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Utility models can be registered in some countries to protect technical innovations which might not qualify for a patent. The requirements of protection vary from country to country. However, most countries will only grant utility models for products, not for methods or processes. Because the novelty and inventive step requirements are less stringent than those required for patents, utility models can be useful for incremental inventions where only a small change has been made and which might not meet the inventive step requirements for a patent.

Utility models are a more flexible and less costly way of protection of technical inventions than patents. The degree of inventive step is required but in a lower grade than for a patent and the maximum duration of protection is shorter.

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© European Union (2011 - 2018). This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 641474.
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Last update: 16/01/2018

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