126	4050	3814	3448	3166	2417	2386	2776	3741	3533	2977	3470	2154	4497	3985	5532	63178

Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

Figure 10

Number of trademark registrations from Bulgarian trademark owners abroad



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

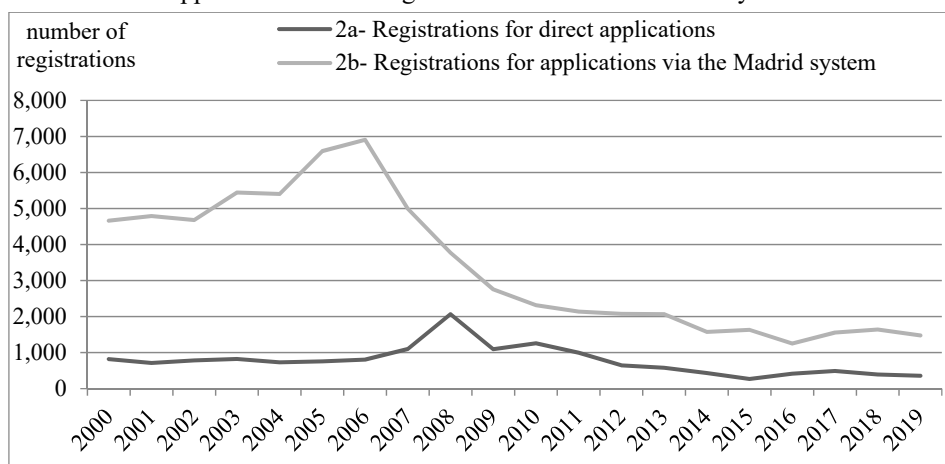
Ranked second among the Bulgarian owners is a trademark registration in Russia (2,765) and third is Ukraine (2,316). Following them are Romania (1,848), Northern Macedonia (1,846), Serbia (1,470), Belarus (1,433), Turkey (1,387), Kazakhstan (1,374), Moldova (1,299), USA (1,239), Poland (1,219), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1,140), Croatia (1,123), China (1,095), Germany (1,081), Greece (1,038), Albania (1,025). On the remaining 125 territories with a share of 57.27%, a total of 33,023 trademarks were registered for the study period.

3.2. Foreign trademark activity of trademark owners in Bulgaria

By analysing the methods of trademark registration (see Figure 11), we observe a significant majority throughout the period (4.36 times) of foreign owners using the Madrid System (67,741) compared to a direct application (15,532). The reason for this majority is the facilitated trademark registration procedure via the Madrid System, allowing legal protection of a registered trademark on the territory of more than one Member State specified by the trademark owner.

The image (see Figure 11) highlights two periods in the registration of a trademark via the Madrid System: a first period (2000 – 2006) when registered trademarks increased with an average annual of 7.13% and second period (2006 – 2019) when there was a decrease in registered trademarks with an average annual of 9.99%, significantly more pronounced by 2012 (17.6%).

Figure 11
Dynamic of foreign trademark activity in Bulgaria by the methods for submitting trademark application – direct registration and via The Madrid system



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

The dynamics of registered trademarks issued following a direct application is different, and its level remained relatively constant, with one exception in 2008 when they had their highest number. The average annual decrease from 2008 till 2019 is by 10.72%.

Table 8

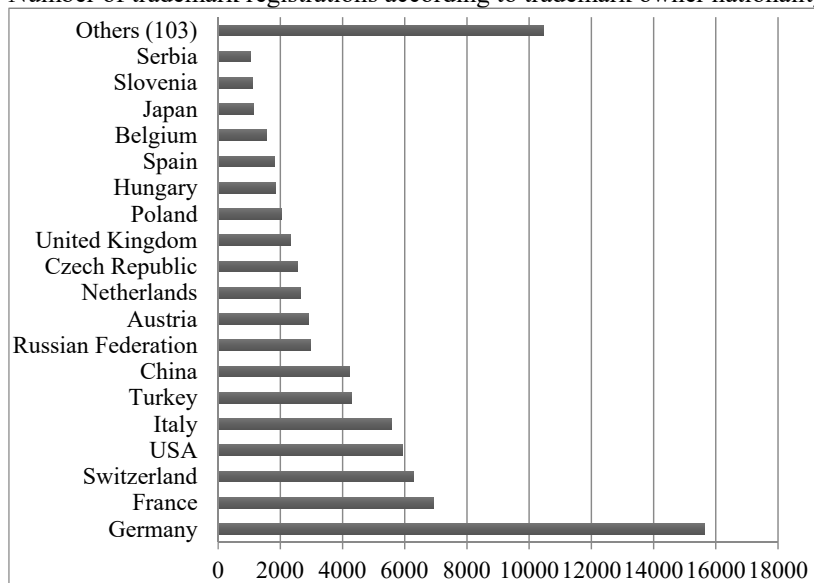
Number of registration according to trademark owner nationality

Origin	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	ALL
1.DE	1516	1448	1185	1628	1427	1678	1716	1047	928	598	500	454	271	238	229	156	158	165	150	132	15624
2.FR	727	590	598	591	561	653	641	477	415	263	269	202	141	155	116	120	90	143	83	91	6926
3.CH	555	694	508	458	390	472	536	362	335	286	299	198	200	187	115	93	116	190	161	127	6282
4.US	372	321	326	360	414	537	501	580	678	231	268	202	182	156	161	140	138	138	131	87	5923
5.IT	525	500	482	481	561	654	727	407	311	191	151	146	85	78	55	59	37	38	63	34	5585
6.TR	34	20	226	280	219	331	372	344	367	256	236	246	169	278	168	192	133	178	139	115	4303
7.CH	56	66	34	110	160	239	240	230	253	189	255	245	208	244	169	175	162	301	482	409	4227
8.RU	-	45	78	94	138	150	179	190	216	153	159	215	229	182	181	127	119	151	167	147	2967
9.AT	225	248	214	145	203	301	292	260	271	141	106	87	100	73	37	35	54	55	32	28	2907
10.NL	304	255	285	254	265	217	252	126	141	102	111	103	51	45	19	30	22	25	20	20	2647
11.CZ	144	144	165	126	189	197	219	201	240	142	97	84	92	167	82	43	42	64	51	53	2542
12.GB	132	109	214	164	197	253	256	174	144	110	138	85	38	42	40	52	27	48	46	56	2325
13.PL	62	125	79	118	152	167	190	194	196	161	109	87	104	60	39	56	33	37	20	60	2049
14.HU	58	119	69	73	131	68	59	184	91	129	84	108	122	139	111	149	26	18	63	48	1849
15.ES	126	188	145	334	193	165	172	129	111	47	44	45	25	17	11	14	16	9	19	6	1816
16.BE	137	219	124	169	112	179	148	71	88	58	50	46	35	30	19	7	10	12	11	17	1542
17.JP	43	36	64	114	109	134	120	103	78	41	55	27	49	41	31	14	34	19	19	17	1148
18.SI	40	27	65	51	58	85	67	72	101	95	107	41	77	49	23	30	34	38	23	24	1107
19.RS	2	11	25	39	20	50	63	134	83	98	66	59	26	47	40	40	74	62	54	57	1050
TOP 19	5105	5165	4886	5589	5499	6530	6750	5285	5047	3291	3104	2680	2204	2228	1646	1532	1325	1691	1734	1528	72819
Others (103)	379	336	578	681	634	819	962	811	796	559	470	457	521	419	362	367	343	354	301	305	10454
ALL	5484	5501	5464	6270	6133	7349	7712	6096	5843	3850	3574	3137	2725	2647	2008	1899	1668	2045	2035	1833	83273

Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations.

Figure 12

Number of trademark registrations according to trademark owner nationality



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author's calculations

These trends and changes in the methods of foreign trademark registrations are significantly influenced by two factors:

First: Bulgaria's accession to the EU (2007) – we observe a distinct decrease in trademark owners registering a trademark via the Madrid System in 2007 compared to 2006 (27.67%).

Second: The World Economic Crisis (2008) – decline trends were observed during the period 2008 – 2009 both for the registration of trademarks via the Madrid System and the direct application process by foreign trademark owners in Bulgaria.

An analysis of foreign trademark activity was carried out in 122 countries, with a total of 72,819 registrations. Table 8 and Figure 12 present data for 19 of them, whose citizens have more than 1,000 registered trademarks, during the analysed period with a total share of 87.45%.

The image in Figure 12 shows the total number of registered trademarks in the period 2000-2019. According to the data Germany again is the country with the highest activity in registration of trademarks on the territory of Bulgaria (15,624). Following Germany, with owners who have registered a large number of trademarks in Bulgaria, are: France (6,926); Switzerland (6,286); USA (5,923); Italy (5,585); Turkey (4,303); China (4,227); Russia (2,967); Austria (2,907); the Netherlands (2,647); Czech Republic (2,542); United Kingdom (2,325); Poland (2,049); Hungary (1,849); Spain (1,816); Belgium (1,542); Japan (1,148); Slovenia (1,107); Serbia (1,050). The share of foreign trademark activity from other countries is 12.55% (10,454).

4. Summary and Conclusions

Four periods can be outlined as a result of the analyses of Bulgarian and foreign trademark activity in Bulgaria and of trademark activity of Bulgarian trademark owners abroad.

First Period: 2000-2006: The trends observed are associated with trademark application activity growth. By 2002, it was less pronounced and under the influence of foreign activity, and higher for the period 2003 – 2006, strongly influenced by Bulgarian applicant activity. The observed trends for trademark owners are similar for the specified period, and the trademark activity rises by 2006.

Second Period: 2007-2008: This period is a cornerstone for trademark applicants/trademark owners in the business environment. The accession of the Republic of Bulgaria in the European Union (EU) is a determining factor. Bulgaria's EU membership provides Bulgarian citizens with the opportunity of protecting trademarks by submitting an "EU TradeMark/Community trademark" application. It is common to all EU Member States. Bulgaria's EU membership is the reason for the observed continuous increase in the number of registered trademarks in the EUIPO system since 2007. The importance of Bulgaria's accession to the EU is also evident from another trend – the decreasing number of applications and trademark registrations after 2007 via the Madrid System. By 2006 there was a steady increase of these applications, as the European Union is a party to the Madrid System, allowing Bulgarian applicants to register trademarks in European Union countries

through the membership of Bulgaria in the Madrid System. Following Bulgaria’s accession to the EU in 2007, this “roundabout” access to European countries is losing its importance due to the possibility of a direct “EU TradeMark/Community trademark” application through EUIPO.

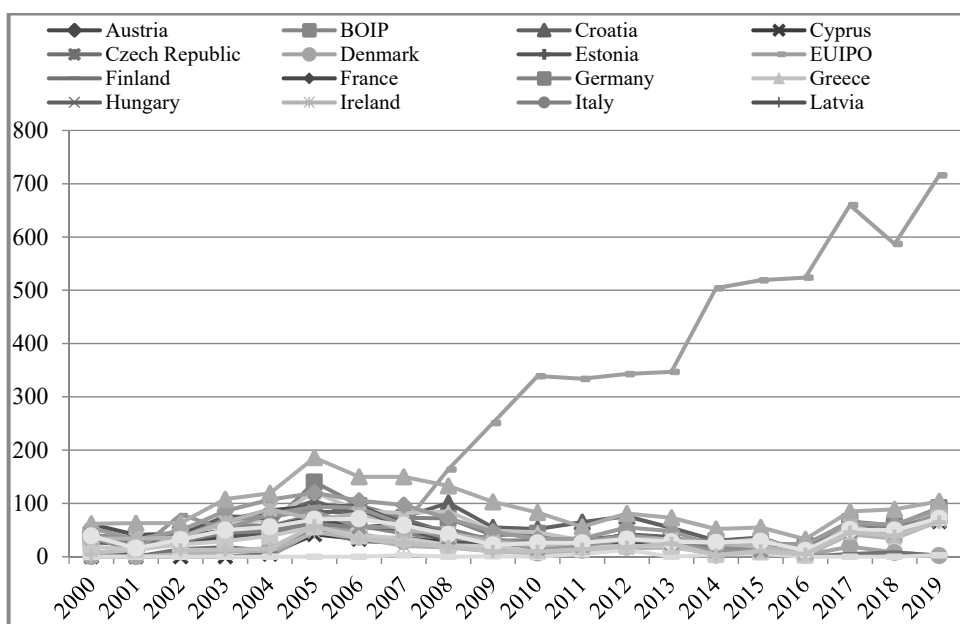
The trend is proven through its visualisation and the dynamics of registered trademarks by Bulgarian trademark owners in the EU Member States and registered EU TradeMarks (Community trademarks) via EUIPO for the period 2000 – 2019 is presented (figure 13).

After 2007, the number of registered trademarks via EUIPO grew progressively (with an average annual increase of 29.16% from 2007 till 2019) compared to the decreased number of registrations in the EU Member States. **The trend of increasing trademark registrations after Bulgaria’s accession in the EU proves the hypothesis for a mutual commitment between trademark activity and the business environment conditions in which natural and legal persons operate.**

The access of Bulgarian trademark applicants to the single European market through a simplified application and trademark registration procedure expands the opportunities for the development of Bulgarian enterprises and provides equal conditions for carrying out their activities.

Figure 13

Number of trademark registrations from Bulgarian trademark applicants in the EU Member States and via EUIPO



Source: WIPO Statistic Data Center, Author’s calculations.

Third Period: 2008-2011: There is a decline in trademark activity by Bulgarian and foreign trademark applicants and trademark owners on the territory of Bulgaria and by Bulgarian trademark applicants and trademark owners abroad. This fact is defined by the World Economic Crisis, which began in 2008. It led to a high degree of uncertainty and the environment for business development deteriorated. The key points of this period are related to increasing the bankruptcy degree of credit institutions (dates back to 2007), collapsing of stock markets and real estate markets, a gross world product decrease, the increase of product prices, record high values of gold and oil, growth of unemployment in some of the affected countries. Negative trends in the deterioration of the environment for business development also affected trademark activity and defined the reported decline in trademark applications during the World Economic Crisis of 2008, which again confirms the output of the hypothesis. The negative impact of the crisis on trademark activity is also confirmed by a WIPO report (2010, p. 26-28). The report also states that the trademark activity by the Madrid system is most affected. Prerequisites for this are sought in the reorientation of natural and legal persons to national markets.

Fourth period: 2012-2019: During that period, the total applicant activity (Bulgarian and foreign) is relatively stable. The activity of trademark owners is characterised by a lack of clearly outlined trends – we observe both an increase and decrease in activity. Since 2017 there has been a downward trend in the activity of Bulgarian and foreign trademark owners in Bulgaria.

The results of the analyses of trademark applicant activity and the activity of trademark owners on the territory of Bulgaria as well as the activity of Bulgarian applicants and trademark owners abroad for the period 2000-2019 allow for the following conclusions to be made:

1. There is an increased trademark applicant activity for the period 2000-2006, after which the number of applications for trademark registration on the territory of the country by Bulgarian and foreign trademark owners decreased.
2. In 2007, trademark owners changed their method of submitting trademark applications abroad. Until 2006, the number of trademark applications submitted through the Madrid System was constantly increasing, while direct applications were fewer. Since 2007, the trend sharply changed with an increase in the direct applications at the Bulgarian Patent Office and a decrease of trademark applications through the Madrid System.
3. There is a sharp decline in the number of trademark applications and trademark registrations in Bulgaria from 2008 to 2009, both from Bulgarian and foreign trademark applicants.
4. There is an increase in the number of trademark applications by Bulgarian citizens abroad, and this growth maintains a higher positive change of 22.99% for the period 2000 – 2007 and 15.09% for the period 2008-2019.
5. The highest trademark activity is observed in the application and registration of an “EU TradeMark” (Community trademark). For the period 2000-2007, the average annual change was 271.3% and from 2008 till 2019, trademark activity decreased but maintained positive growth of 11.03%.

As a result of the study, we have achieved the following:

- We presented existing studies in the field of trademarks related to the subject.
- We studied and analysed the state and dynamics of Bulgarian and foreign trademark activity in Bulgaria for the period 2000-2019, on trademark applications and registered trademarks.
- We identified the countries in which Bulgarian trademark applicants and trademark owners are mostly interested.
- We identified the impact of legislative changes in the field of trademarks and unpredictable economic changes on trademark activity.
- We analysed the impact of business environment change in Bulgaria on trademark activity.

We can conclude that the study tasks have been completed and the objective has been achieved.

Some issues remain that are not included in this paper and would be the subject of future studies: other factors, in addition to the business environment conditions, affecting the trademark activity of natural and legal persons; the correlation “competitiveness index – trademark activity”; the relationship between the Nice Classification of trademarks and the economic sectors of Bulgaria.

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