

NCBiR will give money to fight a patent for "Łągiewka bumper"

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Creators of the Energy Accumulating and Dissipating Converter (EPAR) may receive up to PLN 10 million to fight for a patent with the University of Cambridge. Support will be provided for by the National Centre for Research and Development (Narodowe Centrum Badań i Rozwoju, NCBiR), which signed an agreement with EPAR on November 10.

In brief, the device converts the kinetic energy of an impact into a into a mechanical rotor spin. It can be used in road barriers or fender shields, which protect vessels from damage when mooring in the harbour. At the same time, spinning wheels may, for example, be used to generate electricity. On October 5, 2011, the International Federation of Inventors' Associations (IFIA) awarded Lucjan Łągiewka (the creator of the invention concept) and EPAR technology the title "Best Invention of the First Decade of 21st Century".

It turned, however, that the University of Cambridge in the UK patented the idea lying behind the invention few years after Polish inventors presented it. Polish company argues that the British copied their initial idea for the bumper.

According to the company CEO Przemysław Łągiewka, 15 years ago the Polish Patent Office refused to issue a patent to protect the idea. The probable reason was that the authors did not present prototypes of specific devices, but only an idea, which was the basis for their possible construction. In the UK, patent authorities did not have no such reservations. Cambridge now wants to market systems based on that concept. Poland has also constructed several devices and wants Polish solutions to be considered original.

"We raised the argument that the solution, on which engineers in Cambridge based their devices, is the same as ours, and therefore it should at least be the subject of analysis by the European Patent Office in terms of convergence, and the extent of respective rights of inventors" - explained Łągiewka.

The European Patent Office recognised these arguments and agreed to the official opening of the dispute.

"EPAR needs external support to be able to successfully commercialise their technology. National Centre for Research and Development decided to provide such support" - said the deputy director of NCBiR Leszek Grabarczyk.

He explained that the support will primarily consist in NCBiR providing money to cover administrative costs and attorneys fees. Especially the services of expert lawyers are very expensive, he emphasised.

The procedure may take several years. During this time NCBiR will continue to provide EPAR with funds to cover costs. In total, the company may receive up to PLN 10 million.

PAP - Science and Scholarship in Poland, Urszula Rybicka