25.03.2024 События

EU4IP, a new EU-funded cooperation project on intellectual property (IP) matters, was launched by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), in partnership with the National Intellectual Property Center of Georgia (Sakpatenti), the State Agency on Intellectual Property of Moldova (AGEPI) and the Ukrainian National Office for Intellectual Property and Innovations (UANIPIO) on 25 March.

The EU4IP project will support Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to strengthen their national IP landscapes and to facilitate the alignment of their IP legal and administrative frameworks to the EU systems as they work towards EU accession.

The EUIPO will sign the biannual Work Plan 2024-2025 with AGEPI, as well as Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, the Tbilisi State University and the Georgian Technical University, the first universities from outside the EU and the European Patent Convention (EPC) to collaborate with the EUIPO, on 26 March.

On 25-26 March an EU delegation led by João Negrão, Executive Director (ED) of the EUIPO, visits Chișinău, Moldova. The first day marked the launch of the EU4IP, a cooperation project between the EUIPO and the national IP offices Sakpatenti, AGEPI and UANIPIO to strengthen intellectual property rights (IPRs) in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine with the support of the EU. The initiative aims to leverage IP to create a favourable environment for innovation, creativeness and free competition. In doing so, the partnership paves the way for the three candidate countries' accession to the EU and the European Union IP Network (EUIPN) [1]*, a network made up of the EUIPO and the national IP offices and User Associations of the EU.*

During the 2-day visit, the EU delegation also engages with European and international stakeholders, holding discussions on the needs and goals of the EU4IP project. On 25 March the EU delegation met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Mihai Popusoi, as well as with other senior government officials of the Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian government. On 26 March, meetings will also take place with the Moldovan Parliament and the management of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova in the framework of the Pan-European Seal (PES) programme.

EU4IP official launch

On 25 March, the EU4IP [2] was inaugurated by the State Secretary for European Integration, Ms Rodica Crudu, the EU Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova, Mr Jānis Mažeiks, and the Executive Director of the EUIPO at a launch event. The conference gathered high-level representatives from the beneficiary countries, as well as from the EUIPO, the EU Delegation to Moldova and the European national IP offices of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania in a Team Europe approach.

"I am glad that the success of the Georgia-EU joint project 2020-2023 laid the foundation for the new regional project, in which Moldova and Ukraine are involved along with Georgia - this is especially valuable, as all the three countries participating in the EU4IP project were granted EU candidate status. I strongly believe that the mentioned project will make a significant contribution to the further development of the field of Intellectual property of the participating countries.", stated **Soso Giorgadze, Chairperson of Sakpatenti**.

Eugeniu Rusu, Director General of AGEPI, emphasized the importance of the EU4IP project for the beneficiary countries, stating: "Hosting the launch of this EU project is of a great significance for the Republic of Moldova as it reaffirms our commitment to strengthening intellectual property system and advancing our European integration agenda. We are delighted to collaborate with the EUIPO and our EU partners to further enhance intellectual property protection in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. This collaboration is essential to create a favorable environment for innovation, creativity, and free competition, thus contributing to our objectives of EU accession and integration

into the European intellectual property network."

“On our European path, we remain steadfast in our understanding of the importance of high quality IP protection for building a competitive and sustainable economy based on innovation, technology and creativity, especially in the face of the challenges posed by the ongoing war. Achieving the vision of a shared, innovative European future is impossible without the experience, expertise and dedicated support of our European colleagues. We have had the opportunity to meet all these elements of support through our cooperation with EUIPO”, **Olena Orliuk, Director of UANIPIO.**

"Moldova has an extraordinary promotion potential in the EU Member States and other international markets, of absolutely authentic products that are not available in any other country. Today, the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights is crucial to a country's ability to stimulate innovation and compete in the global economy. In this context, I firmly believe that the launch of this new EU project will boost the development of the country, but on the other hand - it will provide the necessary support to Moldova in its EU accession aspirations by aligning its legislation with the EU acquis, including in the field of intellectual property rights", stated **Jānis Mažeiks, EU Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova**.

”We will spare no effort in providing any and all assistance required according to the specific needs arising from each of the countries. The EU-funded project EU4IP we are launching today will support the alignment of the legal framework of our partner countries with the EU acquis on intellectual property, aligning rules, legal protection and enforcement.”, said **João Negrão, EUIPO Executive Director**.

By strengthening the IP landscape, EU4IP promotes economic and cultural development, bolsters the potential of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and raises the level of investment attractiveness. The EU4IP project’s main objective is to contribute to an adequate and effective level of registration, protection and enforcement of IP rights in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The goal is that the three countries adopt European and international best practices and adhere to the commitments outlined in their respective Association Agreements as well as the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (AA/DCFTA) to support the opening of negotiations for their EU accession.

The EU4IP project highlights the importance of upholding IP rights by focusing on four key areas:

- enhancing legal frameworks and facilitating their alignment to the IP EU acquis;
- supporting IP institutions and networks;
- collaborating on enforcement mechanisms; and
- raising awareness, targeting the private sector and SMEs.

This EU-funded project is implemented by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) [3] *for an initial duration of 48 months, starting from 1 January 2024,* with a total budget of EUR 4 million provided by the European Union, including the EUIPO.

EU support to Georgia in the field of IP

Sakpatenti [4] and the EUIPO have a history of cooperation since they first signed an MoU in October 2015 which was renewed in 2021, and later reinforced through the EUGIPP [5] project from 2020 to 2023. The project’s main objective was to establish an adequate and effective level of protection and enforcement of IPRs in line with the commitments of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the DCFTA. It actively supported the Georgian IP Office in achieving several milestones: developing examination guidelines for trade marks and designs that align with EUIPN practice, improving registration services, enhancing technical capacity and promoting consistency in IP decisions. Other results relate to amendments to national laws in the field of trade mark, design and enforcement, and the compilation of IP case law for judges. The EUGIPP organised over 60 capacity development activities, which included training courses, events and seminars addressed to IP practitioners, enforcers, the academic community and the general public attracting over 1000 participants.

EU support to Moldova in the field of IP

AGEPI [6], the national IP office of Moldova, is responsible for fulfilling the country's commitments in the IP field as provided in the Association Agreement signed between the EU and Moldova to advance towards future EU membership. AGEPI and the EUIPO first signed an MoU on IP cooperation in July 2017, which was renewed in December 2021. The agreement outlined the general framework of the bilateral cooperation between the parties and established the terms and conditions for the offices' cooperation in priority areas. AGEPI integrated various EUIPO flagship tools into their systems, such as TMclass, and has also implemented several EUIPO Common Practices (CPs) and participated in various technical cooperation activities, such as the seconded-national expert programme.

During the visit of the EU delegation to Chișinău, the two-year work plan (2024-2025) is signed by Eugeniu Rusu, Director General of AGEPI, and João Negrão, Executive Director of the EUIPO, for collaboration on IP matters in accordance with the renewed MoU from 2021. The work plan's activities and objectives relate to tools and (technical) trainings, IP studies and education, and alternative dispute resolution/mediation.

EU support to Ukraine in the field of IP

In 2022, the EUIPO took measures to provide support to Ukrainian trade mark and design owners [7] and to safeguard their IP rights within the EU, while continuing the technical work and cooperation with the Ukrainian IP authorities. In February 2023 a ground-breaking agreement [8] between the European Commission and Ukraine was reached, allowing Ukraine to participate in activities financed by the European Union under the Single Market Programme. In June 2023, the joint EUIPO-European Commission SME Fund was extended to support Ukrainian businesses [9], which can now get funding to apply for IP rights including trade marks, designs, patents or plant varieties. In October 2023, the EUIPO's ED João Negrão visited Ukraine [10] to discuss the significant impact of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine's IP sphere, emphasizing the pressing need for collaborative efforts to address these challenges, and to explore the role of IP in the post-war recovery of the country to enhance its investment climate. During this visit, the biannual Work Plan for 2024-2025 was signed between the EUIPO and UANIPIO, outlining joint activities following the MoU signed in July 2023.

Pan-European Seal (PES) Programme [11]

Since 2014, the EUIPO together with the European Patent Office ("EPO [12]"), implements the PES Programme [11] to strengthen IP collaboration and cultivate a strong bond between the academic community and the labour market. There are currently 142 PES Partner Universities [13] located in 27 EU Member States and 11 signatories to the European Patent Convention. They have access to several ongoing projects, most notably: a year-long and fully paid traineeship open to university graduates at the EUIPO (Alicante, Spain) or the EPO (Munich, Germany); trainings and events; and research visits at the EUIPO.

The EUIPO has decided to further expand the programme by opening it up to beneficiary countries of EU-funded projects it implements, through bilateral MoUs between the EUIPO and the concerned universities. On 26 March, an MoU will be signed by Alexandru Stratan, Rector of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, and João Negrão, Executive Director of the EUIPO, during a signing ceremony formalising the collaboration. Simultaneously and remotely, MoUs will also be signed by the Tbilisi State University and the Georgian Technical University, in order for the three academic institutions to become the first members joining the PES programme from outside the EU and the European Patent Convention (EPC). Academic institutions from Ukraine are also expected to join the PES programme soon.

ABOUT THE EUIPO

The EUIPO [14] is one of the largest decentralised agencies of the European Union, based in Alicante, Spain. Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2024, the EU Intellectual Property Office manages the registration of EU trade marks since 1994 and designs since 2003, both of which are intellectual property rights that cover the 27 Member States of the European Union. In 2023, another IP right,

craft and industrial geographical indications, was added to the agency's portfolio. The EUIPO also carries out cooperation activities at EU and international level to create a level playing field in the world of IP and hosts the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights [15].

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ABOUT SAKPATENTI

The National Intellectual Property Center of Georgia (Sakpatenti) is a governmental agency – a legal entity of public law. Georgia was one of the first of the former Soviet republics to create its national patent service in 1992. In accordance with the Georgian legislation, Sakpatenti determines the policy in the field of intellectual property. In the course of time all the major fields of intellectual property were fully consolidated under Sakpatenti's mandate: industrial property, copyright and related rights, new varieties of plants and breeds of animals. As well as geographical indications (GIs), particularly the protection of strategic Georgian products such as wines and mineral waters is a strategic objective of Sakpatenti. For this purpose, Georgia acceded to the Lisbon Agreement for the Protection of Appellations of Origin and started bilateral negotiations on mutual recognition of GIs with the European Union.

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ABOUT AGEPI

AGEPI [6] is the central administrative authority in the field of legal protection of intellectual property relating to industrial property rights, copyright and related rights. AGEPI's mission is to promote and implement policies in the field of intellectual property, making the intellectual property system more efficient in order to promote technological progress, stimulate creativity and contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the Republic of Moldova. AGEPI grant legal protection on the territory of the Republic of Moldova to inventions, plant varieties, trademarks, industrial designs, geographical indications, appellations of origin, traditional specialties guaranteed, copyright and related rights. In July 2011, AGEPI established an Observatory on Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) to ensure the exchange of information between the authorities responsible for monitoring the enforcement of intellectual property rights. The Republic of Moldova has a modern IP legal system in line with international and European standards.

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ABOUT THE UANIPIO

In 2022, Ukraine completed the institutional reform of the IP sphere and the implementation of the relevant legislation. The result of the reform was the establishment of the Ukrainian National Office

for Intellectual Property and Innovations (UANIPIO [19], IP office). The UANIPIO functions as client-oriented state services, grounded on the principles of transparency, professionalism, decency and support. It is an ecosystem of IP protection and innovation for a creative cluster, which in its turn will become an investment magnet. Recently the UANIPIO launched a full-fledged Mediation Center [20]. This is a new tool for the Ukrainian IP system, which functions in all developed economies of the world.

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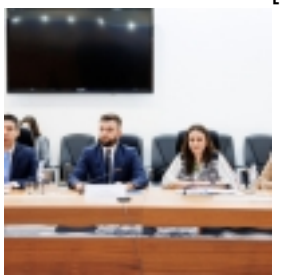
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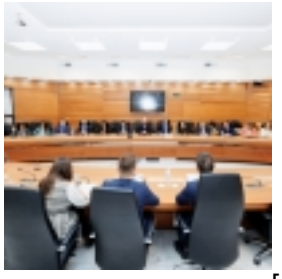
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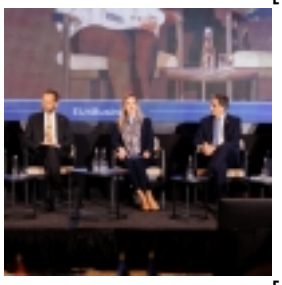
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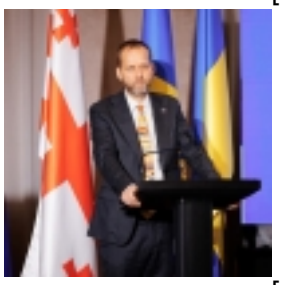
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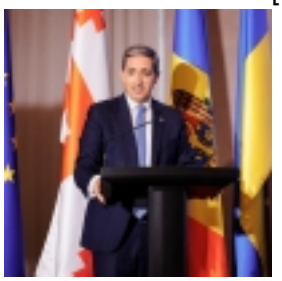
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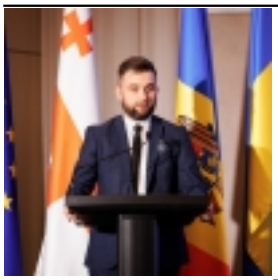
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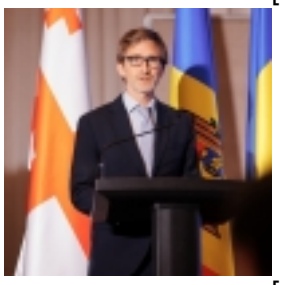
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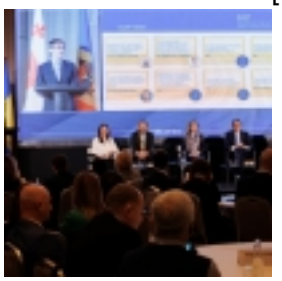
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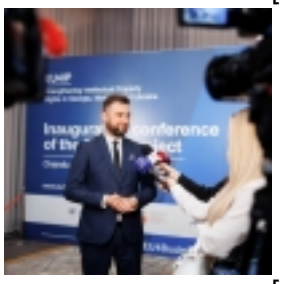
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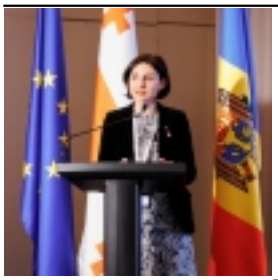
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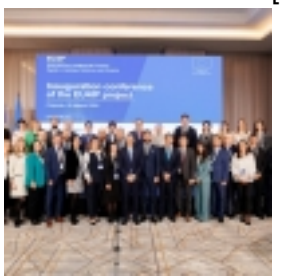
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