

Management Board and Budget Committee meet at EUIPO

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The Management Board of EUIPO has approved the Strategic Plan 2025 of the Office during the Management Board and Budget Committee round of meetings from 19-21 November.

EUIPO's Strategic Plan 2025 is built on a vision of delivering 'IP value for businesses and citizens in Europe' through a number of interlinked strands of activities, centred on the following three strategic drivers:

- An interconnected, efficient and reliable IP system for the Internal Market
- Advanced customer-centric services
- Dynamic organisational skill sets and an innovative workplace of choice

The Strategic Plan 2025 was developed after a transparent and inclusive consultation process, starting with a staff and stakeholders' consultation from December 2018 until the end of February 2019, and continuing with a second public consultation, which ran from 25 June to 17 September. During the EUIPO User Group meeting of 13 September, participants exchanged views on the detailed content of the Plan, including examples of projects and activities to be developed in the coming year.

The approval of the plan by the Management board of EUIPO now clears the way for its implementation by the Office, which is scheduled to start on 1 July 2020.

EUIPO's Management Board and Budget Committee are composed of representatives

of the Member States of the EU-28, the European Commission and the European Parliament, with the Benelux Office of Intellectual Property (BOIP), the European Patent Office (EPO), the World Intellectual Property Office (WIPO), the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), and user associations acting as observers.

During the three day meeting period, Management Board members agreed to launch a selection procedure for the post of President of the Boards of Appeal of the Office. The Management Board also decided to propose to the Council a list of candidates for the post of Chairperson of a Board of Appeal as well as the extension of the mandate of a Chairperson of the Board of Appeal, and to extend the term of office of two members of the Boards of Appeal.

Finally, Members provided an opinion on the Office's trade mark and design practice as reflected in the 2019 edition of the Guidelines for Examination in the Office.

The Management Board also adopted the outcome of two convergence projects: Convergence Project 9, 'Distinctiveness of three-dimensional marks (shape marks) containing verbal and/or figurative elements when the shape is not distinctive in itself', and Convergence Project 10, 'Criteria for assessing disclosure of designs on the internet'. The Management Board also confirmed that the participating offices can proceed on a voluntary basis with the corresponding implementation procedure. The Management Board authorised the continuation of five European Cooperation Projects carried forward from the period covered under the Strategic Plan 2020, and adopted the project definitions for three new European Cooperation Projects.

The Management Board also approved the Work Programme of the Office for 2020 and adopted the proposal for the distribution of the offsetting amount corresponding to the budgetary year 2018.

During the Management Board and Budget Committee joint meeting, Members decided on the scope and mechanism for participation of User associations as Observers in the Management Board and Budget Committee meetings for the period 2020-2025.

During the Budget Committee meeting, Members were briefed on the budgetary implications of the Strategic Plan 2020 and the Annual Work Programme of the Office for 2020. Delegates approved the 2020 Budget of the Office. In addition, Members provided an opinion on the proposal of the review of the Office's Treasury Management Guidelines. Moreover, Members were briefed on the state of play of the Office's Treasury Management as of 30 September 2019.

Press release – Parliament to vote on new European Commission on 27 November



After the meeting, European Parliament President David Sassoli said: “During the last two months, the European Parliament has played its democratic role, scrutinising the performances of the proposed Commissioners closely. The hearings have been detailed, and sometimes difficult, but they provide a unique and transparent way for Members to verify whether the Commissioners-designate are ready for the job ahead. Today we completed the final assessment and are ready to vote on the full College of Commissioners next week.

Over the next five years, Europe has many issues to face – from providing long-term solutions on migration and asylum to leading the world in the fight against climate change. We need a European Commission ready to act on the issues that matter to Europeans. As the direct link with EU citizens, the Parliament will continue to hold the Commission to account and ensure it delivers on its promises.”

After an exchange of views with the Commission’s three executive Vice-Presidents-designate Frans Timmermans, Margrethe Vestager and Valdis Dombrovskis, the Parliament’s Conference of Presidents conducted their final assessment of the hearings of all Commissioners-designate.

Having analysed the evaluation letters from the committees in charge and the recommendation of the Conference of Committee Chairs, it gave its green light and declared the hearings officially closed.

A vote in Parliament will now take place on 27 November at noon, following a presentation by Ursula von der Leyen of the College of Commissioners and their programme.

The Conference of Presidents also authorised the publication of the

evaluation letters. They are available [here](#).

[Press release – ACP-EU : Agreement on climate change, migration and post-Cotonou](#)



Carlos Zorrinho (S&D, PT) Co-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly said: “We are all convinced that the only way to manage migration within a legal framework is to ensure job creation, growth, peace and stability. We must also invest in education and in small businesses”.

Michel Kamano, Acting ACP Co-President said: “I believe strongly that parliamentarians can champion multilateral work, as they bring the views of the people to the table and ensure they reflect the people’s perspective in the global debate. It is therefore with firm conviction that I call on each of you to defend and promote the commitment to multilateralism.”

During the 38th session of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), which took place from 17 to 21 November in Kigali (Rwanda), Members of the European Parliament and their counterparts from 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries debated and adopted several resolutions.

COP25

On the COP25, the UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Madrid in December, the JPA supports the new Commission’s proposal to launch a “Green New Deal”. It also supports the European Parliament’s proposal to increase the share of EU external action funding dedicated to climate action.

Sustainable growth and migration

The ACP-EU Assembly stressed the need to create jobs, particularly for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 18 million additional jobs are needed each year. Support measures, including from the EU, could be useful. Fair conditions in trade agreements and aid for trade also play a crucial role.

Post Cotonou

The Cotonou agreement expires in February 2020. It is therefore vital that the ACP-EU JPA strengthens its institutional role to uphold the parliamentary dimension of the future ACP-EU agreement.

[Spain: EIB, ICO and El Corte Inglés sign EUR 210m agreement to boost the company's investment in innovation and digitalisation](#)



- The European Investment Bank will provide EUR 110m for the operation

under the Juncker Plan, while ICO will contribute EUR 100m

- The agreement will help to accelerate El Corte Inglés' digital transformation to strengthen its competitiveness
- The investments will focus on the implementation of new technologies to expand multichannel sales and improve logistics chain management

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Instituto de Crédito Oficial (ICO) are set to finance the innovation investments of El Corte Inglés, with a view to accelerating its digital transformation. To this end, the EIB will provide a EUR 110m loan with Investment Plan for Europe support, and ICO will grant financing of EUR 100m. This is a ten-year agreement which reflects the two institutions' confidence in the Spanish company. The contracts formalising this agreement were signed today in Madrid by EIB Vice-President Emma Navarro, ICO Chairman José Carlos García de Quevedo and El Corte Inglés CEO Víctor del Pozo.

Supporting innovation and business digitalisation is one of the EIB's priorities in Spain, and it is with this goal in mind that the EU bank has signed this second loan aiming to boost the digital transformation of the emblematic Spanish business and European department store leader. The financing provided by the EIB in 2016 enabled El Corte Inglés to launch a new integrated digital platform for online retail to drive internet and mobile sales.

The ICO financing is part of the Spanish public sector bank's strategy to promote business development in digitalisation and innovation.

With the agreement signed today, El Corte Inglés will be able to speed up and expand its technological transformation by strengthening its digital infrastructure and systems, developing new software for better data management and improving the cyber-security of its online business. In addition, the application of new technologies will enable it to adapt more quickly to consumer preferences and optimise online client response times, as a portion of the EIB and ICO financing will go to investment in its logistics, supply and distribution chain.

The implementation of this project will help strengthen the competitiveness of one of Spain's biggest private sector companies in terms of job creation. El Corte Inglés has more than 90 000 employees and accelerating its digital transformation strategy will mean creating new, highly skilled jobs in its IT department.

*"We are delighted to contribute to the digital innovation of one of our most emblematic companies and one of Spain's biggest employers. Digitalisation is among the main challenges faced by European businesses to ensure they can compete and grow, which is why supporting it is a key priority for the EU bank," said **EIB Vice-President Emma Navarro** at the signing ceremony. "In the retail sector, investing in digital technologies is vital to adapting to rapid market changes and competing with other online retail giants. By signing this agreement, the EIB is reiterating its commitment to the innovation and digitalisation of Spanish businesses and to creating jobs in our country."*

ICO Chairman José Carlos García de Quevedo indicated that *“ICO’s participation in this operation is part of its strategy to promote digitalisation and innovation, one of the public sector bank’s key priorities. ICO’s goal is to provide Spanish companies with financing instruments enabling them to confidently tackle their digitalisation process to consolidate their growth and competitiveness.”*

El Corte Inglés CEO Víctor del Pozo expressed his satisfaction that the company could count on the support of two major institutions in its ongoing digital transformation. *“Our company innovates in everything we do, and the digital challenge is one of our current priorities. The support of the EIB and ICO will enable us to drive and move forward in this digitalisation and innovation objective.”*

The EIB and innovation

In 2018, the EIB Group increased the financing it provided in Spain for research, development and innovation (RDI) – key elements of the competitiveness of the economy – for the third consecutive year. It dedicated EUR 2.439bn to this objective, representing almost 30% of its activities in the country and making Spain the second largest beneficiary of EIB financing for innovation investment in the EU in 2018.

Background information

The **Instituto de Crédito Oficial (ICO)** is a corporate state-owned entity attached to the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Business. ICO has become a reference point for the financing of both SMEs and large investment projects. ICO contributes to business growth and job creation, supporting economic activities meriting promotion and development as a result of their social, cultural, innovative or environmental importance.

Artificial intelligence must benefit everybody, warns EESC



The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is adopting a firm stance on artificial intelligence and has insisted, at a high-level conference held in Helsinki on 21 November 2019, that the digital revolution must have a human face, be inclusive and bring benefits for all Europeans.

Artificial intelligence and the digital transformation must be inclusive and generate benefits for all Europeans, including vulnerable groups. At the high-level conference on Artificial intelligence, robotics and digital services for the wellbeing of citizens, organised by the EESC in Helsinki on 21 November 2019 in cooperation with the Finnish EU Presidency and the

Finnish Ministries of Social Affairs and Health and Transport and Communications, EESC members reaffirmed that people must remain at the core of new technological developments.

Ariane Rodert, president of the EESC Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT), underlined that artificial intelligence was one of the main political priorities of the EESC's current presidency and said: *Artificial intelligence must be developed in a safe, unbiased way and, above all, must be in keeping with the values of the EU. We need to ensure that artificial intelligence and its applications promote people's wellbeing and empowerment, with due respect for fundamental rights.*

On the same wavelength was **Pierre Jean Coulon**, president of the EESC Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN), who declared: *Digitalisation is everywhere: in health, transport and energy, and it affects the lives of everyone. For this reason, we need to regulate developments in this field, to make sure that everybody can contribute to and benefit from the digital economy and society. Civil society must be involved and play an important role, fighting for transparency and protecting the public.*

The event addressed the opportunities and challenges provided by digitalisation and artificial intelligence. At the top of the agenda were the impact on people's health, robotics and cutting-edge digital tools, as well as future steps in EU policy-making. Speakers included **Mikko Koskinen**, representing the Ministry of Transport and Communication, **Johanna Koponen**, from the Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU and MEP **Miapetra Kumpula-Natri**.

HEALTHCARE AND WELLBEING

Digital health and care services can increase the wellbeing of millions of citizens across Europe and thoroughly improve the quality of services delivered to patients. Against the backdrop of the change brought about by the digital transformation, people must be at the centre of care. Digitalisation must help healthcare professionals, who should acquire new and suitable qualifications and digital skills, to better look after their patients.

Digital tools must be a lever to develop new forms of organisation in health and care systems. However, they must not be misinterpreted: they are not a savings package for healthcare budgets and must not lead to staff cuts or cuts in services, said EESC member **Diego Dutto**.

DIGITAL MOBILITY

Connected and automated mobility, in particular driverless autonomous vehicles, offers benefits for our society in terms of safety and better services. On the other hand, it also raises some concerns. That's why, when artificial intelligence is used, the "human-in-command" principle should always be upheld: machines remain machines and people retain control over

them at all time.

Education and training are key to being ready for a digital life and to learning the features, limits and risks of new technologies. *Preparation begins at school with the development of critical thinking. Specialised higher education is important, as are a broad general education and the right attitude to learning throughout our entire lives,* pointed out EESC member **Ulrich Sann**.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Building trust is a priority when tackling the application of artificial intelligence technologies in our society over the next few years. The approach must remain human-centric and a sound certification system based on test procedures must be developed, enabling companies to declare that their artificial intelligence products are reliable and safe. Involving workers is essential, especially when artificial intelligence systems are introduced that are likely to alter the way work is organised, supervised and overseen.

The evolution of artificial intelligence needs to be guided, shaped and anticipated by social and civil dialogue. All stakeholders need to be involved: policy-makers, social partners, consumers and NGOs, as well as experts and academics. It is crucial to identify and monitor disruptive developments in a timely manner, concluded EESC member **Franca Salis Madinier**.

For further information on the event and the work and activities carried out by the INT and TEN sections, please consult our website.