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PRESS RELEASE

EPO and EIC: working together to support innovators and entrepreneurs in Europe

Munich, 22 May 2024 – The European Patent Office (EPO) and the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) reaffirmed their commitment to work together to boost innovation in Europe. On the occasion of the Viva Technology 2024 conference in Paris this week, the two organisations took stock of their joint activities over the past year, which centred on the European Innovation Council (EIC), and agreed to discuss extending co-operation.

EPO President António Campinos said: *“By combining the technology and patent expertise of the EPO with the financial muscle of the European Innovation Council, we are helping innovative startups and SMEs across Europe turn their ideas into products and services. Not only does this advance technology; but it can also create jobs and boost economic growth. And the new Unitary Patent, which now provides owners of newly granted European patents with more affordable and efficient protection in Europe, will only increase the impact of our co-operation in future.”*

Marc Lemaître, Director General for Research and Innovation at the European Commission and Jean-David Malo, Director of EISMEA said: *“Our commitment to longer-term collaboration is crucial. Connecting the EIC’s support for groundbreaking ideas with the EPO’s expertise in patent protection will accelerate the journey from concept to commercialisation and ensure robust intellectual property safeguards. It will allow both organisations to stay on top of technology developments and to ensure the EIC supports critical technologies for the EU’s future competitiveness.”*

EPO-EIC co-operation has so far included successful pilot projects in 2022 and 2023 and the signature of a letter of intent in June 2023 between the EPO and EISMEA, the agency overseeing the implementation of the EIC. Under the pilots, EPO patent examiners, experts in their respective technology fields, helped the EIC to assess the technological novelty and inventiveness of 57 projects being considered for an EU grant. In 2024 the EPO will assess a further 100 such files for the EIC.

Identifying Europe’s high-tech start-ups

The EPO’s unique resources and tools are also helping investors, including the EIC, identify the most innovative SMEs in Europe. The EPO’s [Deep Tech Finder](#), launched last autumn, blends the business profiles of around 8 300 investment-ready European start-ups with information on their patent portfolios. Around one in eight of the start-ups listed in this free tool have received funding from the EIC. Through its partnership with the EIC, the EPO also shares insights and patent trend analysis to detect important technology developments, and participates in joint awareness raising efforts to increase patent valorisation and commercialisation by innovative SMEs, disruptive start-ups and spin-offs, research organisations and universities.



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In future, the EPO and EISMEA will investigate how the two organisations may provide further support to the EIC when deciding on project funding, while putting more emphasis on the benefits of the Unitary Patent.

A one-stop shop for patent protection in Europe

The new Unitary Patent, introduced last June, underlines the value of European co-operation. Administered by the EPO, it is widely used by patent owners from around the world, and especially by European SMEs who have requested to convert nearly one in three of their European patents into a Unitary Patent. The Unitary Patent system reduces costs and streamlines procedures whilst increasing transparency and legal certainty, by allowing applicants to enjoy their recently granted European patent as a single right in 17 EU member states, through a single procedure with a single annual renewal fee, and single legal system before the Unified Patent Court.

Further information

- Access the EPO's [Deep Tech Finder](#)
- Find out more about the [Unitary Patent and Unified Patent Court](#)
- See EPO news of 27 June 2023: [“EPO and European Innovation Council strengthen ties to advance European breakthrough innovation”](#)
- [European Innovation Council Impact Report 2023](#)

About the EPO

With 6 300 staff members, the [European Patent Office \(EPO\)](#) is one of the largest public service institutions in Europe. Headquartered in Munich with offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna, the EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening co-operation on patents in Europe. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors are able to obtain high-quality patent protection in up to 45 countries, covering a market of some 700 million people. The EPO is also the world's leading authority in patent information and patent searching. The EPO, whose 39 member states include all 27 EU members, co-operates closely with the EU. In recent years, the EPO has put in place a number of co-operation agreements with EU institutions and bodies to benefit innovators, patent system users and the public.

About EISMEA

The [European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency \(EISMEA\)](#), established in April 2021, is an executive agency of the European Commission responsible for implementation and management of EU programmes focusing on SME support, innovation and the single market, including the European Innovation Council.

About the EIC

The [European Innovation Council](#) (EIC) is Europe's flagship innovation programme to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough technologies and game changing innovations. It was established in 2021 under the Horizon Europe programme, the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. It has a budget of €10.1 billion to support game changing innovations throughout the lifecycle from early-stage research, to proof of concept, technology transfer, and the financing and scale up of start-ups and SMEs. The EIC Fund, its investment arm, concluded over 100 investments in deep tech companies last year worth around €1.2 billion. And for every euro of direct investment through the Fund, over 3.5 euro of additional investment was leveraged. The total value of the overall portfolio of EIC supported companies, including those from the pilot and predecessor, is almost €70 billion, an increase of €20 billion in the last two years.



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