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**news**



# Distinctive collaboration – CP3

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Reaching common ground across the EU

The Cooperation Fund draws to a close  
Innovation and results – inside the Latvian Office



# Innovation and results – inside the Patent Office of the Republic of Latvia

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Integrating new tools and IT systems to bring added value to Latvian users

Amid the hustle and the bustle of the successful Latvian Presidency of the EU, which spanned the first half of this year, another challenge was ongoing at the Patent Office of the Republic of Latvia.

This challenge would have a huge effect on the Office's daily work, and would involve much collaboration and cooperation with OHIM. Over the past two years, the Office has been busily implementing e-filing for trade marks and designs as well as the e-Services package and Back Office, developed by the Cooperation Fund.

"Our joint efforts with OHIM have brought tremendous results in a very short timeframe", Sandris Laganovskis, Director of the Patent Office of the Republic of Latvia, points out. "That meant that already at the end of last year, you could file trade mark applications on line. Today, this facility is used by more than 20% of all our applicants".

The Latvian Patent Office is expecting that figure to increase over the coming months, and is also expecting to see design e-filing peaking too, given that the design application went live in January.

"It's a great achievement" he says, "and great thanks are due to all the involved people in our Office and also in OHIM. The fact is that we only have one IT colleague and five experts in our national trade mark division, so we could not have done it alone."

Trade mark e-filing was launched in Latvia with a public event to introduce it to users. The system means that for the first time in the history of the Patent Office, applications can be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, quickly and easily.

The Software Package suite of applications, along with other tools and services developed through the Cooperation Fund, has radically changed the IP landscape for Latvian users. Sandris Laganovskis points to the success of TMview in Latvia as a particular example. "When we speak to our users, TMview is always mentioned as the best tool.

Professionals use it several times a day and it shows how, in a relatively small timeframe, it has integrated itself into professional life".

The Latvian Office, along with the Slovenian Office, also joined the OHIM delegation at the INTA annual meeting in San Diego this year, to inform users about the successful results of the Latvian Presidency and to share experiences with the CF tools.

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*"Our joint efforts with OHIM have brought tremendous results in a very short timeframe"*

*Sandris Laganovskis  
Director of the Patent Office  
of the Republic of Latvia*

It's easy to forget, with all this activity, that just seven years ago Latvia was hit with a massive financial crisis. "I always say that we, as a Patent Office, are the mirror of the economy", Sandris Laganovskis notes. "We saw a very sharp decline in trade mark applications during the financial crisis, but now the numbers are rising. Our lowest points were during 2009 and 2010, but now those figures are increasing again, so these past five years have been good."

Alongside all this work has been the Latvian Presidency of the EU. It meant two years of preparation, leading to six months of intense work and effort, and a series of concrete results. By anyone's standards, it was a great success.

Agreements which will affect the lives of hundreds of millions of EU citizens were reached on a host of issues. Over eight hundred public diplomacy events took place in 76 countries, and nearly one and a half thousand meetings took place in Brussels. Latvia transformed itself into an international policy hub with declarations, statements and meetings rolling out – on average; over one meeting for every day of the Presidency.

"We took the Presidency very seriously," underlines Sandris Laganovskis. "We started

preparation a couple of years in advance, and the early start proved very useful".

Sandris Laganovskis, his 64-strong team in the Office and his colleagues in the Ministries had an extremely busy and challenging six months, given the complex IP matters that came as part of the Presidency activities parcel. "It was very intense and interesting for us," he recalls, pointing to the trade mark package, the unitary patent, trade secrets and the Lisbon revision on geographical indications as four key issues for the Latvian IP team.

The Latvian Presidency also saw a flurry of high-level conferences and initiatives around IP, including an event in March of this year – the international conference "IP and Beyond" which attracted over 150 delegates from around the world, including high level guests from WIPO, OHIM and the EPO, along with users, judges and patent attorneys.

Growing the innovation culture in Latvia is a key priority for policy makers, and the IP office has a crucial part to play in that initiative. "We want to be more innovative and move to innovation with high added value," Sandris Laganovskis explains. "The IP office has to participate in this process as much as possible, and raise awareness on this issue – one of our most important roles is to keep explaining how important this is."

Data and facts help the awareness raising process, and in that context, Sandris Laganovskis is appreciative of the work done by the EU Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights, a department within OHIM, in its economic and statistical remit. "For us, the Observatory is like water for someone who is thirsty", he says, "because it allows us to substantiate our work and provide numbers from Latvia." Other initiatives, like the Latvian Office's Trade Mark of the Year Award, now in its fourth year, also help to raise awareness of the value of IP.

The status of the Latvian IP office is due to change too, where under the new Industrial property law in Latvia which will come into effect on January 1 2016. For the first time in its history, the Office will be self-financed. Sandris Laganovskis is clearly relishing the challenges and opportunities that this new state of affairs will bring. "I think this will be beneficial for users," he remarks. "We now have so many ideas in mind as to how we can develop the system further".

The logo for Latvia's Presidency was based around the theme of a millstone – an ancient innovation which has stood the test of time. It stands for prosperity, stability and energy, Latvia's Prime Minister told the European Parliament at the start of this year. The concept of innovation and creativity thus became the symbol of a successful Presidency – a fact not surely lost on the users and supporters of Latvia's IP system.