



PATLIB Summit

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Palácio da Bolsa, Porto, Portugal

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Opening remarks by the President

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Prime Minister of Portugal Mr António Costa

Ladies and Gentleman,

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to Porto and welcome to this special strategic summit of the PATLIB network. Today we've reached somewhat of a landmark in the history of PATLIBs. In a few moments we'll be looking at the development of the network and we'll see how it has existed for more than 30 years, which is a great achievement. Indeed, at a national level, many countries have had patent information advice centres for a lot longer.

Thanks to your efforts, and to the support of colleagues in the EPO – and many others – there are now over 300 PATLIB centres across our member states. And they already provide much needed advice on patents and other IP rights – particularly to SMEs and universities. I have no doubt their work has contributed to the constant rise in patent applications from small businesses and research institutions we've seen at the EPO in recent years.

We've also seen how the network has managed to evolve and adapt since its foundation. This development has accelerated in recent years – through initiatives such as the PATLIB pilot project and the reorientation project.

As a result, we can now offer patent information services that were simply not possible in the early days of PATLIB. And crucially, we have the tools and the knowledge to expand those services beyond patent information. But today we find ourselves at another critical juncture because the environment in which we are operating is changing and we have to orientate ourselves towards those changes.

Patent applications are evolving significantly. They are increasingly complex and cut across more technological fields. The working environment is also changing – as co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration play a greater role in creating synergies and avoiding the duplication of work.

In addition to these factors, patent information is growing in volume and complexity. And there are increasingly important technologies, such as artificial intelligence, which stand to have an impact on *everyone* in the entire IP ecosystem.

In light of these developments, we have to take this opportunity to assess how the PATLIB network can evolve for the better. If we do it right, we can overcome some of the barriers and limitations that we know exist.

One barrier, for example, is the fact that the activities of the network are not systematically co-ordinated, as much as they could be. Another problem is that we don't always exploit opportunities for co-operation with other networks. There are also varying degrees of expertise and competence among the centres and questions over the financial resources available. With your help, we want to see how we can address those issues and what we can do to make this a more effective network. We believe that it is possible – and so do you.

During the consultation process for our Strategic Plan, a number of our member states and other stakeholders asked us to look at strengthening the PATLIB network. They underlined the need for

greater collaboration with universities, technology transfer organisations and PATLIB centres to increase patent awareness activities at local level, the need to enhance the skills of staff working on IP in the PATLIBs, and the need for the EPO to intensify its support and training.

Crucially, we also believe there's a great opportunity at the moment to provide advice on the commercialisation of IP rights and technology transfer. We have a chance now to see how we can empower users to make better use of IP, and to access services that help them prosper and grow based on new IP opportunities. In turn, of course, this would support a richer economy.

We are all aware how much IP contributes to the European economy already:

- 42% – or 5.7 trillion euros – of the EU's annual GDP and 90% of its trade with the rest of the world originate from IPR intensive industries.
- 82 million jobs – both direct and indirect – also result from these sectors, and are marked by the prevalence of higher than average wages.

In short, Europe bears the hallmark of a region whose very prosperity is underpinned by IPR intensive industries.

Now imagine just how much higher those figures could be if we could help everyone to exploit the full commercial power of their intellectual property rights. There is much to gain for innovators. There is much to gain for Europe, as a whole. And PATLIBs – as effective as they are right now – are a source of great untapped potential for achieving those aims.

So this event is our opportunity to explore how large numbers of PATLIB centres can play a greater role in commercialisation and offer more than just patent searching by facilitating the entire journey of an idea from its birth in a research laboratory, or an innovative SME, through to a successful, profitable product.

Of course, some PATLIBs can already provide this type of service. They are the pioneers and have set a standard of excellence. They can provide the inspiration for the launch for a new generation of PATLIBs – a PATLIB 2.0. It will be a network for the future. One which provides users with clarity on where they can access specific services, which is why we see merit in defining PATLIB centres according to their level of expertise.

We know that PATLIBs vary greatly across the network – in terms of size, availability of services and competences. So we want to support you in developing the expertise that you need, no matter which level of service you decide you want to offer. The EPO will contribute its own training, patent information and tools, and increase the overall resources we're devoting to PATLIBs.

More than ever, we're committed to supporting the network – and we will apply ourselves to that end, helping to co-ordinate and facilitate at the European level. We all have a part to play in this endeavour. After all, we're operating in an IP ecosystem where no single IP organisation acts in isolation. So perhaps we also need to reevaluate the way we organise ourselves and how we interact with other stakeholders.

We need to ask how we can better co-ordinate with other networks or organisations such as the EUIPO, the European Commission, WIPO, and ASTP/Proton. And, most importantly, what can the

organisations most directly linked to PATLIB centres – the national patent offices, the universities and the chambers of commerce – contribute?

Ultimately, we want Europe to have a PATLIB network that other regions of the world look upon with envy, one that provides first-rate services across Europe, where the PATLIB centres interact with each other and grow together. And most of all, we want you to feel empowered. It is our goal that if you have the ambition, there should be no hurdles to stop you achieving your goals. That's why this summit will explore what the EPO can do to help you meet the users' needs.

I want to thank everyone for being here to discuss this important topic. And I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our colleagues at INPI for all their help in organising this event. Everyone here has been invited specifically because they can contribute proactively to this debate on the future direction of PATLIBs. There are 100 centres represented here today. In addition we have representatives of national patent offices across our member states. I'm also proud to welcome many third parties – people who I hope will help us to see a broader perspective.

They are experts in a variety of fields, many of them from technology transfer backgrounds, or with expertise in commercialisation of IP; others come from other international organisations, such as the European Commission, WIPO or the EUIPO. With all your contributions, we can get a better understanding of our users' needs, the requirements of the PATLIBs themselves, and how all the actors can work together to achieve those aims and produce the next generation PATLIBs.

We hope to take that input and shape it into a firm declaration – or a "Porto paper". This will be a document that can provide the principles on which we will base the second generation of PATLIBs. These principles could, for example, include closer co-operation, enhanced services and improved understanding of business relevance. Hopefully, we'll also be able to agree on a set of recommendations to help us deliver exactly what our users need from this network.

With that in mind, I'd like to end here and wish you all a very enjoyable and constructive couple of days. And I look forward to hearing all about your ideas and feedback on the future of PATLIB.

Thank you