



Uachtaránacht na hÉireann ar
Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh
Irish Presidency of the Council
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**Presentation by Mr Richard Bruton, Minister of Jobs, Enterprise and
Innovation to the JURI Committee of the European Parliament,
Brussels**

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Honourable Members of the European Parliament, Mr Chairman, Vice-Chairs
and members of the JURI Parliamentary Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity as Council Presidency to outline
to the JURI Committee the priorities and actions for the Irish Presidency on the
issues of Intellectual Property Rights and Company Law.

I am delighted to be here today and I very much look forward to a good
working relationship with the European Parliament. Since the Lisbon Treaty
came into force, the competences of the European Parliament have been
broadened where it now co-decides on the vast majority of EU legislation. The
European Parliament now has a very important role in the whole EU co-
decision process and plays a vital role in the democratic process at EU level
representing citizens. Indeed its role has now also developed towards building
constructive partnership with the National Parliaments. This helps to bring
about more parliamentary accountability both at the European and at the
National levels. Under our Presidency we will adopt a pragmatic and
constructive approach to engagement with the Parliament.

I would like to thank the Cypriot, Danish and Polish Presidencies for advancing some of the key measures under discussion today.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property is the cornerstone of any competitive modern economy, especially in today's global market. The Presidency will endeavour to progress work on a range of EU dossiers within the Intellectual Property family comprising work in the fields of Copyright, Patents and Trademarks.

Attempts at EU Patent reform have a long history over several decades. Successive EU Presidencies have worked hard with the European Parliament to progress this complex issue. I wish to particularly commend the Cypriot Presidency for reaching political agreement on all three elements of the patents package in December. As you know, on the 17th of December last, the Council and the Parliament signed the Regulations on the unitary patent and associated translation arrangements.

During Ireland's Presidency, we will continue to build on the momentum that has resulted in the recent political agreement on the patents package and progress work in order to bring the unitary patent system into being. This work is very important to enable European industry to avail of a system of patent protection that applies on a pan European basis. An element of the patents package which remains to be formally completed is the formal signature of the international agreement on the Unified Patent Court and Statute. During Ireland's Presidency, it is our intention to secure the signatories of all participating Member States to this international agreement and we hope to

do this at the earliest possible opportunity in the margins of the Competitiveness Council on 19 February next.

Member States are currently preparing to secure the appropriate national authority for signature to this international agreement. Following from formal signature, there is a considerable schedule of work to prepare and organise in order to ensure successful implementation of the system. We do not underestimate the challenges that this ambitious work schedule involves but are determined to focus on ensuring that the implementation process is progressed in a timely fashion.

Moving on to a further and very important IP objective during our Presidency is that of moving forward the debate in the field of copyright to ensure that this is fit for purpose to meet the needs of the digital age for businesses and consumers alike. It is clear that the digital revolution is fundamentally changing the way in which business is being conducted and that European copyright legislation must evolve in response to that change. However, we must be conscious also of the need to ensure that any such evolution will continue to uphold intellectual property rights, encourage creativity and preserve cultural diversity.

During our Presidency, we intend to press ahead in Council with an ambitious schedule of meetings to consider the Directive on collective rights management and to make maximum progress on this dossier. The Directive not only covers governance and transparency issues for collecting rights societies but proposes also multi-territorial licensing of rights in musical works

for online use. We will be happy to work with the Parliament on its parallel deliberations which I understand are also underway.

I welcome also the Commission Communication issued on 18 December 2012 that relates to content in the Digital Single Market that is complementary to work that is ongoing on the collective rights management Directive and shares many of the same objectives.

The approach advocated in the Commission Communication which envisages a structured stakeholder dialogue to take place over the course of 2013 and focusses on four specific areas of copyright legislation should enable rapid and parallel progress. It will allow also for a stocktake of the need to consider and make specific proposals in relation to the EU copyright legal framework. It is our intention, in tandem with the legislative work that is ongoing on the collective rights management directive and the Commission stakeholder dialogue initiative, to open up a more general debate on the issues surrounding the achievement of a digital single market in the context of debate at the Competitiveness Council in May 2013.

Finally, the EU Commission has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the overall functioning of the Trade Mark system in Europe. The objective of the review is to modernise the system both at EU and national levels by making it more effective, efficient and consistent. It is our intention, that upon presentation by the Commission of its proposals in this area, we will bring these forward for discussion in Council to ensure also that maximum possible progress is made.

Company Law

The auditing package consists of a proposal for a Regulation and a proposal for a Directive. It was submitted in December 2011 and has since been debated within the Council Working Group.

These negotiations at expert level have been difficult and protracted. This is attributable to the far-reaching nature of the audit proposals. A number key issues, in particular, have emerged on which consensus has not hitherto been possible.

Reflecting this situation, the Cypriot Presidency did not consider it feasible to bring forward a Presidency compromise proposal.

It is probable that negotiations at the level of officials will have to continue for some time before the Council can adopt a General Approach.

I hope that I can put a Presidency compromise on both aspect of the audit dossier on the table during the course of our Presidency with the aim of achieving a General Approach by the Council. On such a basis we can begin negotiations with you in search of first-reading agreements, which we hope would be achieved during the course of 2013.

We are aware of and appreciate the hard work of your Committee in the Parliament as is evidenced by the large number of amendments generated by this.

With regard to the proposed Accounting Directive, let me express the strong political interest of the Irish Presidency in achieving a political agreement in first reading on this important item of European legislation.

Under specific provisions of this Directive, information on the revenue streams, which Governments in resource-rich countries around the world are receiving from European companies active in the extractive industries and in the logging of primary forests, will become available. Populations in such countries will be informed by this information, which will serve as an accountability mechanism vis-à-vis the Governments in question.

The Directive is also important in that it updates the EUs accounting legislation and provides for simplifications and administrative burden reductions, in particular for small and medium sized companies.

There has been significant engagement between the Council and Parliament on this dossier. The Cypriot Presidency has held a number of technical meetings and four informal trialogues with you Chair as rapporteur, (Mr. LEHNE) and your dedicated "shadows" all of whom are to be congratulated and thanked for their efforts.

The result of this hard work is that it is reasonable to say that we are now sufficiently close to agreement with regard to Chapter 9 on reporting of payments to Government that we can understand what the issues are that have to be dealt with, in order to arrive at an agreement in the context of a general and final compromise.

At the last triilogue on 18 December 2012, it was agreed to widen the scope of our negotiations and Council is preparing for these negotiations on all Chapters of the Directive, with a view to reaching agreement as soon as possible.

Indeed, this is a priority of our Presidency. Our understanding is that, because of the number and precision of the amendments which need to be properly discussed, additional hard work is required in the form of technical meetings and perhaps more than one additional triilogue. We are prepared for this in order to meet our Presidency's priority of achieving a first-reading agreement during Ireland's Presidency.

The focus of the priorities that I have outlined demonstrates the importance Ireland attaches to creating the right conditions and environment in Europe in order to promote jobs and growth.

I would like to thank you for your attention and I am happy now Chairman to take questions from the Committee.

ENDS