

Address of the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, at the international conference 'Intellectual property – vision without illusion'

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[Egils Levits](#)



Dear participants and viewers of the conference,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to have been invited to open today's conference of the Patent Office, 'Intellectual property – vision without illusion', and celebrate the 100 years of protection of industrial property rights in Latvia. This international conference will focus on topics surrounding the correlation between intellectual property and economy, innovation and education. It aims to explore the existing and future trends in intellectual property through a discussion and exchange of views between industry professionals, economic experts and a wide range of stakeholders.

After spending 15 years in Court of Justice of the European Union working with and adjudicating a considerable number of cases involving intellectual property rights, it was with great interest that I accepted this invitation. I suppose my colleagues who have been involved in this judicial debate share similar interest.

Dear colleagues,

Let us consider how great discoveries and innovations are made. They are made when an idea meets the resources required to implement it. As one of the countries of the fastest growing regions of Europe – the Baltics – Latvia is a place where ideas can turn into solutions. I am certain that the future of our country lies in our intellectual potential. Our potential to be creative and innovate.

Ingenuity, intellectual prowess, determination and courage of numerous Latvian inventors became known right after the establishment of industrial property protection framework hundred years ago, shortly after proclamation of national

independence in 1918, and it continues to promote Latvia around the world to this day.

From inventions of the first Latvian patent holder Jānis Prāts, who came up with the 'methodology for separating linseed seed heads from the stalk and specially designed milling machine', to world-level pharmaceutical, medical, mechanical engineering artificial intelligence and entertainment industry inventions, Latvia has been capable of showing its intellectual and entrepreneurial potential in all its richness.

Latvia has been one of the fastest growing regions in the European Union for the last three years. Latvia ranked 34 out of 126 world countries in Global Innovation Index in 2019. Latvia continues to develop its national innovation system with numerous improvements this year as well. We implement different support programmes that help various research and development projects attract private investors and encourage more businesses to invest in innovations. Main support tools are designed to promote cooperation of business operators and research community on joint projects, help bring innovation to market and enhance transfer of technology.

Competitive advantages of Latvian economy mostly stem from technological factors, better manufacturing efficiency and innovations. Due to government's focus on better innovation ecosystem, Latvia has quickly climbed European innovation scoreboard. Our government has been very active in supporting companies looking for ways to bring more innovative products and services to the market, and also companies investing in new manufacturing infrastructure.

Study conducted by European Patent Office and European Union Intellectual Property Office in 2019 shows that small and medium enterprises benefitting from formal intellectual property rights such as patents, trademarks and industrial designs have bigger likelihood of experiencing a high growth period than companies not protecting their intangible assets. According to this study, companies that have filed at least one IPR are 21% more likely to experience an initial high growth period, and 10% more likely to become a high growth firm (HGFs) than companies without IPR applications. Whereas the likelihood of experiencing a high growth period is 17% higher for SMEs that have filed at least one European IPR. Study also suggests that companies whose business strategies are based on use of IPR bundles (trademarks, patents and designs) are 33% more likely to become HGFs.

As more businesses decide to solidify their market position and enhance the safety of their investments at national, European and global level, the number of Latvian companies using the intellectual property rights framework keeps growing. Recent studies show that most Latvian business owners (63%) recognise that formal IPRs increase company value, while 52% of them consider it a minimum protection against competitors, who might want to steal the idea to manufacture and market a similar product. In 77% cases they think it is important to protect your trademark early on, and 72% of businesses claim it is vital to protect your prototypes.

I can recall a lot of interesting cases that ended up in the Court of Justice of the European Union because a company had failed to file for early patent and had been pushed out by their more aggressive competitors. It is very difficult for them to prove their rights post factum.

Highly developed IPR system is indispensable to Latvia's economic and business growth. Protection of intellectual property rights will continue to play a major role in Latvia's future development.

I am happy to underline that we have excellent partners and support of international organisations and partner-countries.

I am truly happy to welcome leadership and experts of the World Intellectual Property Organisation, European Patent Office and European Union Intellectual Property Office to today's conference. Thank you for joining this conference. I am sure you will find it very insightful.

We all remember the famous quote of Rainis: 'What changes, endures'. Times change. Technologies change. We change. As Patent Office, our main industrial property rights protection agency, enters its second century, I wish you to keep living by your values, develop them, thus contributing to economic growth of our country and intellectual property rights awareness of our society.

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