

23 September 2025

## **DesignEuropa Awards Ceremony**

Speech by Executive Director of the EUIPO, João Negrão

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### **1.1 Strand 1: Introduction – The importance of design**

Thank you, Cecilie and Kaare and Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Director General Sørensen,

Representatives of IP offices from Europe and around the world,

Dear Finalists and Members of the Jury,

Distinguished guests here in Copenhagen and those joining us online,

I would like, on behalf of the EUIPO, to welcome you all to the sixth edition of the DesignEuropa Awards.

Let me begin by expressing our sincere thanks to the Danish Patent and Trademark Office and the Danish Authorities for their cooperation and support that have made today's ceremony possible.

And what better place to gather than Copenhagen – a city that lives and breathes design. There is much we can learn from the Danish design tradition: its emphasis on purpose, elegance, and functionality; its seamless integration into daily life; and, above all, the respect it commands.

As legendary Danish designer Arne Jacobsen once said:

“Design is not just a profession – it's a way of life.”

His philosophy – anchored in clarity, empathy, and originality – reminds us that design is a language of innovation. It is a bridge: between creative ideas and the market; between industry and humanity, between tradition and progress, between functionality and emotion.

But more than that – Jacobsen's designs remind us of the incredible potential they have in creating value.

Across the European Union, design-intensive industries account for 16% of GDP and 13% of employment. These figures are not theoretical – they reflect the real economic strength of European design.

Behind this strength stands a solid foundation: design protection.

At the centre of it is the design system at national and EU levels – At the EU level, launched in 2003 it has seen more than two million registered designs. It is fast, affordable, accessible – and, following recent reforms, modern and future-ready.

The impact of design rights is clear.

Businesses that own design rights earn 30% more per employee and pay 25% higher wages than those that do not.

This reveals a simple truth:

Intellectual property drives value creation and competitiveness. It turns the intangible into the tangible – It generates concrete benefits to our society!

## **1.2 Strand 2: Aesthetic innovation**

While the success of the EU design system is undeniable, success can sometimes conceal untapped potential.

Too often, design protection is still seen as peripheral – by designers, by businesses, and even within the IP community.

This mindset prevents design from delivering its full value to Europe's economy and society.

An integral part of innovation is the ability of a business to succeed in the market – and design plays a central role in that success, guiding the journey from concept to commercialisation. Design is what makes innovation visible. It resonates. It is what sets products apart in a crowded market – It conveys messages and generates emotions!

Just as we protect technological innovation with patents and commercial innovation with trade marks, we must also protect aesthetic innovation – which builds identity, creates emotional connection and increasingly drives consumer preference, particularly among younger generations.

As Thomas Watson once said:

“Good design is good business.”

Design is more than ever the critical factor in consumers decisions to acquire products, mainly among the younger generation!

Therefore, Design must be placed at the core of the innovation value chain. Not as a simple finishing touch – but as a strategic driver of growth.

Without recognising the importance of design protection, we risk undervaluing one of Europe's greatest strategic assets.

## **1.3 Strand 3: Stories that inspire**

And this recognition begins with storytelling.

Because a design registration is more than just a certificate.

It is a strategic tool, a commercial asset, and – most importantly – often a story of ambition, creativity, and vision.

These stories matter. They show us that design rights are not abstract concepts. They demonstrate how protected design translates into real-world impact – transforming ideas into products, businesses, and brands.

One of the most effective ways to unlock the potential of the design system is by sharing these stories – stories that make the value of design protection tangible and relatable - Stories that connect design with innovation!

That is what the DesignEuropa Awards are all about.

Today, we recognise 6 exceptional designs that exemplify innovation, excellence, and impact.

We also honour two remarkable individuals:

Our Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, whose career stands as a model of creativity and influence;

And our Next Generation Designer Award winner, whose promise reflects the dynamic future of European design.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the stories we celebrate today honour achievement—but more importantly, they inspire.

They show what is possible when creativity is supported, protected, and valued.

We must work together to realise the full potential of design!

By doing that, we can fully harness aesthetic innovation and contribute to build a smarter, stronger, and more competitive European economy.

So let us together continue to support design and designers, and ensure they receive the recognition they deserve:

- In the IP community,
- Across the design world,
- And throughout Europe.

Again, thank you for your presence here today and I wish you all a wonderful design Europa Award 2025!