

Good afternoon,
ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by saying that it is a great honour for me to participate in this session on "Patents in Europe" following the interesting debate on "How to create a Single Market for innovation".

This roundtable seeks to discuss the new Unitary Patent system in Europe, its impacts in the Research and Innovation system and consequently the translation of innovation into social and economic benefits including, of course, growth and jobs.

Europe has distinct strengths and weaknesses. If we are able to identify our strengths and cultivate them, we will also be able to pull in the same direction to greater effect.

Strengths of Europe

With regard to the particular strengths that Europe enjoys, the European Union has allowed for transnational cooperation across the Member States in a way that was not imaginable even a generation ago. This cooperation has contributed significantly to European well-being and prosperity.

Europe now has the largest internal market in the world and remains a leader in a number of key sectors such as the automotive and aeronautics industries. The region possesses top-class researchers, entrepreneurs and companies and a dynamic and wide ranging scientific community.

Also, European programmes are targeted towards activities where intervention at Union level brings added value above intervention at national or regional level by creating economies of scale and critical mass, reducing

fragmentation and ensuring a Union-wide dissemination of results.

Weaknesses of Europe

However, as far as the scientific research system is concerned, currently 80% of researchers around the world work outside Europe, about 70% of patents are registered outside of Europe, 75% of the activities of R&D are carried out in other parts of the world outside Europe, and the trend is getting worse and it is urgent to reverse it.

The Science and Innovation is a necessary condition for development and economic growth, but not enough. There are many other factors which are also important.

For the economic growth, we must ensure other macroeconomic conditions, a new unitary patent system,

competition rules, properly functioning market, tax policy, efficiency, highly skilled services sector, innovative ideas and concepts that are developed in the system of Science and Innovation. It is the private system and the business that create wealth, hence the need to seek to improve the entry of doctors in our businesses and in particular in SMEs.

In particular, regarding the Patents and under the current system, European inventors cannot enjoy the full benefits of the Single Market when they need to seek patent protection country-by-country.

This has negative impact on the competitiveness of the Union as innovation-related activities generate human capital that tends to be more mobile than in other areas. The new system will help making the Union a more attractive place to create and innovate, for both European and non-European inventors.

The lack of access to comprehensive patent protection in Europe means that patent protection stops at the national borders. In order to reduce legal complexity and costs, businesses tend to validate European patents in only a few Member States, thus leading to a fragmentation of the single market. The European Patent with unitary effect will broaden patent protection to all participating Member States. This will increase business opportunities while opening up markets and contribute to the fulfilment of a true single market.

Horizon 2020

Against this background, let me finish by making a few remarks about Horizon 2020, the future framework programme for research and innovation to run in Europe from 2014 to 2020.

Horizon 2020 will be a fundamental instrument in structuring research and innovation in Europe. This

involves a number of factors. In particular, it should be as simple as possible; effectively and adequately funded, include a comprehensive approach to the passage from research to market and be designed in such a way as to overcome fragmentation and to encourage trans-European collaboration.

I have a direct and longstanding connection with Horizon 2020. I am currently the rapporteur for the Specific Programme Implementing Horizon 2020. The not inconsiderable goal of Horizon 2020 is to, at once, improve industrial competitiveness, to encourage excellence in science and to find ways of resolving the societal challenges that we are currently confronted with.

One of the objectives of Horizon 2020 is to develop and market new products. Patents are a vital tool to companies during the R&D process and can help safeguard the long-term international competitiveness of the EU.

The decision of the EU member states to adopt the unitary patent, and consequently a dedicated unified patent court, is a strong signal at a crucial moment as it underlines their support for a strong, innovation-based economy in Europe at a time of crisis. It is important that patent have solid rights in pertinent areas of technology and Horizon 2020 has a key function in stimulating such a development.

Thank you very much and it only remains for me to say that I look forward to what I am sure will, once again, be a stimulating and fruitful discussion.