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Subject: Major sporting events as drivers of innovation
- Policy debate
(Public debate in accordance with Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure [proposed by the Presidency])

Delegations will find attached a discussion paper on Major Sporting Events as Drivers of Innovation, as prepared by the Presidency in light of consultations with delegations.

The Committee of Permanent Representatives is invited to submit the attached Presidency discussion paper to Council (EYCS) as the basis for the policy debate that will take place at its meeting on 26-27 November 2018.

Major Sporting Events as Drivers of Innovation

- Presidency discussion paper -

Introduction

In addition to its economic importance, the world of sport is also closely linked to technological developments and creativity. High-tech sports equipment, functional clothing, training devices, security systems, fan entertainment, media and broadcasting opportunities – innovation is one of the key drivers in creating an all-round sports experience.

The European Union Work Plans for Sport (2011-2014¹, 2014-2017²) underline the economic dimension of sport, and special emphasis is placed on the economic dimension and innovation in sport as one of the key topics in the EU Work Plan for Sport 2017-2020³.

The Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on sport as a driver of innovation and economic growth⁴ captured the fact that sport is, in general, an important driver of innovation. The economically strong European sports industry is constantly innovating and has therefore become a leader in certain technologies. This has spillover effects on other sectors of the economy. Major sporting events not only have the potential to make a considerable contribution to the local, regional and national economy, but they can also foster innovation.

¹ OJ C 162, 1.6.2011, p. 1.

² OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, p. 12.

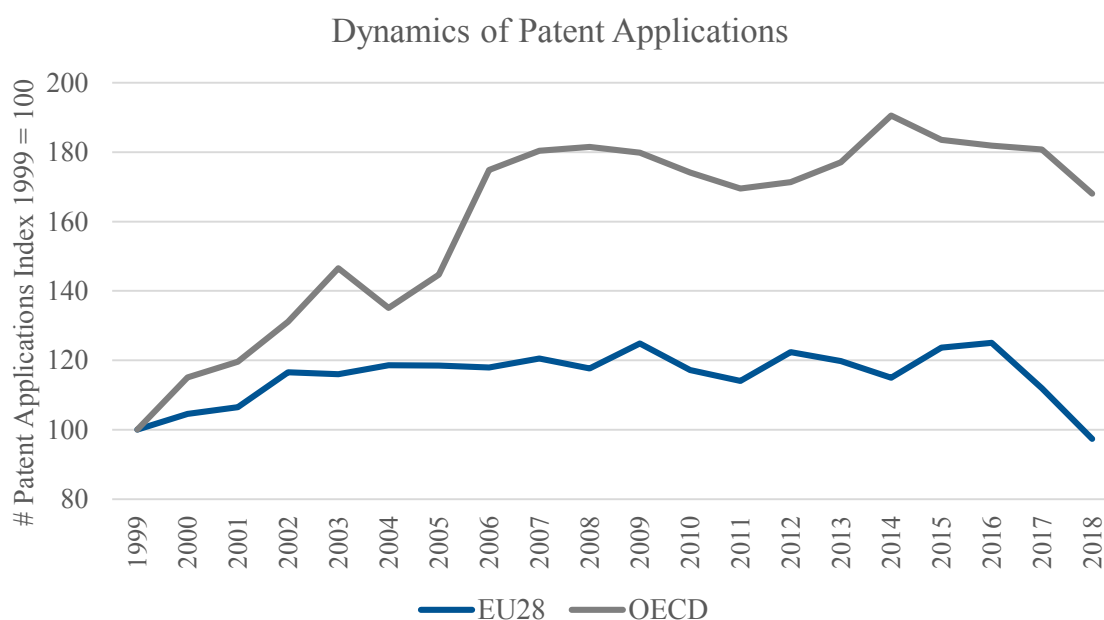
³ OJ C 189, 5.6.2017, p. 5.

⁴ OJ C 436, 5.12.2014, p. 2.

Measuring Innovation in Sport

Innovations can occur in various forms, ranging from the creation of new products or services to the modification of processes or even organisational alterations. There is some evidence that major sporting events are connected to innovation in the host country. To describe innovation in a quantitative way, patents are commonly used as an indicator. As patents protect the intellectual property rights (IPR) of new technologies, they can be used to measure the current situation and help to analyse developments over time and between countries. To analyse innovation in the field of sports, the Vilnius Definition of Sport is used to establish a thematic boundary in the context of patent analysis. More precisely, each component of the Vilnius Definition of Sport is mapped to the International Patent Classification (IPC) scheme, resulting in specific patent classes relevant to sport.

Having determined the framework for sports patent analysis, developments in patent applications in Europe and around the world can be examined. Looking at the OECD countries, the number of total annual patent applications in the field of sport almost doubled between 1999 and 2007 (from 4 500 to 8 000), and has remained more or less stable at that level since then. In the EU28 countries, the number had been increasing slightly but now fluctuates around 1 500 applications per year.



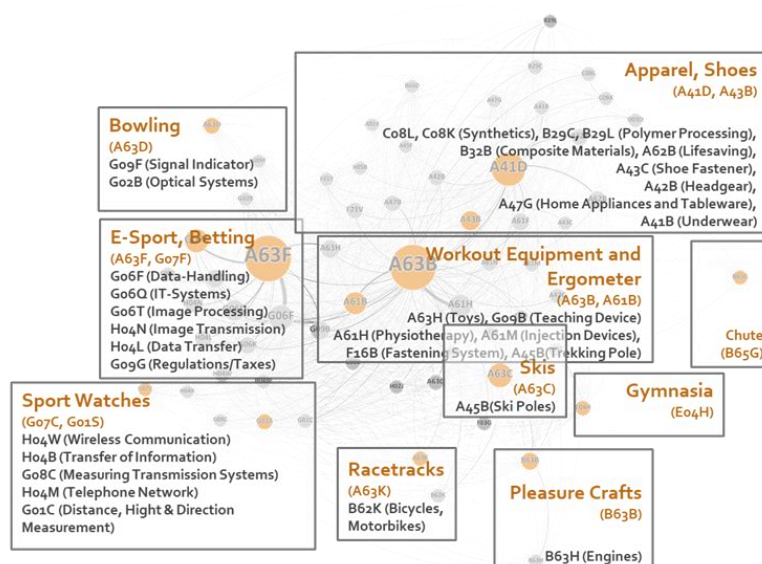
Graphics: Economica Institute of Economic Research

Major Sporting Events and Innovation

Major sporting events generally involve a considerable mobilisation of resources and much economic activity. To examine this relationship more closely, patent data from the period mid-1998 to mid-2018 were analysed. The Vilnius Definition of Sport and the International Patent Classification scheme were again used to identify sports-related innovations, which were subsequently connected to major sporting events around the world, namely the Winter and Summer Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA European Football Championship.

Major results

Sporting patents have an interdisciplinary character, allowing for the analysis of technological diffusion. In the period from 1999 to 2017, major sporting events took place in several EU Member States. The events had a substantial impact on the dynamics of patent activities, especially in more recent years. By analysing 'co-patent activity' for the latest period (2013 to 2017), we can identify crossover technologies which benefit most from the innovative activities of sport. The most important are communication and data processing technologies as well as gymnastics apparatuses and medical devices. The clothing, furniture, headgear-production and toy industries can also all benefit from sports-related patent activity.



Graphics: Economica Institute of Economic Research

Debate

In light of the above and taking into account the importance of this topic, the Presidency would like to invite Ministers to exchange views and share their experiences in relation to the following questions:

1. Do you consider that major sporting events can efficiently contribute to innovation? If so, can you give some concrete examples from your country?
 2. What measures are needed to promote the innovative dimension and the economic spill over effects of major sporting events ?
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