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ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION: RAISING IP AWARENESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

This contribution explores strategic initiatives pursued by the Latvian Patent Office to raise awareness of intellectual property (IP) among young people. It highlights the importance of fostering creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial skills through IP education from an early age and outlines key activities and partnerships in this field, including collaboration with Junior Achievement Latvia, the development of methodological material for teachers, the Creative Intellectual competition and the first Baltic IP youth camp. These efforts aim to integrate IP awareness into educational curricula, promote practical IP application and inspire the next generation to value and protect intellectual assets, thereby contributing to innovation and economic growth.

* The views expressed in this document are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Secretariat or of the Member States of WIPO.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Raising awareness of the value of intellectual property (IP) is vital in fostering creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit among young people. Recognizing this, the Latvian Patent Office emphasizes the importance of educating children and young people about IP – especially industrial property, such as trademarks, designs and patents – from an early age.
2. One of the Office's core functions is to promote public understanding of industrial property protection and enhance its value in society and the country as a whole. The Office's Operational Strategy for 2022–2026 identifies public education and raising awareness of IP rights protection as strategic priorities, with students and young people highlighted as a key target group. Consequently, the Office carries out educational work and activities on IP for children and young people on a regular and systematic basis.
3. In recent years, the Office has been using a variety of communication channels and resources to reach young audiences more effectively. The Authenticities initiative of the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) has been launched in two of Latvia's largest cities, Liepāja and Daugavpils. This initiative is designed to empower local authorities across the European Union to engage citizens and partner organizations in the fight against counterfeiting and piracy, with a view to creating a European network of Authenticities to share best practices and ideas and undertake joint activities.
4. The Office has organized events and lectures in various regions, deliberately expanding its presence beyond the capital to promote IP awareness throughout the country. It has also started collaborating with online content creators to engage young people more effectively on social media platforms.
5. This contribution highlights several key initiatives aimed at promoting IP awareness among young people.

II. COOPERATION WITH JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT LATVIA

6. To enhance teachers' and students' understanding of IP rights and the importance of protecting them, the Office has maintained a decade-long partnership with Junior Achievement Latvia, with support from EUIPO. Junior Achievement Latvia provides access to a practical business education program, approved across Europe and adapted to Latvia's needs, to approximately 120,000 students annually at all levels of education. The program also offers professional development and continuing education for teachers from its member schools in Latvia. Its mission is to promote economic development through youth education, fostering entrepreneurial skills and shaping a new generation of entrepreneurs. This is achieved by integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experience in the learning process, in alignment with the economic context of Latvia, Europe and the world.
7. Through this collaboration, the Office actively participates in various events organized by Junior Achievement Latvia. One of the most prominent is Other Bazaar, a traditional student enterprise fair that takes place twice a year, in spring and winter.
8. At these fairs, the Office not only runs its own stand, offering consultations on IP protection to students and visitors at the Domina Shopping Centre, but also contributes to the event as a member of the jury, evaluating students' business ideas and projects and assessing the performance of student enterprises, with awards given to the best student enterprises at primary and secondary school level in the "Knowledge-based student enterprise product/service" category.

9. In addition to these public events, the Office contributes to educating students and teachers through specially designed lectures, seminars and interactive workshops conducted in collaboration with Junior Achievement Latvia throughout the academic year. These sessions are tailored to introduce the basics of IP, explore real-life examples and offer practical tools for identifying and protecting intellectual assets in student-developed products and services. Such activities are integrated into school curricula and teacher training events, ensuring sustainable knowledge transfer. One example is the Young Entrepreneurs' School event series, where experts from the Office deliver targeted training to educators, followed by workshops and discussions on best practices in the classroom. In parallel, students participate in IP-themed lessons, often supplemented with guest lectures.

10. Together, these initiatives help create a knowledge-based, innovation-oriented environment, empowering young people and their mentors to approach entrepreneurship with a strong foundation in IP awareness and protection.

III. METHODOLOGICAL MATERIAL: "JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY"

11. The content of this methodological material was developed in line with a new approach to the curriculum and in accordance with relevant Latvian school system regulations. A new edition was developed pursuant to Cabinet Regulation No. 747 of 27 November 2018 (Regulations on the National Basic Education Standard and Sample Basic Education Programs) and Regulation No. 416 of 3 September 2019 (Regulations on the National General Secondary Education Standard and Sample General Secondary Education Programs). The material was originally published in 2018; a revised and updated version was released in 2023, with support from EUIPO.

12. The material comprehensively covers various aspects of IP rights, including patents, trademarks, designs, geographical indications and copyright, and issues related to counterfeiting, taking an interdisciplinary, content-wide approach. The material is intended for students from grade 1 to grade 12. Each lesson within a particular topic includes information on the target audience, objectives, expected outcomes, required resources and recommended teaching methods. Four animated films form an integral part of the material; these are essential for better understanding of the topics and completing tasks related to the lesson.

13. The authors of the material aim to inspire teachers by offering a variety of teaching techniques, methods and ideas. Many of the tasks and handouts included in the worksheets for each topic can be fully or partially reused in lessons on other subjects, allowing educators to adapt and create new exercises as needed.

14. The material features a range of activities recommended for use in general secondary education subjects, such as social studies, mathematics, design and technology, Latvian and world history, and suitable for use in classroom-based lessons.

IV. CREATIVE INTELLECTUAL COMPETITION

15. For the seventh consecutive year, the Office has organized a competition for primary and secondary school pupils, the concept of which has evolved over the years. It now carries the title Creative Intellectual, but its core objective remains unchanged: to encourage youth creativity, deepen understanding of the importance of IP and inspire the development of innovative solutions with research and entrepreneurial potential.

16. The competition has always been closely connected with the Office's methodological material, which is recommended as a foundation for approaching the tasks involved. It originated as a way to promote the use of these resources after their official launch in August 2018. The first competition, which was held the following year and organized by the Office in collaboration with the Latvian Association of Professional Patent Attorneys, the Latvian National Group of the International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property and Junior Achievement Latvia, took the form of a student video contest on the subject "Journey into the World of Industrial Property". Students were invited to create videos promoting respect for and protection of IP rights. Participants from grades 5 to 11 showed impressive creativity, originality and a professional approach to the task.

17. Over time, the nature of the tasks and the target age groups have evolved. In 2025, mindful of educational developments and changes in learning formats, the Office invited pupils in grades 9 to 12 to participate in a new initiative: the Creative Intellectual IP hackathon. The aim of the event was to promote creativity, raise awareness of the importance of IP and encourage young people to create practical solutions to reduce the stress, anxiety and sleep deprivation that may be caused by excessive use of digital technologies. At the hackathon, teams were asked to develop a concept and present a solution, showcasing its creativity, innovation potential and approach to IP protection. In order to better prepare for the event, teams received the task in advance.

18. All applications were evaluated and 10 teams were selected to take part in the hackathon, which was held in Riga on 26 November 2025. During the event, students worked on their respective innovative solutions with support from experienced mentors from the Office, Junior Achievement Latvia, the Latvian Association of Performers and Producers, the Latvian Design Centre, a patent attorney and the company Printful Latvia. Teams were also expected to apply IP protection principles in practice as part of their final presentations.

19. Each year, the Office organizes an awards ceremony in a location that is engaging and interesting for students, such as the Riga Motor Museum or the airBaltic Training Center, and invites well-known, relevant hosts who resonate with young people. In recent years, these have included content creators who are especially popular among young people, with a view to promoting the competition on social media platforms. A great deal of positive feedback has been received from both teachers and students, with last year's satisfaction rate reaching 100 per cent.

V. REGIONAL IP YOUTH CAMP

20. From 19 to 22 August 2025, the first Baltic IP youth camp, entitled "Creativity, Innovation, IP, and Entrepreneurship", was held in Latvia, organized by WIPO and the Latvian Patent Office in collaboration with the IP offices of Estonia and Lithuania.

21. This pioneering training brought together some 40 students from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, offering hands-on learning guided by international experts in IP, business and the creative industries. Participants explored topics such as copyright, patents, trademarks and the role of IP in entrepreneurship and innovation. Latvia was represented by students from seven universities.

22. Over four days, participants attended lectures and undertook group work focused on creative thinking, innovation and the practical benefits of IP. They explored how copyright and patents can support original ideas and how IP connects with design, branding and entrepreneurship, gaining valuable insights into current trends and real-world IP applications. At the end of the camp, participants received certificates recognizing their achievements.

23. The camp served as a powerful platform to inspire and educate the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs. By deepening their understanding of IP and its role in creativity, business and economic development, it equipped participants with practical knowledge and fresh perspectives. The camp not only strengthened regional cooperation in IP education but also laid the groundwork for future ideas, innovations and ventures driven by young minds across the Baltic States.

VI. CONCLUSION

24. The Office's commitment to raising IP awareness among young people is both strategic and forward-looking. Through long-term partnerships, innovative educational resources, engaging competitions and regional collaboration, the Office has created a dynamic ecosystem that empowers young people to understand, respect and apply IP principles in their creative and entrepreneurial pursuits. The Office has become a recognized and trusted partner in youth education and is regularly invited to participate in events organized by other institutions.

25. By integrating IP education into school curricula, supporting teachers with practical tools and offering students real-world experiences, the Office ensures that the next generation is both informed and inspired. These efforts contribute to a broader cultural shift, where IP is recognized as a vital component of innovation, economic growth and personal development.

26. As the digital and creative economies continue to evolve, fostering IP literacy from an early age will remain essential. The Office's initiatives serve as a model of how national IP offices can play a transformative role in shaping a more informed, innovative and IP-conscious society.

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