

The IP Office of the Czech Republic celebrates its 100 years

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The Industrial Property Office of the Czech Republic (the Office) was established 100 years ago, in the wake of the independence of Czechoslovakia in October 1918. To celebrate this, the Office organised an International Conference on Protection of Industrial Property In Europe.

My welcome package contained a decorated gingerbread from Pardubice, a Czech city famous for gingerbread production that was awarded a "protected geographical indication" in 2008, and a publication "Vědci, vynálezci a podnikatelé v českých zemích".

After a short welcome by the Master of Ceremonies, the event started with a small humoristic film showing actors dressed in 19th century fashion, featuring an inventor arriving at the patent office after Bell or Edison. Czech colleagues later told us that this was a scene from a film featuring Jára Cimrman, a fictional character presented as a universal genius who became immensely popular in Czechoslovakia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wo-F2HH4Fwg> (English subtitles available)

In his Opening Statement, Mr. Kratochvíl, President of the Office, mentioned the document "Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2019–2030", which the R&D Council headed by the Prime Minister prepared, and the introduction of a new brand "Czech Republic: The Country For The Future".

A first panel discussed today's challenges for IP Rights Protection in the Czech Republic.

Mr. Fusek, Deputy Director for Strategic Development, Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry of the Czech Academy of Sciences, explained the challenges that universities face for extracting value from their inventions, supported by English language slides. His institute files about 10 applications per year, from which result about 8 patent families, and has granted 10 licences with an annual income of about 60 million €.

Mr. Havlík, President of the Czech National Group of AIPPI, explained the challenges relating to the modernisation of trademark law with the support of Czech language slides, showing examples of the new types of trademarks.

Mr. Dobřichovský, Director of the Institute of Copyright, Industrial Property and Competition Law, Law Faculty of Charles University, led us through challenges facing the protection and licensing of other intellectual rights, he compared different legal aspects of copyright and industrial property rights.

After the panel discussion, Mr. Ménière, Chief Economist of the EPO, took the floor for the first presentation on "Patents and the European Economy" (in English). He first explained the dual role of patents. He then presented the importance of IPR-intensive industries in the EU, highlighting the good performance of the Czech Republic. According to him, most of a country's productivity gains is due to international technology transfers.

A coffee break followed.

Mr. Wunsch-Vincent, Co-Editor of the Global Innovation Index, Head of Section in the Economics and Statistics Division of WIPO, presented the Global Innovation Index. His presentation "The Shifting Global Innovation Landscape and the Czech Republic" highlighted how well the Czech Republic is doing.

The second panel featured "IP Education and Awareness Raising".



Mr. Maier, Director of the EU Observatory on Infringements of IP Rights at the EUIPO, presented the problem. 97% of Europeans believe that inventors and creators need to be rewarded, but especially youngsters challenge this, downloading illegally and buying counterfeits. The EU developed "Key competences for lifelong learning" (recommendation, 22 May 2018) linked to IP. The EUIPO has received missions in this regard. It developed the concept of an IP Day at school. His conclusion: there is light at the end of the tunnel.

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Mr. Bradley, Head of the Academic Institutions and Executive Program at the WIPO Academy, presented the Academy and its missions globally.

Mr. Flammer, Principal Director Patent Information and European Patent Academy at the EPO, presented the objectives of the Academy. These include ensuring that there are enough professionals in all countries, training the paralegals. He also mentioned the cooperation with national offices in the area of patent information, including the recent revamp of PatLib centres.

Ms. Engelová Pavková, Head of the Industrial Property Training Institute of the Office, introduced her presentation with a reminder that this Institute had been founded in 1963. She then proceeded to present the activities of her Institute.

The moderator asked what in the view of the panellists is the biggest challenge for reaching the younger. Mr Bradley said it was catching their attention first. For Mr Flammer, it was selecting the right channel, and convincing them they are in IP when they use modern tools.

Just before the lunch break, the Surprise of the Day was a short (Mercedes Benz) film about 1888 Bertha Benz historic trip of 106 km by car from Mannheim to Pforzheim.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsGrFYD5Nfs>

This was followed by another Mercedes Benz film showing an autonomous car.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AihC5flC-38>

At lunch, I had the honour of being seated next to the Master of Ceremonies, Ms. Hergetová, who is a famous Czech journalist with economic and civil engineering background.

The afternoon session started with a Congratulatory Speech of the Minister of Finances, followed by a presentation of the "Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2019–2030", by the Deputy Minister of Industry.

Mr Campinos, President of the EPO, first mentioned the 17.5% increase in EP applications from Czech inventors last year and reminded the audience of Czech inventors nominated at recent European Inventor Awards Events. He then presented the EPO Strategic Plan 2023, in particular emphasising quality, timeliness, and flexible examination.

Mr Archambeau, Executive Director of the EUIPO, presented a main outline of the upcoming EUIPO's Strategic Plan 2025.

Mr. Gurry, Director General of WIPO, was meant to present "Today's IP Challenges of the World" but his plane landed late, and he was announced to speak during the gala dinner.

Thus, Mr Kratochvíl delivered the closing remarks early, and the conference ended with a round of applause.

During the conference, there was an exhibition of student inventions and ideas in the next room. This had allowed the Minister of Finances to mention that she is not worried about the future of Czech inventiveness.

A gala evening was held in the Spanish Hall of Prague Castle, one of the most exquisite places, normally not ordinarily open to the public.

The Master of Ceremonies opened the event at 19:19 (of course), explaining that the hall got its name from being built above the stables of noble Spanish horses by Emperor Rudolf II from 1602 to 1606 to store his art collection.

The stage was decorated with four "living statues" as can be seen in the streets of Prague, Nobel, Bell, Einstein and Edison (a reminder of the clip that opened the Conference).

The official part started with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry handing diplomas and awards of Bohemian crystal to Messrs Gurry, Campinos and Archambeau.

When on stage, Mr Gurry reminded the audience that it was also 100 years ago that Czechoslovakia ratified the Paris Convention, and 100 years ago that the League of Nations was created, mentioning the role of the country's first president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

Diplomas and awards were presented to numerous scientists, inventors or people active in the field of intellectual property, for example to Antonín Holý (in memoriam), who invented important antiretroviral drugs used in the treatment of HIV, or to microbiologist Blanka Říhová, specialist in immuno-oncotherapy. Our colleague František Kania, Chairman of the Chamber of Patent Attorneys of the Czech Republic, was also presented an award.

Mr Gurry presented the WIPO Gold Medal for Creativity to a former President of the Czech Office, Ladislav Jakl.

The Prague Cello Quartet provided musical interludes with their adaptations of well-known classical compositions, starting with 'Humoreska' by Czech composer Antonín Dvořák.

Mr Kratochvíl thanked everyone, presented flowers to the Master of Ceremonies, and the Prague Cello Quartet closed the official part by playing 'Vltava' (The Moldau), the famous symphonic poem by the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana. The guests could then enjoy Czech cuisine with excellent local wines.