**Word IP day 2023 – Testimonial by prof. Vladia Borisova, President of the Patent Office of the Republic of Bulgaria**

* **The role for women in IP and innovation**

In the field of IP, as in many spheres of public life in recent years, gender equality is not only encouraged but a major objective. We are identifying the positive results of these efforts, particularly in research and innovation, where the diversity of human intelligence and creativity is essential and not dependent on gender. Significant inventions are created by women inventors, such as Marie Curie – inventor and only female Nobel Prize winner for physics and chemistry; the Bulgarian Sevelina Shopov in the field of pharmacy; and others, without whose creativity the world of health and medicine would not be the same. Even today women are driving many of the key innovation processes and are often on the golden list of inventors, which the Patent Office celebrates every year. It is remarkable that, while a decade ago women were mainly represented in the fields of biology and chemistry, today we also see more and more engineers, founders of start-ups, entrepreneurs, managers etc. professions that also require knowledge of the specifics of intellectual property.

In 2022, the Bulgarian Patent Office received 40 patent applications from female inventors and co-inventors, which accounts for 23.4% of the total number of applications. The largest number of applications, 21, was in the aggregate technical field of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, which represents 34.4% of the total application activity in that field. The next highest number of applications, 15, was in the aggregate area of Chemistry, Pharmaceuticals and Biotechnology, where the relative share was 45.5%. The lowest patent activity of women was in the aggregate area of Mechanical Engineering, where only 4 applications have been filed, accounting for only 8.8% of the total.

* **How can we do more to support women’s talent in the field of IP and innovation**

Many years of experience have shown that the key lies in education and additional professional qualifications. The conditions that the environment offers for the development of women's talent in the field of IP and innovation are also important. The more innovation-oriented an economy is, the stronger the link between research and industry and the more successful the role of women in IP and innovation. Women contribute to innovation not only with their intellect and creativity, but also with their special insight into creating innovative solutions to make everyday life easier. For instance, the microwave, the dishwasher, the car cleaner, the clothes zipper, etc. I have the privilege and honour as the President of the Patent Office of the Republic of Bulgaria, along with its experts, to be the first to tap into this innovative treasure of women's talent, owing to the fact that the Office carries out substantive examination of patent applications.

* **Who/What is your favourite female inventor/invention?**

Mary Anderson - inventor of the wiper blade, one of the favourite extras on cars. On a visit to New York City in the winter of 1902, on a frosty day Anderson gets on a bus. She notices that the bus driver is having difficulty seeing out the windows due to the falling snow. In order to clear the windshield, the driver had to stop and go outside to wipe the windshield with his hands. Anderson imagined a windshield wiper that the driver can operate from inside. When she returned to Alabama, she hired a man to construct a hand-operated device to keep the windshield clean. Anderson applied for and was granted a 17-year-old patent for a windshield wiper in 1903. Her device consisted of a lever inside the vehicle that operated a rubber blade on the outside of the windshield.