VISEGRAD PATENT INSTITUTE

10 YEARS ANNIVERSARY



JUBILEE REPORT

2016-**2026**

10 Years of the Visegrad Patent Institute

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I. GREETINGS FROM THE VISEGRAD PATENT INSTITUTE

Dear Reader,

As Director of the Visegrad Patent Institute, it is my great honour to welcome you with this exceptional publication which has been produced to mark the 10th anniversary of our Institute's operations.

Please, allow me to start by briefly reflecting on what exactly the Visegrad Patent Institute is. In its core essence, the Visegrad Patent Institute is an International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), a PCT International Authority. It was set up in the most effective manner possible by the Visegrad Countries in Central Eastern Europe, through the adaptation of a Northern European legal innovation to support the international patenting efforts of the innovative players in the region with high-quality, user-friendly services. However, this truly unique international organisation represents far more than this.

The Visegrad Patent Institute celebrates the 10th anniversary of its actual operation this year but the idea behind the Institute dates back a decade earlier.

The Visegrad Patent Institute celebrates the 10th anniversary of its actual operation this year but the idea behind the Institute dates back a decade earlier, to the period when Hungary – in fulfilment of one of the conditions for EU accession – implemented the acquis communautaire in the field of patents. Part of this involved bringing the Hungarian patent legislation in line with European standards, in particular the European Patent Convention (EPC). Completing this requirement, the Czech Republic and Slovakia became Contracting States to the EPC in 2002, while the Republic of Hungary in 2003 and the Republic of Poland in 2004. In 2004, it was a turning point in our region's history when the Visegrad Countries became full members of the European Union, joining as part of its largest wave of enlargement to date.

Parallel to becoming members of the European family, responsible thinking about the future of the national patent systems immediately began in the V4 Countries. The automatic consequences of accession to the EPC prompted the managements of the IP Offices to seek new ways of securing a high standard of service to their patent applicants.

It is a curious twist of fate that I was personally involved in this work from the very outset, working as a legal officer at the Hungarian Intellectual Property Office, or as it was called, the Hungarian Patent Office at that time. I remember receiving the assignment with excitement and enthusiasm. After all, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity for a lawyer to work towards a goal that could bring about a qualitative leap in a given field – and, without exaggeration, truly usher in a new era.

The initial approach to establishing a local PCT International Authority was to gain PCT International Authority status for the Hungarian Patent Office. The limited number of national innovators, coupled with the national public administration's capacity constraints, rapidly revealed the impracticality of this goal. This understanding encouraged us to broaden our horizons. In order to achieve our goal, collaboration was essential, as was the implementation of the most up-to-date international best practices. We did not have to go too far, as our partners and best practices were within easy reach.

We were in a fortunate position that we were able to build on the revival and reaffirmation of the traditional good relations that had been characteristic of our region. Furthermore, the Austrian Patent Office operated as a PCT International Authority in the neighbourhood, albeit with a very specific scope of competence. The Austrian Patent Office – which had been designated as a PCT International Authority right from the very outset, even when the PCT was launched – served as a point of reference in our region both then and now.

The Visegrad Patent Institute could not have been established without a thorough understanding of Austria's functioning PCT International Authority. The relationship between the two offices went beyond traditional cooperation. I consider myself extremely fortunate that I could attend the interesting, highly informative and instructive bilateral discussions in person held to gain an understanding of the practical experience and organisation of the work of a PCT International Authority. We, the staff of the Hungarian Patent Office, learnt a great deal from this, for which I personally remain grateful to this day. I can confidently state that the Visegrad Patent Institute could not have been established without the close cooperation with the Austrian Patent Office.

Another, equally decisive factor in the establishment of the Visegrad Patent Institute was the creation of the Nordic Patent Institute (NPI). The successful establishment of the NPI, its designation as a PCT International Authority and the acceptance of its existence by the European Patent Organisation paved the way for the establishment of the Visegrad Patent Institute. We realised that the model followed by Denmark, Iceland and Norway – based on an innovative legal solution and the 21st-century information and communications revolution – was the only way forward, the only viable scenario for our region as well.

Having understood the work processes and having recognized the viable model, we still had to identify those partners who would help to bring the Central European PCT International Authority to life. The Visegrad Countries stepped in and the wonderful sense of community of the national IP Offices proved that we could count on one another in this endeavour. Embracing this sectoral initiative, the Governments of the V4 Countries also threw their weight behind the plan.

It is particularly interesting to note that behind the V4 collaboration, there is national unity in every participating country – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. It is a concept that creates a community amongst us that transcends political parties and governments. Moreover, this unity – although it has faced challenges in recent years – has endured to this day. As an example, the ratification of the Headquarters Agreement between the Government of Hungary and the Visegrad Patent Institute can be cited, which took place in the summer of 2022. The Hungarian Parliament, setting aside its deep divisions, also unanimously supported the Act promulgating this agreement.

The history and the existence of the Visegrad Patent Institute extend far beyond the institute's official mandate under the PCT. It embodies our region's need for cooperation, development and stability. The Visegrad Patent Institute carries out its day-to-day work whilst striving to strengthen the good relations within our region.

In this spirit, we established official contact with the other international organisation set up by the Visegrad Countries, the International Visegrad Fund, and the two organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2022.

The Visegrad Patent Institute also collaborates closely with international organisations that directly impact its activities.

The Visegrad Patent Institute also actively cooperates with a number of national IP offices. First, I would like to highlight the significant initial cooperation activity relating to the Visegrad Patent Institute, which was carried out between the national IP offices of the Visegrad countries and the Japan Patent Office prior to the establishment of our Institute. The Japan Patent Office's professional support and advice during the Visegrad Patent Institute's initial appointment as a PCT International Authority was instrumental in helping the Institute prepare to meet the PCT's appointment criteria, ultimately contributing to its successful appointment by the WIPO PCT Union Assembly.

Since then, the Visegrad Patent Institute has invested considerable effort in establishing further cooperation with national IP offices. It acts as a PCT International Authority for Lithuanian and Serbian applicants based on Memoranda of Understanding. To promote tasks and awareness raising in the field of patents, the Institute has signed Memoranda of Understanding with the Austrian, Slovenian and Croatian National IP Offices.

The Visegrad Patent Institute also collaborates closely with international organisations that directly impact its activities. Its main international partner at a global level is the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), which administers the PCT by providing secretarial services for the PCT Assembly and working-level meetings, as well as central administrative services for the operation of the treaty through the International Bureau.

As a European PCT International Authority, the Visegrad Patent Institute has prioritised the development of a particularly close relationship with the European Patent Organisation. The Visegrad Patent Institute is established and operates in accordance with the EPC, and particularly its Protocol on Centralisation. In light of the aforementioned considerations, and in accordance with the EPC Protocol on Centralisation, the Visegrad Patent Institute is an active partner of the European Patent Office. The Institute collaborates closely with the European Patent Office, particularly in the field of harmonising their search activities. In order to manage this close connection in an active way and to facilitate the exchange of views and the direct flow of information, the Visegrad Patent Institute gained observer status at the meetings of the Administrative Council of the European Patent Organisation in 2022.

By respecting the special European legal background and internalising international best practices, the Visegrad Patent Institute has established a quality-based, user-focused operation and provides reliable, quality search and examination work under the PCT. In recognition of the success of its decade-long operation, the PCT Assembly confirmed the reappointment of the Visegrad Patent Institute as PCT International Authority in July 2026. Following the decision, the Visegrad Patent Institute is granted the right to continue its work as International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority under the PCT for another ten years, until 2037, in the best interests of its users.

Moreover, and also for the benefit of its applicants, the Visegrad Patent Institute participates in the Global Patent Prosecution Highway (GPPH) pilot project. The GPPH network comprises of 28 national and regional IP offices worldwide where applicants can request accelerated processing based on the PCT work products of the Visegrad Patent Institute when entering the national phase of the PCT procedure.

Our journey continues. The Visegrad Patent Institute is committed to further improving its services and procedures in line with the European best practices, especially those of the European Patent Office, and in accordance with the interests of its users, based on their increasingly active feedback.

I would like to acknowledge the steady, reliable professional cooperation of the national IP offices of the Visegrad Patent Institute's Contracting States, which has been instrumental in facilitating our decade-long commitment to quality work and continuous development. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the management of the national IP offices. Their support for the Visegrad Patent Institute in building a growth strategy in a rapidly changing innovation and economic environment was instrumental. I would also like to thank the professional staff of the offices. Their hard work makes the daily management of our tasks possible.

It has been an honour for me to participate both in the birth of the Visegrad Patent Institute and in its development in the past 6 years. This publication presents an interesting scope of historical, factual and often personal perspective of several outstanding professionals who participated in the work that created and built our unique international organization. In their words, you will find a similar sense of accomplishment and professional pride that I share because the Visegrad Patent Institute is a manifestation of not only historical roots and regional cooperation of the V4 Countries but also personal efforts of many outstanding professionals, all of which is aligned for the goal of helping our beloved region develop and flourish.

I wish you a pleasant reading.

Johanna Stadler
Director



THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE VPI SHOULD BE VIEWED IN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION AMONG THE COUNTRIES OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP AND THEIR JOINT EFFORTS TO ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY AND COMPETITIVE SERVICES IN THE FIELD OF PATENT PROTECTION.

II. GREETINGS FROM THE NATIONAL IP OFFICES OF THE CONTRACTING STATES

2.1 GREETINGS FROM THE INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OFFICE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The year 2026 marks a significant milestone in the history of the Visegrad Patent Institute (VPI), which celebrates ten years since the start of its operations. Allow me, therefore, on behalf of the Industrial Property Office of the Czech Republic, to express my sincere congratulations on this anniversary, and at the same time, my appreciation to all those who contributed to the establishment, development, and day-to-day operations of this institution. For me personally, this anniversary also has a special dimension. I had the honour of being present at the signing of the Agreement on the VPI. This makes me all the more aware of the continuity and development the Institute has undergone over the past decade.

The establishment of the VPI should be viewed in the broader context of strengthening regional cooperation among the countries of the Visegrad Group and their joint efforts to ensure high-quality and competitive services in the field of patent protection. From the very beginning, the launch of VPI 's operations was associated with a number of activities on the international stage. For the cooperating national IP offices, including the Industrial Property Office of the Czech Republic (the "Office"), this meant not only an opportunity but also a challenge: how to establish effective coordination and harmonization of joint activities and create a solid foundation for long-term cooperation.

The Office faced a specific and practical task of defining the method of communication with applicants, with the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), as well as with the emerging VPI Secretariat. At the same time, it was essential to implement an efficient and secure system for administering VPI files in an electronic environment. In this regard, it proved crucial to integrate VPI administrative processes into the Office's existing quality management system. As a result, these activities became part of regular reviews conducted as part of both internal and external audits, which contributed to establishing and maintaining, over the long term, a high standard that meets the requirements of international searching authorities.

From the perspective of professional capacity, involvement in VPI activities provided a significant impetus for the further development of patent examiners. The new role of an International Searching Authority within the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) system placed high demands both in terms of technical expertise and language skills. Consequently, Office staff underwent targeted training focused on the activities of international authorities under the PCT and completed intensive language training, particularly in technical English. The use of advanced search databases and analytical tools also expanded significantly and is now an integral part of high-quality patent practice.

It is important to note that this emphasis on education and professional development was not

a one-off response to the establishment of the VPI, but has become a permanent feature of the Office's activities. Over the past ten years, these training activities have not diminished; on the contrary, they have continued to develop in response to technological progress and changing user needs. The Office systematically participates in the implementation of new search systems and tools, examiners regularly attend professional seminars and webinars, and specialized language consultations continue. In this way, a high level of expertise is ensured over the long term, which is a prerequisite for effective operation within the international system.

From the perspective of the Office, the establishment of the VPI can clearly be assessed as the right and forward-looking step. The VPI has not only strengthened the professional level of the participating institutions, but has also enabled more effective sharing of experience, harmonization of procedures, and broader involvement of the Czech Republic in the global patent system. Added value also lies in the creation of a stable platform for regional cooperation with a tangible impact on the quality of services provided.

Over the past decade, the Czech innovation ecosystem has undergone significant development. It is based on a functioning research base, high-quality technical education, and a growing number of innovative enterprises, including dynamically developing startups and technology companies. At the same time, cooperation between academia, research organizations, and industry has deepened. In this environment, the Office plays an important role not only in administering the agenda related to the legal protection of industrial property, but also as a partner actively supporting the effective use of patent protection in practice.

The VPI has not only strengthened the professional level of the participating institutions, but has also enabled more effective sharing of experience, harmonization of procedures, and broader involvement of the Czech Republic in the global patent system.

Our long-term priority is to raise awareness of the importance of industrial property protection across society as a whole, from research institutions to small and medium-sized enterprises. It is precisely these entities that often possess considerable innovative potential which, however, is not always sufficiently protected or utilized. In this regard, we see an important role not only for national activities but also for cooperation within the VPI, which enables the sharing of experience and the transfer of best practices.

This priority is also reflected in the IP Strategy: The Approach to Promote Industrial Property Rights 2021–2030, which is based on the Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic for the period 2019–2030. One of its strategic objectives is the development of international cooperation. Cooperation with the Visegrad Group countries and the Office's contribution to the further development of the VPI also fall within the framework of implementing this concept and its objectives.

Looking ahead, it is clear that the field of industrial property protection will face a number of new challenges. The rapid advancement of digitalization, the rise of artificial intelligence, new innovation models, and ever-shorter innovation cycles are transforming the environment in which we operate. These developments raise new questions both in terms of patentability and in terms of the efficiency and accessibility of protection systems.

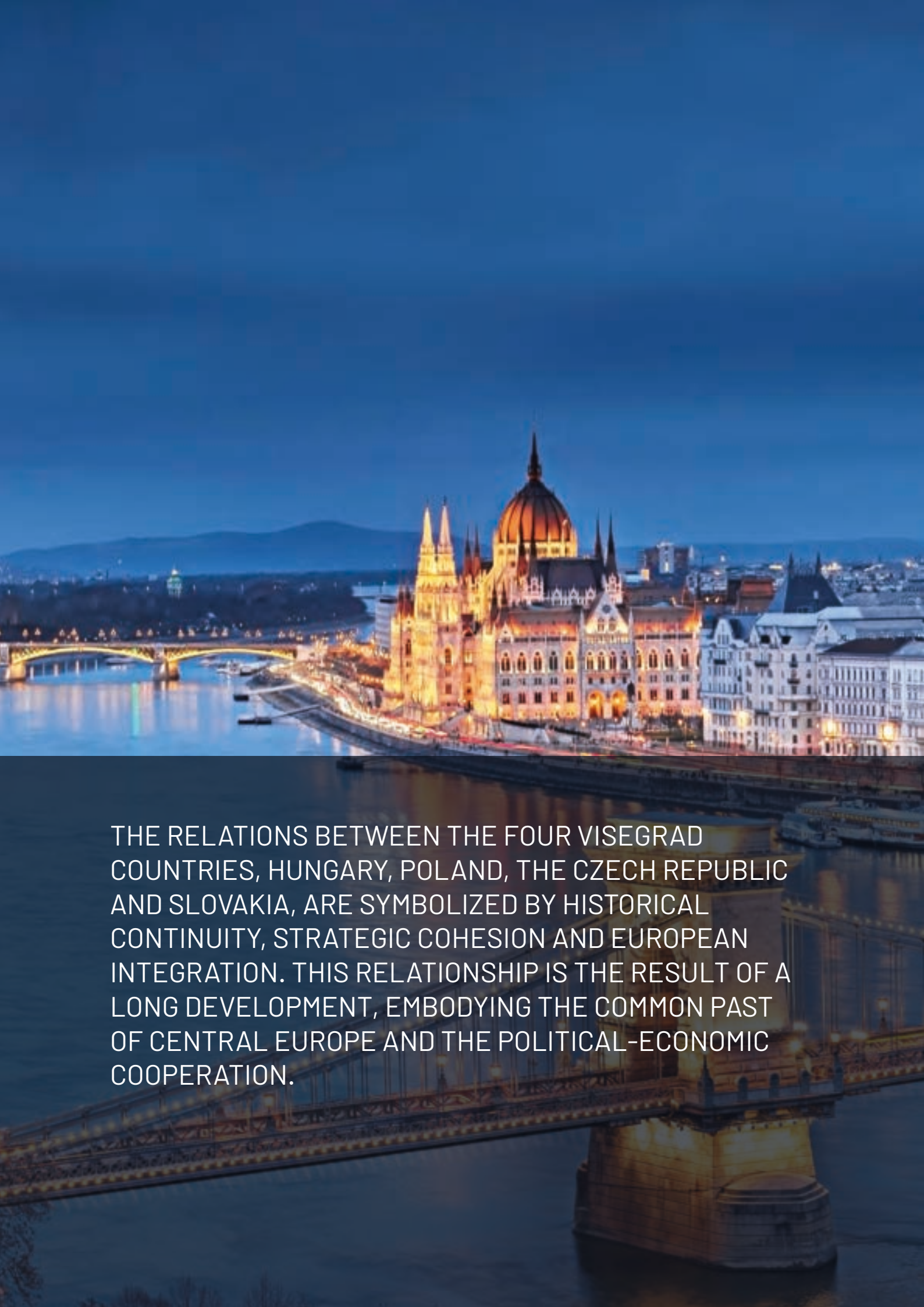
Over the next five to ten years, it will be crucial for institutions such as the VPI to be able to respond flexibly to these changes. I see significant potential here to further develop cooperation, share expertise, and coordinate procedures among VPI members. I also consider it important to develop cooperation with other countries in the region that are not part of the VPI. An open and partnership-based approach towards other countries in our region can represent a valuable contribution in the future in terms of sharing experiences, expert dialogue, and broader use of best practices. Last but not least, such development could ultimately be beneficial especially for users, thanks to better navigation of within the system, greater predictability of procedures, and wider availability of high-quality services. Equally important will be the modernization of processes, the broader use of digital tools, and a focus on user-friendly services.

An open and partnership-based approach towards other countries in our region can represent a valuable contribution in the future in terms of sharing experiences, expert dialogue, and broader use of best practices. Last but not least, such development could ultimately be beneficial especially for users.

The Industrial Property Office of the Czech Republic is ready to remain an active and reliable partner in this cooperation. I believe that through our joint efforts it is possible to ensure that the patent protection system remains not only high-quality and trustworthy, but also sufficiently flexible and open to the needs of the future.

Let me conclude by once again congratulating the Visegrad Patent Institute on its tenth anniversary. I wish it many further successes, stable development, and the continued ability to contribute to strengthening the innovation environment in our region. I am convinced that cooperation within the VPI will continue to bring concrete and measurable benefits in the years to come, both to our institutions and to the broader innovation community (including users of the patent system) that we jointly support.

Josef Kratochvíl
President



THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FOUR VISEGRAD COUNTRIES, HUNGARY, POLAND, THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA, ARE SYMBOLIZED BY HISTORICAL CONTINUITY, STRATEGIC COHESION AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION. THIS RELATIONSHIP IS THE RESULT OF A LONG DEVELOPMENT, EMBODYING THE COMMON PAST OF CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE POLITICAL-ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

2.2 GREETINGS FROM THE HUNGARIAN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE

It fills me with immense pride that I, as the current Chairman of the Administrative Board of the Visegrad Patent Institute (the VPI), can congratulate the Institute on its 10th anniversary. Our joy is doubly great, as the Hungarian Intellectual Property Office is celebrating its 130th anniversary this year. These ten joint years have been filled with numerous tasks, achievements and successes.

The relations between the four Visegrad countries, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, are symbolized by historical continuity, strategic cohesion and European integration. This relationship is the result of a long development, embodying the common past of Central Europe and the political-economic cooperation.

The cradle of this historical link, economic and political alliance is Visegrad. The cooperation dates back to 1335 and this name is binding. In 1991, again in Visegrad, this time not by kings but by prime ministers, the alliance was formally confirmed, marking the most important political turning point in the history of modern Central Europe. We became strong partners, and we have been continuously strengthening this partnership ever since. Our goal was to preserve our common Central European identity and realize the European integration. It was a great success and a major milestone when we joined the European Union together in 2004.

This commitment is even more valid for us today. There is no doubt that we are stronger together. This is also true in the field of intellectual property. Our common interests in European and international forums closely connect us. We must think and be innovative together.

We also built on this, along the aforementioned aspirations, when we wished to create an institution in the field of patents that could enable our countries and IP offices to become important factors internationally, and which would be able to provide quality patent activities and services in the region.

The VPI is a symbolic bridge on the Danube that connects our countries, IP offices and colleagues more closely than ever before. This bridge is held by a balance of powerful forces.

The founding fathers intended the establishment of the VPI as an intergovernmental organization to be a turning point for our IP offices in international patent cooperation. Just as the Danube carved out the magnificent Danube Bend in a fateful way, creating one of the most beautiful natural landscapes in Hungary.

Looking back on the past 10 years, I feel that we have succeeded, our plans have been realized.

As an International Searching Authority (ISA) and International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA) under the PCT, the VPI provides professional and cost-effective support to innovators from Central and Eastern Europe in obtaining patents for their inventions in as many countries as possible. The VPI is one of the 26 authorities worldwide that can perform these international patent tasks. It is a cause for particular joy and celebration that the VPI's ISA and IPEA status was

In addition to the tasks arising from role of being an international authority, the VPI has also built a service portfolio available to anyone on a global level. We are also full members of the Global Patent Prosecution Highway.

reaffirmed this year for the next ten years.

Using the VPI can bring great advantages to applicants from the V4 countries – and now other countries, Lithuania and Serbia as well. The possibility of using the mother tongue, the speed, the significant fee reduction, and the quality of international search are extremely attractive options.

The VPI is able to assess inventive concepts conceived in any field of technology, and our patent examiners pursue a practice that is fully recognized also at the European level.

In addition to the tasks arising from role of being an international authority, the VPI has also built a service portfolio available to anyone on a global level. We are also full members of the Global Patent Prosecution Highway, which guarantees international recognition and accelerated acceptance of search reports in the world's leading patent offices.

We would like to be even more visible, to become a more important, if you like, an unavoidable factor for Central European applicants. Thus, there is still much to be done, but I truly believe that by continuing our joint efforts steadily and with due diligence, we can look forward to another 10 years of success.

The VPI is the realization of a long-cherished dream. Its creation is due to the dedicated work of many colleagues from the Hungarian, Polish, Czech and Slovak IP offices. I would like to congratulate and thank all those who took an active role in this. I personally was able to participate in these tasks, which I am extremely proud of. I feel that the work invested has paid off and will bring even greater rewards in the future.

We have created a form of cooperation between the V4 countries that we can all be proud of, and I believe that future generations will acknowledge our efforts with appreciation.

I wish the Institute many more decades of continued success.

Szabolcs Farkas
President



ESTABLISHED THROUGH THE SHARED COMMITMENT OF THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES, THE INSTITUTE HAS DEMONSTRATED HOW COORDINATED ACTION, MUTUAL TRUST AND THE POOLING OF EXPERTISE CAN STRENGTHEN ACCESS TO THE INTERNATIONAL PATENT SYSTEM AND CREATE TANGIBLE VALUE FOR INNOVATORS THROUGHOUT CENTRAL EUROPE.

2.3 GREETINGS FROM THE PATENT OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

The tenth anniversary of the Visegrad Patent Institute (VPI) provides an excellent opportunity not only to celebrate an important institutional milestone, but also to reflect on its future mission. Over the past decade, the VPI has become a remarkable example of successful regional cooperation. Established through the shared commitment of the Visegrad countries, the Institute has demonstrated how coordinated action, mutual trust and the pooling of expertise can strengthen access to the international patent system and create tangible value for innovators throughout Central Europe. What began as an ambitious regional initiative has evolved into a respected institution that contributes meaningfully to the global intellectual property landscape.

The last decade has witnessed accelerating technological progress, increasing global competition, growing geopolitical uncertainty and the emergence of entirely new technological domains. At the same time, innovation has become one of the key determinants of economic resilience, competitiveness and long-term prosperity. In this environment, IP is no longer viewed solely as a legal mechanism for protecting inventions, it has become an essential strategic asset that enables innovators to transform knowledge into economic and societal value.

This approach to IP is reflected in Poland as well. Poland's innovation ecosystem combines well developed public support, entrepreneurial activity and strong human capital, but still struggles to convert these assets into high-value innovation, maximizing IP value by its users and scalable technologies.

Over the next 5 to 10 years, the Patent Office of the Republic of Poland (PPO) in this landscape intends not only to act as a rights-granting authority but also to develop its role as an active participant in the creation and implementation of Poland's innovation policy.

The above principles have a direct impact on the activities of the PPO, which cover, amongst other things, the following areas: strengthening the technology transfer and commercialization of IP, educating the public and raising awareness of IP protection, developing digital tools (including AI tools) to facilitate entrepreneurs' access to patent information and supporting sustainable development.

To aim these goals, we have established a dedicated Innovation Department within the PPO. Its duties cover support in identifying emerging technological trends, developing future-oriented policies to ensure that our institution remains well positioned to serve innovators in a rapidly changing environment.

Equally important, to strengthen the significance of IP as a financial and strategic asset we need to support SMEs and startups in accessing the patent system. That is why, another activity of the PPO in this area also includes development of instruments supporting commercialization of IP rights, with special regards to financing mechanisms based on intangible assets, IP valuation systems and platforms enabling the trading of IP rights. All these areas are core to the mandate of the new Department and the Office.

Through its role within the Patent Cooperation Treaty system, the VPI also helps innovators access global markets more efficiently, reducing barriers to international expansion and strengthening the global competitiveness of Central European enterprises.

In the area of education and awareness-raising our role is to constantly enhance transparency of the patent system and better communicate its role in the knowledge-based economy and everyday life. Our Office is well known for its promotional and educational activities, that will be developed.

With regard to tools that facilitate access to the patent system, it should be noted that artificial intelligence and digital technologies are transforming both innovation and public administration, requiring the Office to continuously adapt our expertise, tools and services while maintaining trust and high-quality decision-making. The Office will continue to develop its systems to improve access to information and enhance its quality using modern technologies, including those based on AI.

At the same time, innovation policy can no longer be separated from sustainability objectives. Central Europe is well positioned to contribute to the development of clean-energy, environmental and resource-efficient technologies, making sustainability an increasingly important dimension of regional innovation policy. The PPO is committed to contributing to these efforts, both through our participation in international initiatives and through our own organisational transformation, including the implementation of environmentally responsible management practices and sustainability-oriented solutions.

The PPO actively contributes to and will develop international cooperation within the World Intellectual Property Organization, the European Patent Organisation, the European Union Intellectual Property Office, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union, particularly in areas such as patent quality, digital transformation, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

Against this backdrop, the Visegrad Patent Institute occupies a particularly important position. Through its role within the Patent Cooperation Treaty system, the VPI also helps innovators access global markets more efficiently, reducing barriers to international expansion and strengthening the global competitiveness of Central European enterprises.

Looking ahead at the next five to ten years, I believe that the VPI has the potential to play an even more influential role, especially as PCT search authority. Beyond its existing functions, the Institute could also develop as a regional centre of excellence for knowledge exchange, professional training, dissemination of best practices in technology transfer and commercialization of inventions. Promoting patent protection in Central Europe remains a significant challenge as well, as it should not only combat misinformation and oversimplifications, but above all, translate technical and

legal jargon into the language of business and market benefits. In an age of information overload, our joint media strategy must be based on precisely targeted educational campaigns, building a strong digital presence, and establishing ourselves as the go-to experts in the public debate on the future direction of innovation. The Central European region possesses enormous intellectual potential, but its full realisation depends on how effectively we can convince innovators that a patent is not a bureaucratic burden, but a strategic asset of a capital nature.

The future European patent landscape will require stronger partnerships, greater interoperability of digital systems and deeper cooperation between institutions. No office can effectively address the challenges of technological complexity, global competition and rapidly evolving innovation models on its own. The continued success of Europe's innovation ecosystem will depend on our collective ability to share expertise, harmonise approaches and develop common solutions.

The future European patent landscape will require stronger partnerships, greater interoperability of digital systems and deeper cooperation between institutions. No office can effectively address the challenges of technological complexity, global competition and rapidly evolving innovation models on its own.

On behalf of the Patent Office of the Republic of Poland, I congratulate the Visegrad Patent Institute on its tenth anniversary and thank all those who have contributed to its success. We remain committed to our cooperation and are confident that the Institute will continue to play an important role in supporting innovation, competitiveness and technological development across Central Europe.

Congratulations on this important milestone, and best wishes for continued success in the years ahead.

Ewa Skrzydło-Tefelska
President



FOR SLOVAKIA, PARTICIPATION IN THE VPI HAS STRENGTHENED THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE NATIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY SYSTEM. IT HAS ENABLED CLOSER COOPERATION WITH PARTNER OFFICES IN THE VISEGRAD REGION, CREATED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED EXPERTISE.

2.4 GREETINGS FROM THE INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The tenth anniversary of the Visegrad Patent Institute (VPI) is an important opportunity not only to reflect on a decade of successful cooperation, but also to acknowledge the dedicated efforts that made the Institute's establishment and operation possible. For the Industrial Property Office of the Slovak Republic, the establishment of the VPI represented an important milestone in regional cooperation and a shared commitment to providing high-quality international patent services.

The establishment of the VPI required intensive institutional, organisational and technical preparation. One of the IP Office's major early tasks was to define the operational framework for communication between applicants, the International Bureau of WIPO, and the VPI Secretariat. Clear procedures had to be created to ensure that international applications could be handled efficiently, reliably and in accordance with the requirements of the Patent Cooperation Treaty system (PCT).

Participation in the VPI had a significant impact on the professional development of Slovak patent examiners. The IP Office needed to strengthen examiner expertise in areas directly connected with international search and preliminary examination work under the PCT. This included deepening technical knowledge, improving technical English and developing skills in conducting international searches and international preliminary examinations.

Equally important, the relevant VPI processes were incorporated into the Office's quality management system. As a result, these processes became subject to both internal and external audits, strengthening accountability, procedural consistency and confidence in the services provided.

This professional development has not been limited to the initial phase of the VPI's operation. Continuous training remains an essential part of the IP Office's work. Slovak examiners continue to develop their skills through professional seminars, webinars, consultations, language training and the implementation of modern search systems. These activities support the long-term objective of maintaining high standards of quality and ensuring that the IP Office can respond effectively to increasingly complex technological developments.

For Slovakia, participation in the VPI has strengthened the international dimension of the national intellectual property system. It has enabled closer cooperation with partner offices in the Visegrad region, created opportunities for professional exchange and contributed to the development of internationally recognised expertise. At the same time, it has helped Slovak applicants, researchers, universities, startups and enterprises approach international patent protection with greater confidence and predictability.

The IP Office's role, however, extends beyond the administration of industrial property rights. Our Office also seeks to act as a partner to the Slovak innovation ecosystem by supporting the effective practical use of patent protection. Research institutions, universities, small and medium-sized enterprises, startups and technology companies all need accessible, reliable and strategically

The experience of the VPI demonstrates the value of regional cooperation in the field of intellectual property. By pooling expertise and resources, the participating offices have created an institution capable of delivering high-quality patent services while strengthening professional cooperation across Central Europe.

useful intellectual property services. Properly managed patent protection can help innovators secure investment, support technology transfer, strengthen competitive positions and enter foreign markets with greater confidence.

This is particularly important for Slovakia, whose economy has a strong industrial foundation in sectors such as automotive production, engineering, information technologies and advanced manufacturing. In parallel, Slovak universities, research institutions, startups and technology companies are increasingly producing innovative solutions with commercial potential. The challenge is no longer only to create knowledge, but to transform knowledge into value through effective protection, management and commercialisation of intellectual assets.

This approach is consistent with Slovakia's broader objective of building a more knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy. Intellectual property should not be perceived merely as a legal instrument or administrative formality, but as a strategic tool that supports investment, technology transfer, market expansion and sustainable growth. Our Office therefore seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of intellectual property as an integral part of innovation management and economic development.

The experience of the VPI demonstrates the value of regional cooperation in the field of intellectual property. By pooling expertise and resources, the participating offices have created an institution capable of delivering high-quality patent services while strengthening professional cooperation across Central Europe. The VPI has shown that countries with shared interests and comparable innovation challenges can achieve more together than they could individually.

Looking ahead, I believe that patent offices will need to address key challenges such as digitalisation, artificial intelligence, shorter innovation cycles and changing user expectations. Patent offices will need to modernise their internal processes, expand the use of digital tools, improve user-friendly services and adapt their expertise to new technological realities. The continued development of secure electronic systems, advanced search tools and AI-driven approaches will be essential for maintaining quality and efficiency.

I am convinced that regional cooperation will remain one of the key strengths of our patent systems. On the occasion of the Visegrad Patent Institute's tenth anniversary, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the Institute's development and success.

The VPI has become a respected platform for regional cooperation, professional exchange and high-quality patent services. We are confident that it will continue to support innovation, strengthen international competitiveness and contribute to the effective protection of technical solutions throughout Central Europe. We look forward to continuing this successful partnership and shaping the next decade of innovation and patent cooperation together.

Pavol Gregorčok
President

III. THE BIRTH OF THE VISEGRAD PATENT INSTITUTE

The genesis of the Visegrad Patent Institute (VPI) was defined by global, European and regional trends and developments – all of which both presented an opportunity and erected some hurdles. On the VPI's tenth anniversary, it is befitting to pay tribute to the leadership that recognized and seized that opportunity and the workmanship of a small, dedicated team that cleared those hurdles and brought the VPI into existence.

Reviving their historical bonds, prime ministers and heads of state of the then Visegrad countries laid down the foundations for their political, economic and cultural cooperation by a solemn declaration adopted in 1991. It followed the historic currents of regime change in Central and Eastern Europe and focused on European integration. In June 2000, this regional cooperation was further strengthened and institutionalized through the creation of an International Visegrad Fund, mandated to support common cultural, scientific and educational projects.

Almost right from the outset, the Visegrad Group has had its own IP dimension as well. Heads of the V4 industrial property offices have been holding annual meetings since 1992 – to exchange views on topical IP issues and to evaluate new regional, European and worldwide developments, frequently leading to common positions expressed at global and European fora. The V4 cooperation of national IP offices has also been extended to Austria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia, known as "V4 + Friends".

It was in this context that the idea was born that the region's own International Authority (IA) should be created under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), and a working party was set up to prepare the VPI's establishment and its appointment under the PCT. Between October 2013 and December 2015, the working party, which consisted of experts from all the four Visegrad offices and which I had the honour of coordinating, developed the concept of the Institute, drew up the international treaty on its foundation, supported the relevant processes in WIPO and the EPO, and prepared the launch of the VPI in terms of its operations, quality management, governance, budget and finances.

The Agreement on the Visegrad Patent Institute (VPI Agreement) was signed in Bratislava on 26 February 2015 by the heads of the V4 national IP offices as the duly authorized representatives of their governments – it was of course a major step, but only the beginning of a longer journey towards the VPI's becoming an international authority duly recognized by both WIPO and the EPO.

The VPI Agreement mandated the Institute, as its main task, to act as an International Searching Authority (ISA) and an International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA) under the PCT. However, this was a status that needed to be obtained in WIPO through appointment by the PCT Union Assembly and the conclusion of an agreement with the International Bureau (IB). This required

not only compliance with minimum requirements of a substantive nature but also the completion of a relatively complex procedure which had been redesigned by the PCT Union Assembly just the year before, setting a tight timeline and providing for the assistance of existing IAs in assessing fulfilment of the substantive criteria for appointment.

The appointment process was set in motion in February 2015 by a joint letter signed by the heads of the V4 offices, Mr. Josef Kratochvíl (CZ), Mr. Miklós Bendzsel (HU), Ms. Alicja Adamczak (PL), and Mr. Luboš Knoth (SK). It was addressed to WIPO's Director General and sought the VPI's appointment by the PCT Union Assembly, based on a comprehensive set of supporting documents demonstrating the VPI's preparedness for satisfying the substantive ISA and IPEA appointment requirements regarding examiners, tools, search systems and documentation, as well as quality management and internal review arrangements. When putting all this together, the V4 Working Party was able to rely on the invaluable advice and support from WIPO's PCT Director, Mr. Claus Matthes. Additionally, the favourable assessment provided by the Nordic Patent Institute (NPI) and the Japan Patent Office as existing IAs gave the project a boost and paved the way for the VPI's eventual appointment. What made the NPI's assessment and support particularly relevant was the fact that the VPI followed the NPI's structure in the sense that the national offices of its contracting states would perform the tasks of international search and examination on the VPI's behalf and under its intergovernmental layer consisting of the Administrative Board and the Secretariat.

In support of their application, the V4 delegations argued that the VPI would fill a territorial gap within the global system of the PCT through acting as an International Authority for Central and Eastern Europe, and they noted that in

In support of their application, the V4 delegations argued that the VPI would fill a territorial gap within the global system of the PCT through acting as an International Authority for Central and Eastern Europe.

VPI would serve the goals of fostering innovation and creativity as well as promoting economic growth and competitiveness in the Central and Eastern European region.

WIPO the Group of Central European and Baltic States was the only regional group within which there existed no functioning IA under the PCT, and thus the VPI was intended to support the development and usefulness of the PCT system by adding further competent resources to those already available, especially in respect of a region not having its own IA in place at that time. Through completing the global coverage of IAs, the VPI was expected to contribute to a better understanding and wider use of the PCT in the Central and Eastern European region, leading, in turn, to an improvement in the quality of international applications originating from that region. Based on the long-established traditions and expertise of the V4 national offices and their existing, and the VPI's expected, good record on quality management, the VPI sought to become a reliable, efficient and constructive partner in the efforts to further improve the quality and the efficiency of the functioning of the global patent system.

They stressed that the VPI would serve the goals of fostering innovation and creativity as well as promoting economic growth and competitiveness in the Central and Eastern European region. To achieve these goals, and with the full support of the region's users, the VPI was intended: (i) to offer applicants a favourable and efficient option for entering the PCT system (through the possibility of using local languages and with proximity to users, in particular, SMEs, individual inventors and the like); and (ii) to maintain, and further develop, the patent-related expertise of the participating national offices at the service of their inventors and industries.

In May 2015, the PCT Committee for Technical Cooperation unanimously recommended that the VPI be appointed as an ISA and IPEA. Taking the Committee's advice into account, the PCT Union Assembly, at its October 2015 meeting, appointed the VPI as an ISA and an IPEA and approved the draft agreement between the VPI and the IB. The latter was signed on 14 December 2015 in Geneva, completing the appointment process within WIPO.

The VPI also needed to be recognised within the European Patent Organisation as a full-fledged European IA operating on an equal footing with its counterparts in Europe. The V4 countries consistently argued that the establishment of the VPI would fit in with the concept of the European Patent Network (EPN) and would also ensure a smooth interaction with the newly emerging regime of the European Union's unitary patent protection. Thus, another important objective of the VPI was to contribute to the development of a coherent and efficient European patent system based on the European Patent Convention (EPC) as well as on the well-established cooperation between the European Patent Office (EPO) and national offices, and to offer Central and Eastern European users the best platform possible for taking advantage of such European cooperation.

It was in the March 2015 meeting of the Administrative Council (AC) that the delegations of the V4 countries provided information on the VPI's establishment. They announced that they wished to

make use of the authorisation under Section III, paragraph (1) of the Protocol on Centralisation to the EPC in view of the fact that none of them had an official language in common with those of the EPO. Moreover, they undertook to comply with their obligations under the EPC and the Protocol on Centralisation when concluding and implementing the agreement with WIPO's IB in relation to the VPI's functioning as an ISA and IPEA.

This, in turn, led to the VPI's full recognition at the EPO as well. In December 2015, the AC decided to extend the scheme to the VPI under which the fee for the supplementary European search is reduced where the international search report or supplementary international search report was drawn up by another European ISA. Under Article 153(7) EPC, this fee reduction is intended to ensure that in terms of total cost there is equality of treatment on entering the European phase between applicants who have used the EPO as ISA and those who have used another European ISA (such as the VPI). In addition, again following the example of other European IAs, a special agreement was concluded on harmonising search activities between the EPO and the VPI in accordance with Section III, paragraph (2) of the Protocol on Centralisation.

Upon completion of these steps, the VPI became a full member of the system of PCT cooperation in Europe, which had just been redesigned as a result of the so-called Strategy Debate and the creation of the EPN, and applicants of the VPI were guaranteed the same treatment as provided for those of the other European IAs.

With this, the VPI was all set to open its gates and launch its operations on 1 July 2016 – starting to serve the innovation ecosystem and the economic and technological development of the region. As a testimony to the VPI's success and coincidentally marking its tenth anniversary, in July this year the PCT Union Assembly extended its appointment as ISA and IPEA until 31 December 2037.

Mihály Ficsor
Principal Director, Legal Affairs, European Patent Office
Former Vice-President for Legal Affairs of the Hungarian Intellectual Property Office

IV. GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENTS OF THE NATIONAL IP OFFICES OF THE V4 COUNTRIES AT THE TIME OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE VISEGRAD PATENT INSTITUTE

THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Signature That Connected Two Moments in History

For several years, we had been working towards an ambitious idea: bringing together the expertise and resources of the four Visegrad patent offices and creating a new intergovernmental organization capable of serving innovators from our region on the international stage.

There are moments in a professional life that remain vivid long after the meetings, documents and official titles have faded. For me, one of those moments was 26 February 2015 in Bratislava.

I remember sitting there, behind the table with open documents revealing a historic moment for the Slovak Republic as well as for all Visegrad Four countries, in my role of the President of the Industrial Property Office of the Slovak Republic, holding a pen that was about to become part of something much bigger than an ordinary administrative act.

For several years, we had been working towards an ambitious idea: bringing together the expertise and resources of the four Visegrad patent offices and creating a new intergovernmental organization capable of serving innovators from our region on the international stage. That day, the idea became reality.

Together with Josef Kratochvíl of the Czech Republic, Miklós Bendzsel of Hungary and Alicja Adamczak of Poland, I signed the Agreement on the Visegrad Patent Institute in Bratislava — as the duly authorized representative of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The Agreement formally established the VPI as an intergovernmental organization for cooperation in patents, with the ambition of becoming an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority under the PCT.

But what happened immediately afterwards is the part I remember most. The then Slovak Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Miroslav Lajčák, came to me and said words that I have never forgotten:

“Mr Knoth, may I ask you - do you realize what you have just done?”

And after my deep thought... he put the moment into a much larger historical perspective. He

reminded me that Bratislava had once been the place where the Peace of Pressburg was signed in 1805 — the historic treaty following Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz. And he told me, in essence, that we had just created and signed something exceptionally rare on the international stage: a new international treaty in Bratislava, almost two centuries after that historic peace.

I remember the feeling. For a moment, the room disappeared. There was only the awareness that a signature placed on a piece of paper could connect two completely different chapters of European history.

The first was about war, power and peace. Ours was about knowledge, innovation and cooperation. The Peace of Pressburg belonged to the Europe of Napoleon. The Visegrad Patent Institute belonged to a modern Europe trying to build its future through cooperation.
And that contrast has stayed with me ever since.

The VPI was not created merely as another institution. Its purpose was to make international patent protection more accessible to inventors, SMEs, universities and research organizations in Central and Eastern Europe — combining the expertise of four national offices and opening a regional gateway to the international patent system. What makes the memory even more powerful today is that the signature did not remain only a historical moment.

The VPI became operational on 1 July 2016 and has continued its mission for a full decade. In 2025, the Institute itself commemorated the tenth anniversary of the signing — describing that day as the beginning of a truly exciting journey.

Looking back, I feel enormous gratitude. To Josef, Miklós and Alicja — thank you for the trust, the negotiations, the courage and the shared belief that our four countries could create something that would reach far beyond our borders.

But my deepest thanks belong to everyone who stood at the birth of the Visegrad Patent Institute — to all those who contributed their expertise, time, energy and determination to negotiating, preparing and establishing it; to the teams of our four national offices; to the experts, diplomats, lawyers, patent professionals and colleagues whose work often remained behind the scenes but without whom that signature could never have happened.

And, above all, my heartfelt thanks go to all those who, from that day until today, have transformed the words written on that document into reality. To everyone who has worked — and continues to work — to fulfil the meaning and promise of those signatures. To those who have made the VPI a living institution rather than simply a treaty. To those who every day help inventors, innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, universities and companies from our countries protect their ideas, develop their inventions and bring their knowledge into the world.

The signatures were ours. The fulfilment of those signatures belongs to all of you. And perhaps that is the most important lesson of all. Institutions are not created by documents alone. They are created by people who believe in an idea — and by generations of people who refuse to let that

idea remain only on paper. To everyone who has carried this vision forward, thank you.

And to Dr Johanna Stadler, today leading the Visegrad Patent Institute: thank you for carrying this legacy forward. What we once negotiated around a table and eventually committed to with our signatures has become a living institution serving innovators in our region and connecting Central European expertise with the global patent system.

May the Visegrad Patent Institute live and prosper for many decades to come. May it continue to grow beyond the expectations of its founders. May it surpass even the ideals we dared to imagine when we signed that document in Bratislava. And may every future signature placed under the name Visegrad Patent Institute continue to mean what we hoped it would mean that day: cooperation instead of division, knowledge instead of borders, innovation instead of limitation, and a better future built together.

Long live the Visegrad Patent Institute. May its next decades be even greater than its first. And may the ideas protected through its work continue to change our countries, our region — and the world.

And now I know. That is perhaps what makes certain moments in life unforgettable. You think you are signing a document. Only later do you understand that you were signing a beginning.

And every time I think of that February day in Bratislava, I remember Minister Lajčák's question:

"Do you realize what you have just done?"
Today, I can answer him:
Yes, Minister. I think I finally do.

Ľuboš Knoth
Former President of the Industrial Property Office of the Republic of Slovakia
2012-2016

I would like to express my feelings of happiness and pride that we have managed to complete a common idea within four Central European countries: at the beginning, taking into account all circumstances, this seemed rather like a mere fantasy.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

With regard to the Visegrad Patent Institute, above all, I would like to express my feelings of happiness and pride that we have managed to complete a common idea within four Central European countries: at the beginning, taking into account all circumstances, this seemed rather like a mere fantasy. Gradually, however, a number of substantive and formal obstacles were overcome, and the result was the Agreement on the Visegrad Patent Institute.

For the National Patent Offices of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the Institute represented certainly a great challenge. I do remember our discussions on how to leverage the experience of existing PCT authorities while taking into account our specificities. How to create an institution that would work brilliantly while operating economically. It was not easy to fulfil this commitment with honour and to avoid becoming a disgrace in the "world league" of Patent Offices of the most advanced countries. However, enthusiasm and great commitment paid off. Friendship and goodwill of all Presidents and employees of the participating Patent Offices also played a big role. In our Office the Institute was also seen as one of the newer fruits of regional cooperation, which was co-founded years ago by our President Václav Havel.

Today, we can proudly state the following:

- The VPI operates seamlessly within the European network of PCT authorities.
- Regional applicants can navigate the complex international patent system using their own national languages, lowering bureaucratic friction.
- The institute significantly minimized the financial burden of innovation, reducing international PCT application fees.
- Universities, research institutes, individual inventors, and SMEs have gained favourable direct access to global patent protection pathways.

As one of the "founding fathers", I congratulate the Visegrad Patent Institute on its anniversary and have no doubt about its great future.

Josef Kratochvíl
President of the Industrial Property Office of the Czech Republic
2009-Present

It is evident that the economic competitiveness, knowledge industry, entrepreneurial culture, innovation potential and patent awareness of its inventors have been significantly elevated by the international community that operates the Visegrad Patent Institute.

HUNGARY

The establishment of the Visegrad Cooperation in 1991 and the joint efforts of the V4 Group in the accession processes of our countries to the European Union from 1993 were significant achievements for Central Europe. During the first decade of the generation-long time that has passed since then, we have become equal members of the European family. We also became parties to the European Patent Convention and Organisation and the EU in 2002 and 2004.

The subsequent decade marked a significant progression in modernisation. The Visegrad Patent Institute (VPI) was established in Budapest in mid-2016 as an international searching and preliminary examining authority under the WIPO's PCT system, in accordance with the founding agreement prepared by the V4 industrial property offices and signed in Bratislava. I am proud that, with my excellent leader colleagues, who possess the necessary knowledge, experience and enterprising spirit to implement this joint organisational innovation, we are able to offer our clients the best service possible.

Following a decade of successful performance, the PCT Assembly has decided to renew the PCT authority mandate of the VPI until the end of 2037. I offer my wholehearted congratulations on this excellent achievement. The well-founded decisions of the Administrative Board, consisting of the heads of the Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak national patent offices, and the recognised quality enhancement efforts of the VPI have ensured high search efficiency, service portfolio growth, and significant extension of competence and outreach. Our institution has become a valued member of the group of PCT ISA and IPEA institutions, which now counts 26 members.

It is evident that the economic competitiveness, knowledge industry, entrepreneurial culture, innovation potential and patent awareness of its inventors have been significantly elevated by the international community that operates the Visegrad Patent Institute.

In a continuation of the historic Visegrad agreement of 1335, which strengthened the peace and prosperity of our region, may the next decade of the VPI – which will include the exceptional occasion of the 700th anniversary of the Visegrad royal agreement – also successfully enhance the social and economic recognition of our region.

Miklós Bendzsel
Former President of the Hungarian Intellectual Property Office
1997-2016

The establishment of the Institute marked the culmination of several years of consistent cooperation among the offices and reflected a shared vision for the development of the regional system of industrial property protection.

THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

The anniversary of the Visegrad Patent Institute is a special occasion to look back, with gratitude and satisfaction, on the moment of its establishment. It was accompanied by great joy, a sense of shared achievement, and the enthusiasm of the leadership of the patent offices of the Visegrad Group countries.

The establishment of the Institute marked the culmination of several years of consistent cooperation among the offices and reflected a shared vision for the development of the regional system of industrial property protection. The aim of this undertaking was not only to significantly reduce the time and costs associated with international patent applications under the PCT procedure, but also to strengthen the position of the countries of our region within the international patent system.

The path to bringing this idea to life required determination, trust, and effective cooperation among all parties involved. The entry into force of the Agreement of 26 February 2015 on the Visegrad Patent Institute, signed in Bratislava by the heads of the intellectual property offices of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, required the completion of the procedures applicable to international agreements. In Poland, this meant the adoption by the Parliament of the Republic of Poland of the Act authorising the ratification of the Agreement, which took place on 5 August 2015. The President of the Republic of Poland ratified it on 5 October 2015.

6 October 2015 was of particular significance, as on that day the Assembly of the PCT Union of the World Intellectual Property Organization appointed the Institute as an International Searching Authority and an International Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). This was a moment of great importance for the entire region — a confirmation of the professionalism, credibility, and competence of the offices that established the Institute.

Today, looking back from the perspective of the years that have passed, I remember with great pleasure the atmosphere of those events: commitment, mutual goodwill, sense of responsibility, and shared conviction that we were creating an institution of genuine importance and value. I am pleased that the spirit of that cooperation has endured to this day and continues to be one of the most valuable foundations of the Visegrad Patent Institute.

Alicja Adamczak
Former President of the Patent Office of the Republic of Poland
2002–2019

V. THE GROWTH OF THE REGIONAL NETWORK OF THE VPI BETWEEN 2016 AND 2026

The Visegrad Patent Institute was established with the signature of the agreement between the four Visegrad countries, but the VPI has been keen on building strategic cooperations with neighbouring countries ever since its establishment.

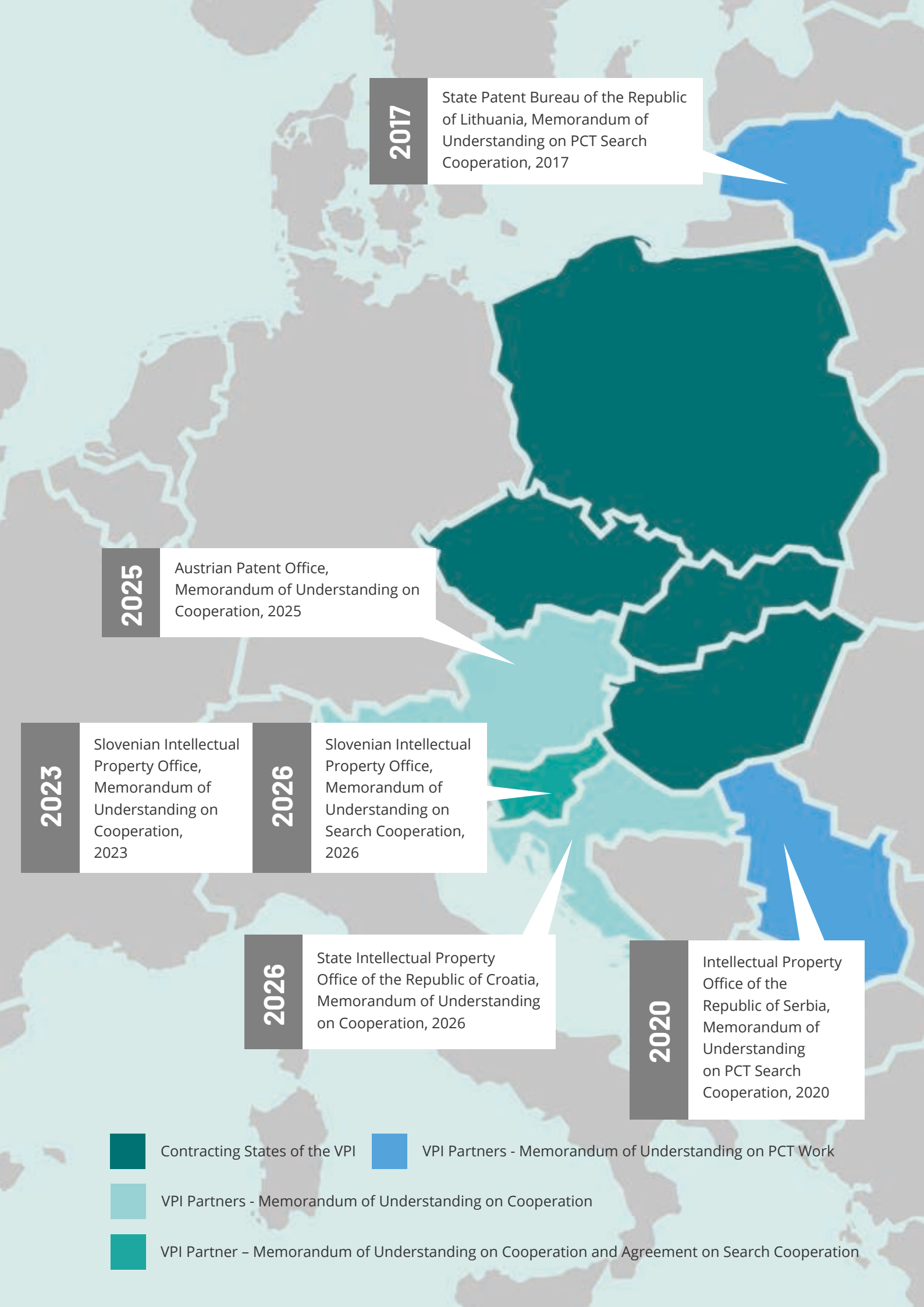
Over the past decade, the VPI signed Memoranda of Understanding with the patent and intellectual property offices of several neighbouring countries.

The Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) concluded by the VPI vary in nature, depending on the type of cooperation they cover. Two of the MoUs concluded with national offices empower national applicants from the given countries to utilise the VPI as an international searching and preliminary examining authority under the PCT. Such MoUs have been signed with the State Patent Bureau of the Republic of Lithuania (in 2017) and the Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Serbia (in 2020).

The objective of three of the MoUs is to enhance regional collaboration in the domain of patents. These MoUs were concluded with the Slovenian Intellectual Property Office (in 2023), the Austrian Patent Office (in 2025), and the State Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Croatia (in 2026).

Another type of MoU stipulates additional support for national offices in their national patent granting procedure. One such MoU was concluded with the Slovenian Intellectual Property Office in 2026, in addition to the aforementioned cooperation MoU.

- 2017
- 2020
- 2023
- 2025
- 2026


2017
State Patent Bureau of the Republic of Lithuania, Memorandum of Understanding on PCT Search Cooperation, 2017
2025
Austrian Patent Office, Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation, 2025
2023
Slovenian Intellectual Property Office, Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation, 2023
2026
Slovenian Intellectual Property Office, Memorandum of Understanding on Search Cooperation, 2026
2026
State Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Croatia, Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation, 2026
2020
Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Serbia, Memorandum of Understanding on PCT Search Cooperation, 2020
Contracting States of the VPI
VPI Partners - Memorandum of Understanding on PCT Work
VPI Partners - Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation
VPI Partner – Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation and Agreement on Search Cooperation

VI. GREETINGS FROM THE IP OFFICES WITH A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE VISEGRAD PATENT INSTITUTE

VITA KIRILIAUSKAITĖ
DIRECTOR OF THE STATE PATENT BUREAU OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

Over the past decade, the Institute has established itself as a trusted and highly respected International Searching and Preliminary Examining Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty, making a valuable contribution to the global patent system. Since 2017, Lithuanian applicants have the opportunity to choose the Visegrad Patent Institute as their ISA. This has strengthened access to high-quality international patent services and provided our innovators with an additional, reliable pathway for protecting their inventions abroad via the PCT system.

We greatly value constructive cooperation built on professionalism and a shared commitment to fostering innovation. I wish the Institute continued success, growth and many more years of supporting inventors and innovation across our region and beyond.

On behalf of the State Patent Bureau of the Republic of Lithuania, I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations to the Visegrad Patent Institute.



LITHUANIA

VLADIMIR MARIĆ
DIRECTOR OF THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The Intellectual Property Office of Serbia and the Visegrad Patent Institute signed a Memorandum of Cooperation, which entered into force on 1 September 2020. By signing this agreement, for the first time in history, the possibility was opened for PCT applications of our nationals to be examined, alongside the European Patent Organization, by another competent international body – the Visegrad Patent Institute. For Serbia, this was a step in the right direction.

The significance of this agreement is reflected, above all, in the reduction of costs of international patent protection for our nationals. This was, and still is, an important incentive for creative people in Serbia, since patent protection has never been cheap. Like everything else in the world, the patent system too must change and adapt to the needs of the local environment and the current historical moment. It should serve not only the rich and powerful, but also members of the middle class, young people just beginning to create and work, and small and medium-sized enterprises. The Visegrad Patent Institute carries part of such benefits.

On behalf of all employees of the Intellectual Property Office of Serbia, and in my own name, I congratulate our colleagues from the Visegrad Patent Institute on this anniversary and wish them many more years of successful and fruitful work.



SERBIA

STEFAN HARASEK
PRESIDENT OF THE AUSTRIAN PATENT OFFICE

The Visegrad Patent Institute (VPI) is undoubtedly a milestone in strengthening the cooperation in the field of intellectual property in Central Europe. Consequently, on 15 May 2025, the Austrian Patent Office (APO) and the VPI signed a Memorandum of Understanding which further intensified the longstanding and fruitful collaboration between the two organisations.
The APO and VPI have many things in common. Not only their geographical and historical proximity, but also their common goal of furthering excellent technical cooperation in the Central European region. They are both International Searching and International Examination Authorities (ISA/IPEA) under the WIPO PCT, striving to provide high-quality services to PCT applicants in the region and worldwide.
We look forward to many more decades of exchange and cooperation, in order to enhance our contribution to a strong patent system which benefits the users of the IP system and all of society in the best possible way.



AUSTRIA

KARIN ŽVOKELJ
DIRECTOR OF THE SLOVENIAN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE

The Slovenian Intellectual Property Office warmly congratulates the Visegrad Patent Institute on its 10th anniversary. Over the past decade, the VPI has demonstrated how regional cooperation can strengthen the international patent system and deliver tangible benefits to applicants. Through its expertise, high-quality services and commitment to cooperation, the VPI has become a valued and trusted partner for intellectual property offices across the region.
The cooperation between the Slovenian Intellectual Property Office and the VPI has continued to grow, marked by the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2023 and further strengthened through the Agreement on Cooperation in Search Activities concluded in 2025. This partnership enables Slovenian applicants to benefit from high-quality prior art searches and written opinions on patentability for national patent applications, helping them better assess the patentability of their inventions and make full use of the opportunities offered by the patent system. We highly value our cooperation with the VPI and look forward to continuing our successful partnership in the years ahead.
Congratulations once again on this important milestone. Thank you for the excellent cooperation over the years, and I look forward to continuing it in the future.

SLOVENIA

LJILJANA KUTEROVAC
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE STATE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

The tenth anniversary of the Visegrad Patent Institute is a welcome opportunity to celebrate both its achievements and the spirit of cooperation that has made them possible. By bringing together the expertise of national patent offices, the Visegrad Patent Institute has become an excellent example of successful regional cooperation among the countries of Central Europe.

The State Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Croatia is looking forward to become part of this dynamic regional partnership. The Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Visegrad Patent Institute on 10 March 2026 opens new opportunities to bring our institutions closer together, share knowledge and experience, and develop practical forms of cooperation for the benefit of innovators, research institutions and businesses.

We look forward to turning these opportunities into joint initiatives that will make patent information and expertise more accessible and help innovators bring their ideas and technologies to wider markets.

On behalf of the State Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Croatia, I warmly congratulate the Visegrad Patent Institute on its tenth anniversary and wish it continued success in strengthening cooperation, innovation and shared progress across our region.



CROATIA

VII. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICES OF THE VISEGRAD PATENT INSTITUTE

The primary aim of the VPI is to help patent applicants from the V4 and MoU countries to make more effective use of the international patent system under the PCT.

Furthermore, the VPI aims to support more informed decision-making regarding the patenting of inventions and the acquisition of patent protection by providing prior art search services under the Global Patent Search Services.

7.1 PROCEDURES UNDER THE PCT

The Visegrad Patent Institute started its operation as International Searching Authority (ISA) and International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA) with offering International Search and International Preliminary Examination as well as Supplementary International Search.

To better serve its applicants, the VPI broadened this service portfolio with the International-Type Search that can complement the national patent search with the search carried out by the VPI as an ISA on a national patent application filed with Industrial Property Office of the Czech Republic, the Hungarian Intellectual Property Office or Industrial Property Office of the Slovak Republic. The ITS has been offered to the applicants from the 1 January 2024.

SERVICE PORTFOLIO OF THE VPI

PCT services >

- International Search
- Supplementary International Search
- International Preliminary Examination
- International-type Search

Global Patent Search Services >

- Novelty Search
- Novelty Search with Preliminary Patentability Report
- Validity Search

7.2 GLOBAL PATENT SEARCH SERVICES (GPSS)

In order to provide services to a broader user base, the Administrative Board of the VPI took the decision to launch the GPSS portfolio on 1 October 2023. The portfolio of services was established with two services available to any interested user worldwide.

The Novelty Search Service (NSS) is a service that provides prior art and state-of-the art information in relation to a given invention or technical solution. The report established in the NSS identifies patent documents and other publications that can be taken into account for the assessment of novelty and inventive step requirement in respect of the described invention.

The Novelty Search with Preliminary Patentability Report (NSPPR) identifies patent documents and other publications that can be taken into account for the assessment of novelty and inventive step of the invention described, and gives a detailed reasoned opinion on whether the invention meets the three criteria for patentability (novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability).

Both services are offered for a flat fee within a period of four weeks. As a user-friendly step, the VPI reduced the fee of the NSS in July 2025 to enhance the affordability and availability of the service.

In response to customer feedback, the GPSS service portfolio was extended with the Validity Search Service (VSS) on 1 October 2025. The VSS offers in-depth searches of a patent specified by the customer that is in force (or has family members in force) in at least one country, with claims available in English. The VSS report identifies patent documents and other publications that have the potential to affect the validity of the patent in question. Furthermore, a comprehensive opinion is provided on the patentability of the invention described in the patent, taking into account the cited prior art documents. The service is delivered based on a quote within 4 weeks.

The VPI is committed to the continuous enhancement of its service provision, both within the V4 and MoU countries, and on a global scale.

VIII. HISTORICAL STATISTICAL FIGURES OF THE WORK OF THE VPI FOR THE PERIOD BETWEEN 2016 AND 2025

This annual report provides a comprehensive overview of the most significant statistical figures related to the work of the VPI since the commencement of its operations.

In consideration of the VPI's 10th anniversary, it was decided that a 10-year overview of the primary statistical data would be presented, in lieu of the customary 5-year review that had been presented in the annual reports of the past years. The objective is to facilitate the identification and assessment of long-term trends in the statistics related to the work of the VPI.

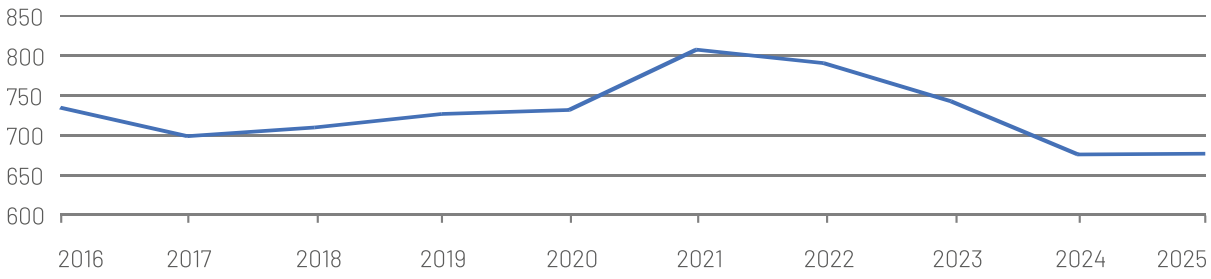
The VPI commenced operations on 1 July 2016, with reporting conducted on a calendar year basis. Therefore, it is imperative to emphasise that the data from 2016 exclusively encompasses a half-year's worth of work.

8.1 INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS ORIGINATING FROM OUR REGION

The VPI's core function is the international search and preliminary examination of international applications under the PCT. However, applicants from the region, including those from V4 countries, do not make full use of the PCT system. Usually, they perceive the PCT to be too complex. Furthermore, applicants also underestimate the importance of acquiring patent protection outside Europe when they first file a patent application and during the priority year. Not only do these applicants miss out on the opportunities that filing an international application under the PCT might bring, but this also undermines the competitive advantage of the region and Europe as a whole. This is particularly apparent in the case of ground-breaking inventions with great international potential.

This is reflected in the statistical data of PCT applications to the EPO and the VPI as well. The number of PCT applications of the past decade originating from the V4 region reached its peak in 2021 with steady decline until 2024 and stagnation in 2025.

Total Number of International Applications from V4 Countries 2016-2025



Source: World Intellectual Property Office (WIPO) IP Statistics Data Centre

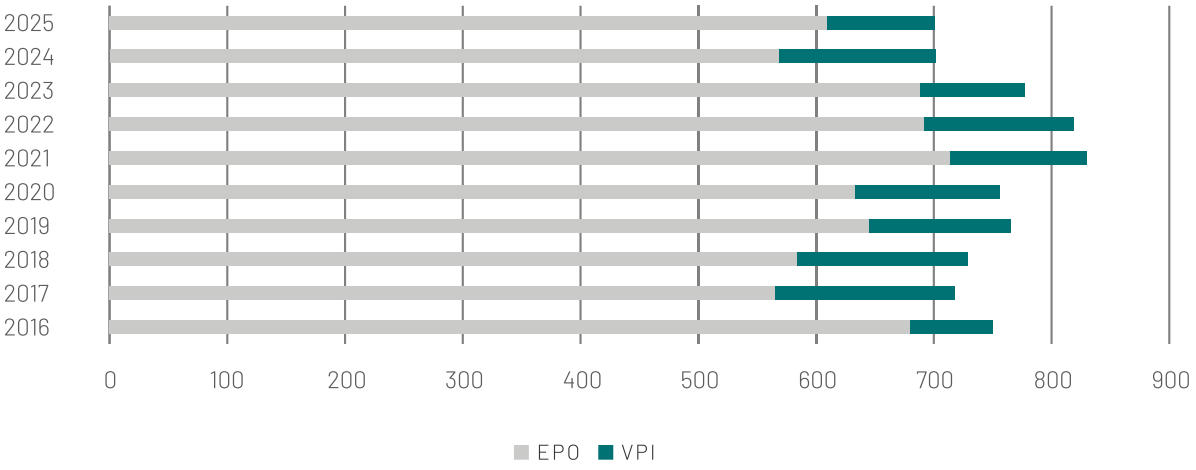
The VPI, within its limited resources, participates in PCT awareness-raising campaigns. It also supports all initiatives in its contracting states that aim to strengthen the use of the PCT system.

8.2 RATIO OF APPLICANTS CHOOSING THE VPI

It is important to consider that all of the VPI's contracting states and the MoU countries are also members of the European Patent Convention. Consequently, applicants from the V4+MoU countries are at liberty to opt for either the European Patent Office (EPO) or the VPI as ISA and IPEA under the PCT.

In this context, the VPI's workload is contingent on two factors. Firstly, the overall PCT filing trends in the region. Secondly, the percentage of its share from this total workload in comparison to the EPO.

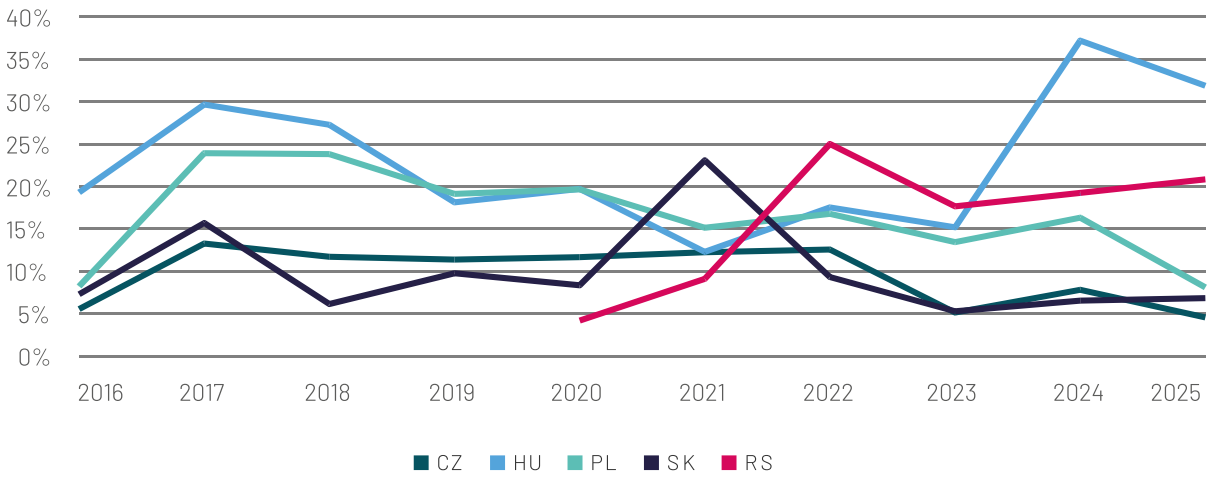
EPO/VPI Breakdown for International Applications from the V4 and MoU Countries 2016-2025



Source: WIPO IP Statistics Data Centre

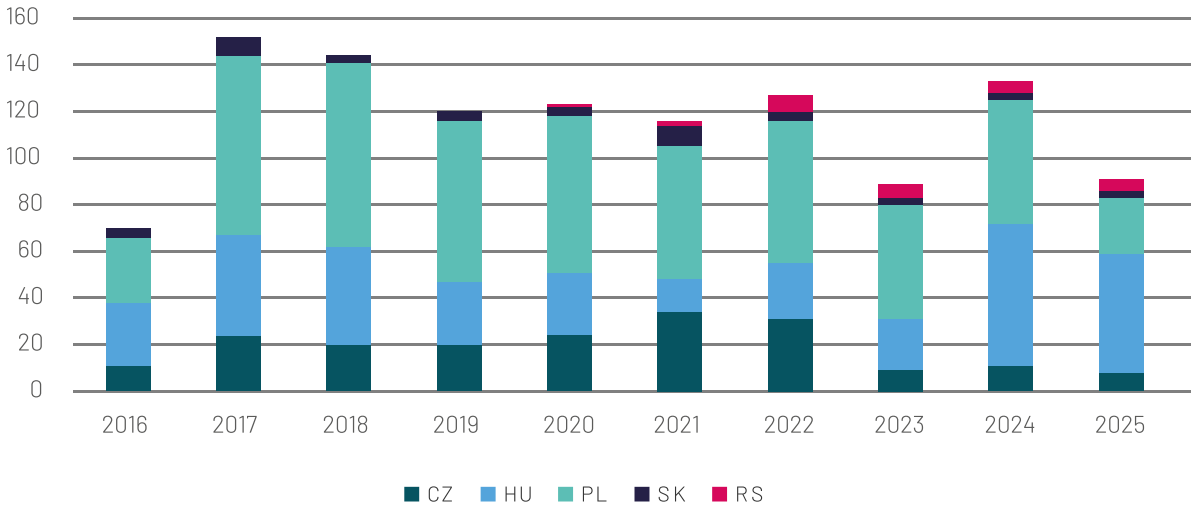
The VPI only receives a minority of the total PCT applications from the V4+MoU region, and this tendency is likely to continue. Only temporary positive changes for the VPI have been observed in this respect over the past 10 years.

Ratio of Applicants Selecting the VPI out of the Total Number of IAs by Country of Origin 2016-2025



There is no clear trend that can be drawn for the entire period and for applicants from all contracting and MoU states. However, the ratio of Hungarian and Serbian applicants opting for the VPI significantly grew in the past years. The low number of applications from the Czech Republic and Slovakia make it difficult to identify any trends. However, there was a significant decrease in the number of Czech applications in 2023, after which applicants did not return to the VPI. Since 2017, the number of PCT applications selecting the VPI originating from Poland has steadily decreased, with only minor fluctuations.

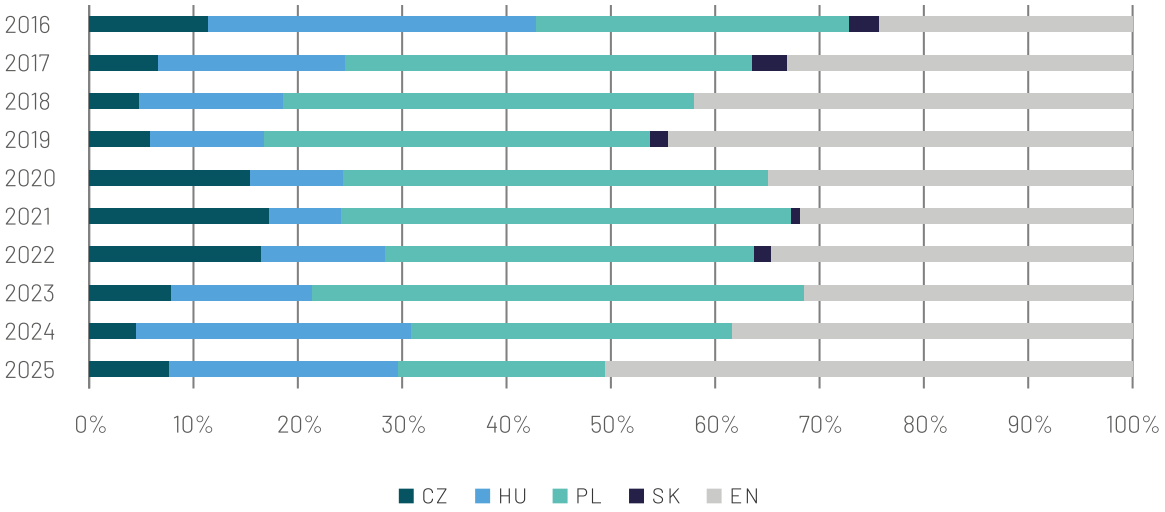
Number of IAs by Country of Origin 2016-2025



Traditionally, Polish applications accounted for the majority of applications received by the VPI. This was a logical consequence of Poland's size and the upward trends in its economy. However, this changed in 2025. Unfortunately, the number of Polish applications decreased significantly in 2025, to the extent that applications from Hungary could even exceed those of Polish origin.

8.3 FILING LANGUAGES

Ratio of Filing Languages 2016-2025

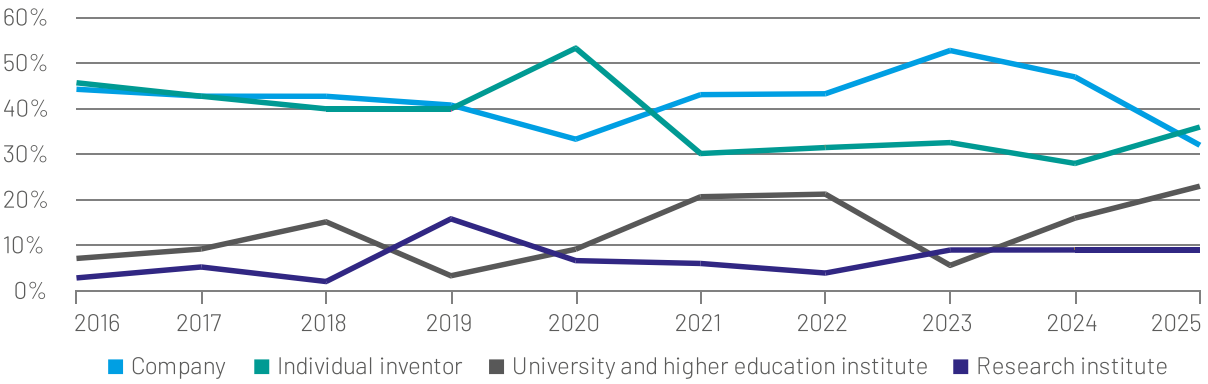


Important advantage of the VPI is the possibility of wider use of national languages compared to the EPO. However, the previous trend of about two-third of the applications being filed in national languages changed in 2025 with 50% of the applications filed in English.

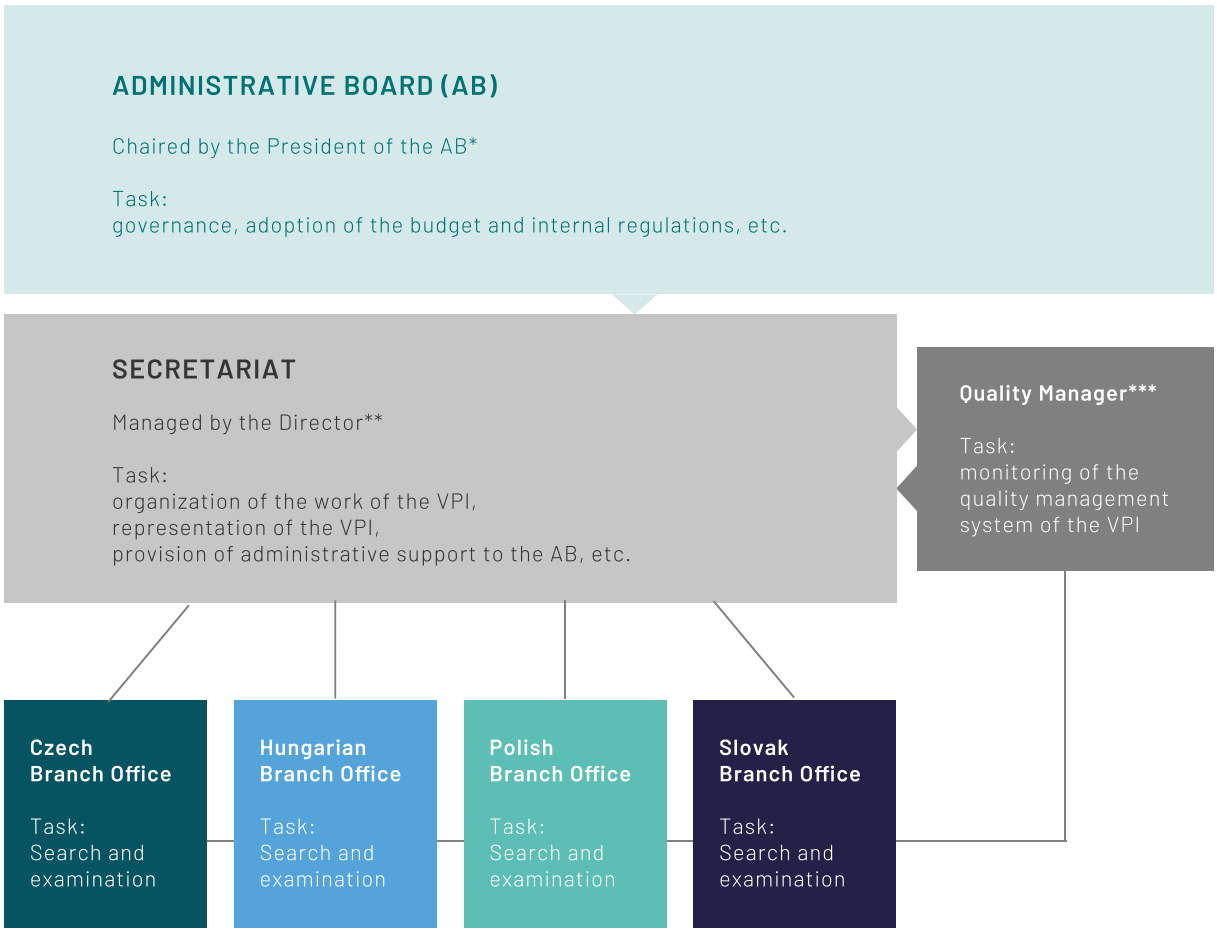
8.4 NATURE OF APPLICANTS

Historically, the majority of applications directed to the VPI has originated from companies and individual inventors. However, the ratio has undergone significant fluctuations since 2020. Following a substantial decline in 2023, the proportion of universities and higher education institutes has been exhibiting an upward trend once more.

Nature of Applicants of the VPI 2016-2025



IX. ORGANIGRAM OF THE VISEGRAD PATENT INSTITUTE



*The President of the AB is elected from Members on a rotational basis.
**The Director of the VPI is appointed by AB.
***The Quality Manager is appointed by the AB.

VISEGRAD
PATENT
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10 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

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