



## Intellectual Property Awareness at Social Sciences and Communications in Bulgaria: ULSIT's Experience

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### Abstract

*The contemporary information society imposes new requirements for the competence and appropriate knowledge of modern young professionals graduating their higher education. This is particularly true for the professional fields related to information and social sciences, as currently these sciences are one of the most dynamically developing. Since the main areas of realization of these graduates are: regional and national media, national institutions, government and non-governmental organizations, and the use of information resources is the basis of their work one of the main condition for their successful implementation is the future professionals to be well informed about the Intellectual Property (IP) protection. The main focus of the paper is to make an overview of different national and international project initiatives of the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT) in Bulgaria which are related to the stimulation of dissemination of IP knowledge, especially IP in the university information environment. The ULSIT is one of the universities in Bulgaria which appreciated the role and importance of IP as a stimulator of innovation development and step by step carrying out the necessary steps to disseminate knowledge and information on IP. It conducts its activities in support of the initiatives of the two leading organizations in the world - WIPO and EPO and implement its initiatives.*

**Keywords:** Intellectual Property, IP dissemination, ULSIT, WIPO, EPO, Library and Information Science

### 1. Introduction

In the theoretical literature there are many definitions and interpretations of Intellectual Property (IP), which are constantly evolving with the change of technology. By itself IP, very broadly, means the legal rights which result from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary and artistic fields. Generally speaking, IP Law aims to safeguard creators and other producers of intellectual goods and services by granting them certain time-limited rights to control the use made of those productions. Those rights do not apply to the physical object in which the creation may be embodied but instead to the intellectual creation as such [1]. IP rights must be seen as objective and subjective right courses and science. The new information environment imposes new requirements on the competences and adequate knowledge of modern young professionals, graduated their higher education.

According some authors "the main spheres of realization of these specialists are: regional and national media, institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the use of information resources is the basis of their professional activity and condition for their successful realization, they need to be well informed on the issues of IP protection" [2]. IP can be considered as an element of information literacy in university information environment as to be successful students at the university, and in life, they must learn to use efficiently the wide variety of information and communication technologies for searching, finding, arranging, analysing and assessing the information they need [3].

### 2. The Intellectual Property Tradition at ULSIT

The ULSIT's educational profile is related with a wide range of information products, services, equipment and technologies that are inherently intellectual products whose are Intellectual Property is logical for students to have good knowledge in IP field.

Therefore, the inclusion of IP issues in the curricula of students is natural and necessary, and therefore efforts are directed towards its realization. The students are definitely interested and will acquire Intellectual Property knowledge - an area perceived as modern, relevant and useful. Indicative of this is the fact that each year the majority of students graduating from different specialties and levels of study develop theses on IP rights and protect them successfully.

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### 3. The New Reality of Intellectual Property at ULSIT: Project Initiatives

In the recent years ULSIT has developed IP tradition and there are a lot of initiatives which are focused to the Intellectual Property, so the aim of the paper is to make a short overview of three of the biggest ULSIT's initiatives, which are related to the stimulation of IP knowledge dissemination. These three initiatives aim to make a relation between the theory and practice in one hand and to explore the need of Intellectual property knowledge in a working environment.

#### 3.1 Intellectual Property awareness among Social Sciences and Communication Students in Bulgaria

First one is a project of ULSIT, funded by the National Science Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science in the competition "Young Scientists". The project aims to explore the mind and culture of behavior among young people in Bulgaria, particularly students about protection of Intellectual Property objects in the Internet. Through surveys, analysis, comparisons and conclusions to reach: accumulation of research material which will find application in updating existing training programs related to the study of intellectual property and direct application in the educational process.

The main moment in the project is the conducted national survey among students in the studies professional field of all universities in Bulgaria, having valid accreditation program for training in this professional field. Detailed information about the survey is presented under aim, background, methodology and findings of the survey.

##### 3.1.1 The Aim, Background, Methodology and Findings of the National Survey

The main goal of the national survey "The Attitude of the Bulgarian Students towards IP in Digital Environment" is to investigate first of all the actual IP knowledge and awareness levels and second of all the attitude of the Bulgarian students towards IP in the Digital Environment and the effectiveness of IP training at the university courses.

The survey was done on the principle of systematic random selection with stratification compared to 10% of students in the above mentioned professional field. The sample covers 570 respondents from 9 universities in 5 towns in Bulgaria, in "Bachelor" degree students. The survey was conducted during October – November 2012. The survey instrument was developed by the authors in order to collect data from students who study in professional field "Public Communications and Information Science", regarding their knowledge, awareness levels and attitude of intellectual property issues. Because of the national scope, during the development of the questionnaire, national legislation and WIPO guidelines were primarily used. The questionnaire consists of 25 main questions and includes mainly closed (some based on 5-point Likert Scale) and few open questions.

In the research tools for achieving the second sub-goal of the study is included a relatively independent questionnaire containing a block of questions through which is collected information about the effectiveness of IP Training in the examined professional field and necessity of introducing this type of training in universities which do not offer it. It is notable that the picture of the individual opinions of the students regarding the teaching of IP is quite colorful. Averages, minimums and maximums, and the great dispersion of the responses to some questions indicate that respondents are impossible to be approached as a homogeneous mass.

From the data in the table it is clear that the answers of the respondents are located throughout the range of conferred options. It is clear that in respect of all matters estimates are in the range from -2 to +3, so analysis needs to develop in the direction of the distribution of answers of respondents in each of the questions in this block of the survey (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Distribution of the respondents' answers according the survey questions.

Questions	-3		-2		-1		0		+1		+2		+3	
	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%
Contribution of Lectures and Seminars on IP to promote information literacy (1)			2	.8	5	2.0	20	8.1	51	20.6	119	48.2	50	20.2

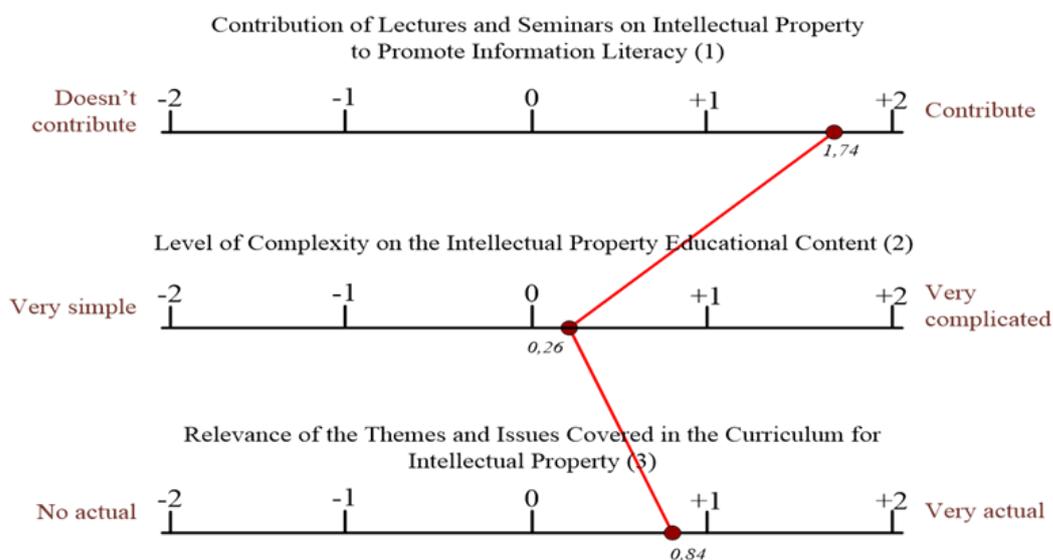


Level of Complexity on IP educational content (2)			1	.4	33	13.6	124	51.0	71	29.2	14	5.8		
Relevance of the themes and issues covered in the curriculum for IP (3)					17	7.0	53	21.7	127	52.0	47	19.3		

It is noteworthy the high percentage of the students (89%) who think that it is undisputed contribution of lectures and seminars on intellectual property to enhance their information literacy. Only 2.8% do not see any benefit from the training, and 8.1 percent have no formed clear position. The proportion of respondents who believe educational content of IP for complex is 35%, preponderance this time is for the students who have no clear position on the complexity of the educational content of the intellectual property - 51%. Only 14% of students in the examined professional field are of the opinion that the educational content is simple. Extremely encouraging is the fact that 71.3% of the respondents consider that the topics and issues involved in IP curricula to date. The proportion of students undoubtedly on the question is 21.7%, while only 7% believe that the topic is not relevant.

Figure 1 gives a visual representation of the profile of the views expressed by the respondents regarding the effectiveness of IP training in the above mentioned professional field. The analysis of the profile shows that the curve in the figure is entirely conditional at the positive part of the continuum, which will allow the development of this problem coincides with the expected trend direction.

Data indicate that in the studied professional field there is a certain potential to be channeled, developed and effectively used for the development and implementation of IP educational programs, which will contribute to the professional development and prosperity of graduates falling in this direction. This, on the other hand, will contribute to enhancing the information literacy of students and thus enhance their competitiveness.



**Figure 1.** Profile of the level of knowledge and awareness of the respondents regarding the effectiveness of training in intellectual property

### 3.2 World Intellectual Property Day (26th April) – Traditional Seminar in ULSIT

The project is a national project, dedicated to the World Intellectual Property Day (26th April). There is an established tradition at ULSIT, in the celebration on this day as initiated annually conducted professional forum for exchange of opinions and ideas of the secondary students with specialists from practice and the creation of research products with possible application in the learning process.

The theme of the seminar is determined after the announcement of the slogan from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The annual seminar aims to popularize issues directly affecting copyright competence of future library managers, and to become an annual professional forum for exchange of views, ideas and meetings with prominent experts in the IP field. The seminar is



a method to enrich the theoretical knowledge with practical aspects and meeting the academic community with professionals from practice and with leading external experts.

The seminars are held annually from 2013, so we could say that there is a real tradition at the University about the seminars, which are dedicated to the World Intellectual Property Day. The slogan of the seminar in 2013 was "Creativity: The Next Generation", the slogan for 2014 was "Moves: The Global Passion", the slogan for 2015 was "Intellectual Property – Formula for Success, Creativity and Innovation", the slogan for 2016 was "Internet Liberalization - Formula for Success, Creativity and Innovation" and for the present 2017, our fifth seminar was held under the slogan "Intellectual Property, Innovation and Research in a Global Environment". The seminars are always welcomed with great interest by students, professionals, practitioners and those interested in the issues non-specialists lawyers.

### **3.3 The 9th Workshop of the European Intellectual Property Teachers Network – The EIPTN Ltd. – ULSIT as a Host of the Event**

Indisputable evidence of the ULSIT's contribution in the scientific community discussion around the world on intellectual property rights' issues was the University hosting of the 9th Workshop of the European Intellectual Property Teachers Network – The EIPTN Ltd. For two days – 4th and 5th July, 2016, 40 scientists from 11 countries of the Old Continent and Australia met and discussed unfair competition experience Bournemouth, IP-rights in the technical sciences, intellectual property advertising, piracy, management, patents and other issues, sharing information and best practices in innovation in teaching and promotion of intellectual property, multidisciplinary and web-based learning activities, etc.

The 18 reports presented by experts from Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Croatia, Sweden, Czech Republic, out-lined the highlights in the work of the Organization for the next year – harmonization of laws with fundamental principles of European law, streamline procedures for issuing patents, as well as the cooperation of countries in the protection of inventions in order to save effort, time, money. We live in dynamic times. Business and Management out-line the future with new values, influenced by technology and the Internet. The world is changing. Our eyes see differently, change paradigms for interpreting the processes around us, flowing with terrible force. We live in dynamic times. Business and Management outline the future with new values, influenced by technology and the Internet. The world is changing. Our eyes see differently, change paradigms for interpreting the processes around us, flowing with terrible force. Emotions take precedence over rationality and increasingly to the fore the values of humanity and understanding between people. Meetings like this are a step in the overall road – a road that leads to mutual respect and assessing the value of authorship, creativity, innovation, in a word – future.

## **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion we could say that the ULSIT is one of the universities in Bulgaria appreciated the role of IP importance as a stimulator of innovation development and step by step carrying out the necessary steps to disseminate knowledge and information on IP. As can be seen from the above mentioned project initiatives, ULSIT works really very actively to achieve its ambition to train students on IP Rights in all three forms of education: full, part time and distance, as well as three degrees: Bachelor, Master and Doctoral. These three projects make the relation between the science education in one hand and the practitioners in library and cultural institutions in other.

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