

## **Final Conference summing up the project: *Financial incentives as a tool for improving the V4 innovation ecosystem and enhancing IP protection***

On Monday 25th of September 2023 the final conference summing up the project *Financial incentives as a tool for improving the V4 innovation ecosystem and enhancing IP protection* took place. 102 participants listened to the presentations given by the invited specialists in the field of Intellectual Property from all of the four Visegrad Group countries and project partners from:

- Jagiellonian University, CITTRU (Poland)
- Charles University, Faculty of Law (Czechia)
- Slovak Organization for Research and Development Activities (Slovakia)
- University of Debrecen (Hungary)

The conference is the result of 12 month-long work conducted by the aforementioned partners.

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**Professor Justyna Ożegalska-Trybalska** from the **Jagiellonian University** opened the conference and welcomed all of the distinguished guests. Subsequently **Gabriela Konopka-Cupiał PhD** the director of the Centre for Technology Transfer CITTRU in her welcoming speech underlined the role of increasing the number of IP protection. Deputy President of the **Polish Patent Office Piotr Zakrzewski PhD** emphasized the role of the Jagiellonian University in conducting research on intellectual property issues. He expressed deep appreciation to the diversity and the fact that all of the participants come from a different professional background such as patent offices, universities, non-governmental organizations etc.

**Johanna Stadler** the Director at **Visegrad Patent Institute** warmly welcomed all of the participants, expressing her great satisfaction to the fact that the Project is fully dedicated to the enhancing IP protection specifically in the V4 countries. Director Stadler introduced the Visegrad Patent Institute and its role as an intergovernmental organization with the main objective to offer users of the patent system from the Central and Eastern European region a favourable and efficient option for obtaining patent protection abroad. Start of a new search service was announced, from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 the VPI will support the patenting efforts of applicants and prospective applicants by providing them with information on the novelty and patentability prospects of their invention at the earliest stage possible without financial commitment of a patent application.

Detailed information is available on the website of the Visegrad Patent Institute (<https://vpi.int/en/>).

Next presentation had been conducted by the Deputy Director at the **Centre for Technology Transfer CITTRU Krystian Gurba** who described the main purpose and aim of the project which was developing the recommendations for policymakers and financing organizations at the national and regional V4 level as well as exchanging best practices and identifying the most effective financial tools and schemes that support obtaining IP protection in V4 countries. Deputy Director discussed the content of the report and listed the activities that were completed during the duration of the project such as:

- mapping the national and regional financial schemes supporting innovations and IP protection in V4 countries
- identifying individual public support schemes, programs and initiatives and their impact

- developing joint recommendations for improving innovation ecosystems and enhancing technology transfer activities in the V4 region
  - disseminating project results and the discussing the best practises with policymakers and other stakeholders
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In the second part of the conference the guest speakers delivered presentations about the role of formally granted IP rights in business strategies and innovative economies.

The first presentation on the topic *Hungarian incentives for patenting, with a special focus on the programmes and services of the Hungarian IP Office* was conducted by **Péter Lábodý PhD** Vice-President for Legal, International and Innovation Affairs of the **Hungarian Intellectual Property Office**. He introduced the structure and national and international engagement of the HIPO. The participants learned about The Neumann program which provides strong incentives for Hungarian universities, researchers and students to increase patent and trademark applications. HIPO conducts educational programs in a field of IP at universities and research institutions aiming at guiding the universities through the utilization of IP. The additional aim is raising IP awareness and improving IP protection among SME's by promoting resources leading to support of activities fostering the domestic and international protection of IP (SME Fund).

Next **Emil Zatkuliak**, Head of the International Relations Department of the **Industrial Property Office of the Slovak Republic** referred to the topic of *SME's support activities*. The speaker listed the main goals leading to identifying opportunities to strengthen IP protection and growing innovation ecosystem via four strategic goals:

- providing better and faster IP protection
- increasing IP awareness and use of IP rights
- strengthening commercialization and IP rights enforcement
- intensifying international cooperation

IPO of the Slovak Republic made recently main developments to reach the following targets:

- reduction of the proceedings' duration
- notifications on proceedings' changes provided by SMS or e-mail
- introduction of new National IP strategy developed in line with National Research Development and Innovative Strategy, approved by the Slovak Government on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2023
- study visits for startups, small, medium and large enterprises on how to protect a product or service from copying or counterfeiting or how to get financial support to protect products and services

One of the important elements of the development of the innovation ecosystem for IPO SR is the cooperation with EUIPO. The cooperation is in line with the Strategic Plan 2025 built on a vision of delivering a stronger IP system, efficient enforcement and better understanding of IP rights in global and increasingly digital environment.

**Lucie Zamykalová PhD**, Head of International Relations Department, **Industrial Property Office of the Czech Republic** delivered the presentation on the topic of *IP Strategy: The Approach to Promote Industrial Property Rights*. She focused on the analysis of the IP European Innovation Index. Czechia is a Moderate Innovator, over time, performance relative to the EU has remained the same. To

strengthen the position of the Czech Republic as the innovation leader the following measures should be taken:

- raising awareness of industrial property rights protection
- increasing in the use of IP rights
- effective use of patent information
- establishing a framework to promote industrial property rights protection
- development of international cooperation
- use of digital technology in developing the system of industrial property rights protection

**Joanna Kupka** the Deputy Director in the Promotion and Innovation Department of **the Polish Patent Office** shared her experience acquired while running the project *IP in your company* and during the speech focused on *The role of national IP offices in promoting IP protection*. Project *IP in your company* offered IP Scan services dedicated to SMEs, delivered online or in person. The scope of the service provided the whole spectrum of IPRs, the main aim was to show possible business benefits of using IP protection. Deputy Director during the presentation described the granting scheme of the project and services provided by the Polish Patent Office. The main part of the presentation was devoted to the description of the problems and challenges the organisers of the project had to face. Such knowledge can be a helpful in work organization of other Patent Offices for the future.

The main problems and challenges were:

- timing of the project; COVID pandemic and economic crisis
- lack of similar services available before
- bureaucracy in the eyes of SMEs
- inadequate requirements in comparison to a grant amount
- administrative workload behind the project

Deputy Director Joanna Kupka also raised the topic of other possible means of supporting SMEs in effective use of IP which can be among others:

- raising awareness activities such as organising events, providing educational materials or using social media platforms
- creating a network with other business institutions, journalists etc.
- creating a user-friendly front-office

**Anna Sowa-Jadczyk** from **The Malopolska Agency for Regional Development (MARR SA)** gave the presentation on *The role of region in providing financial schemes in IP protection*. The speaker explained the three main fields of supporting regional innovation strategy. At the beginning MARR SA provides know-how for new entrepreneurs and assists in preparation of their business plans and financial analyses. The emphasis is on advising of professional company management, carrying out audits of companies and looking for optimal solutions in order to improve performance.

Anna Sowa-Jadczyk introduced to the audience two projects conducted by MARR SA. The first one is entitled WIDOK – Własność Intelektualna: Doceniam, Ochraniam, Korzystam (VIEW – Intellectual Property: I Appreciate, I Protect, I Use) which aims on raising the awareness of the SEMs about the benefits of intellectual property protection. The second one entitled Własność Intelektualna – niedoceniony potencjał przedsiębiorców (Intellectual Property – the underestimated potential of entrepreneurs) which goal is spreading the knowledge in the field of methods, possibilities and benefits resulting from the protection of intellectual property in enterprises.

**Virág Halgand Dani** Head of the Section for Central European and Baltic States Countries and Mediterranean Countries and Young Expert **Eva Stefanovska**, **WIPO TDC Division**, introduced the *WIPO Project on PCT for Universities, SMEs, Startups of V4 countries*. During the presentation participants could gain the knowledge about the main objectives of the project such as increase of awareness and understanding of the benefits of the PCT system as well as increase of its use by Universities, SMEs and startups of the Visegrad countries, through customized needs-assessment, tailored and targeted awareness raising and capacity building activities. The experts provided the results of desk-research. The numbers show that from the total patent filings by applicants residing in the V4 countries, the percentage of PCT filings in the triennium of 2019-2021 is 11% (CZ), 10% (HU), 8% (SK) and 6% (PL). The PCT applications field per 1 000 000 inhabitants, in 2022, are 22 (CZ), 12 (HU), 10 (PL) and 8 (SK).

**Virág Halgand Dani** explained three main areas of work of WIPO in terms of IP Finance, which are:

- 1) raising the profile of IP finance, bringing together stakeholders (High-level Conversation on Unlocking Intangible Asset Finance November 2022, November 2023)
- 2) WIPO Report Series on Unlocking IP - backed Finance; in Progress for V4 countries (situation on the ground, identify gaps and best practises)
- 3) creation of tools, providing information and guidance: objective to equip participants in the finance and valuation ecosystems to help them use IP as a financial asset. This includes a series of hands-on finance guides, the first of which will address debt finance.

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The topic of the third part of the conference was *Mapping financial incentives enhancing IP protection in V4 countries*. During that final part, speakers focused on presentations of the national report and final results of the project followed by the joint recommendations. Detailed information is to be found in the Final Report of the Project.

At first Presentation of the national report was held by the partners from Czechia – **Petra Žikovská PhD** and **Vaclav Hodonicky PhD** from the **Charles University in Prague**, who at the beginning presented the general overview and the key players such as the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Business and Innovation Agency (AIP), CzechInvest, The Technology Agency of the Czech Republic and The Industrial Property Office. In the course of the work on the project the following problems were identified:

- no one-stop-shop source of information
- rather low effectiveness of the programmes
- financial obstacles
- legislative obstacles

To overcome the aforementioned problems and improve the innovation ecosystems following recommendations have been prepared:

- introducing tax benefits
- patentability as obligatory condition of a subsidy
- IP law system easier to navigate
- strengthening of the capacities of VPI

**Neméth Gábor** and **Bene Tamás** from the **University of Debrecen** conducted the presentation of Hungarian National Report. First the partners presented the National Innovation Ecosystem of Hungary and the RDI Strategy for years 2021-2030 which is aiming at making more use of the results of public research organisations, improving the innovation performance of domestic enterprise (especially SMEs) and strengthening cooperation between actors in the R&D and innovation systems. Speakers presented good practises such as support schemes, programmes and initiatives with a particular focus on financing IP protection and listed barriers to IP protection, which are following:

- financial barriers – certain applicant groups might be discouraged from applying for patent protection
- lack of proper knowledge on the benefits of the IP protection and on the IP system
- low availability of patent attorney services: with a few exceptions, enterprises do not employ in-house patent agents and patent attorneys' offices are almost exclusively located in Budapest

Country recommendations concerning prepared by Hungarian Partners were concerning both, the IP protection and technology transfer.

IP protection:

- awareness-raising
- services necessary for the protection and commercialisation of IP should be directly available to any stakeholders
- development of IP voucher scheme in the framework of a project development service of the National Innovation Agency
- in case of R&D grants, a certain minimum part of the funding must be used for the IP positioning

Technology transfer:

- introducing new research funding schemes focusing on co-production of research with the industry and market-oriented research
- improving the support of proof of concept funds available for universities and PROs (co-financing)
- launching long-term funding schemes that support the creation of academic spin-off companies
- considering tax allowance for inventors

**Lubomir Bilsky** from the **Slovak Organization for Research and Development Activities** conducted the presentation on the works done by the Slovak Partners. The presentation focused on the innovation ecosystem of Slovakia, introducing main stakeholders such as Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR and Industrial Property Office of the SR. Report of the Slovak Republic concentrated on 9 national, 6 regional and 11 institutional programs and initiatives focused on technology transfer and IPR financing.

The list of best practices had been selected by the Slovak partners:

- innovation vouchers (SMEs) – enhancing the cooperation of business entities and public research institutions as well as refunding the costs of IPR protection filling and maintenance fees
- national technology transfer centre (public academic institutions) – patent fund: covering the filling and maintenance fees – app. 260 patent/utility model applications supported
- national business centre – financial and non-financial support

The presentation ended with enlisting the following national recommendations:

- raising awareness and information on IPR issues
- effective use of EU funds: Structural & Investment fund/Recovery and Resilience Facility
- introducing new funding schemes for the IPR protection

The final part of the conference were the results of the national report of Polish Partners as well as joint recommendations and final results of the project presented by **Professor Justyna Ożegalska-Trybalska** from the **Jagiellonian University**.

The list of best identified practices contained the following items:

- decentralisation of funds for financing IP protection
- support for the prospective applicants at the stage of building IP strategy helping in applying for optimal for of IP protection
- combined forms of support (free consultancy support for the preparation of formal protection applications + financing of administrative fees and financing of protection maintenance)

Polish partners listed three main recommendations:

- centralised management of support programmes/centralised information based on currently available support programmes at national, local level
- centralisation of forms of support
- actions aimed at enhancing cooperation in the area of IP protection in the VF region

Professor Justyna Ożegalska-Trybalska provided the participants with a general overview of the project as well as a summary of the works conducted by the project partners.

Detailed information is to be found in the Project Report followed by the list of joint recommendations and final results.