

**Info Document for the
PatCOM group**

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Confidential Excerpt
from the Automation Plan CA/30/06 of the Office
dealing with External Services
prepared for the members of the PatCOM group

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I. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The EPO Information Systems and Services (ISS) Plan, CA/30/05, presented the automation activities of the Office for the first time in a systematic way, showing the links between those activities and the strategic objectives they support.

This document is an updated report on its implementation.

As set out in CA/30/05, the automation products and services of the Office have been grouped into Business Process Areas (BPAs) according to the user community that they support.

As part of the detailed implementation, the list of BPAs has been reviewed as follows:

- Patent Granting - Examination
- Patent Granting - Formalities
- Data Resources
- Management Information
- e-business
- Patent Information
- Administrative and Legal
- Office-wide common services

The automation management is consequently organised on three levels:

- an **Automation Policy Committee** accountable for the implementation of the strategy set out in the ISS Plan and its associated staff and budgets;
- an **Operational Steering Committee** responsible for the prioritisation of resources between the various Business Process Areas;

- eight **BPA Steering Committees** led by Principal Directors from the main user communities and responsible for monitoring and steering the progress of projects and operational systems in their areas.

During 2006, this governance structure is being gradually put in place, using PRINCE2 as the official methodology supporting project management under the new structure.

2. Major achievements

A new version of **Register Plus** provided hyperlink access to the European Publication server, the My.epoline® portal, the WebSphere Portal and EPTOS, improving performance and usability. Previous Online European Patent Register and earlier versions of Online Public File Inspection were phased out in mid-2006.

The new **EPO Intranet** was launched mid-2006. Based on a Content Management System (CMS) that will be shared with the EPO Internet website, it allows a more efficient management of several thousand pages.

II. BUSINESS PROCESS AREAS

The activities linked to the product and services covered in the ISS Plan are of two types:

- maintenance of products and services driven by the evolution in workload, procedural changes, bug fixes and minor enhancements in functionality;
- new projects implementing the strategic objectives set for the ISS Plan.

For each of the BPA sections, reviews have been undertaken using the following template:

- an introduction, including a brief description of the BPA, major achievements since CA/30/05, an update on maintenance activities and a list of new and on-going projects;
- a section on automation projects and activities, providing details on new projects and status reports on projects, systems and services presented in CA/30/05.

A. PATENT INFORMATION

a) Introduction

This BPA, originated from the split of the BPA "External products and services" as presented in CA/30/05, covers the products and services which the Office makes available to the public as patent information tools such as: the publication databases; Internet search & retrieval services; bulk document & bibliographic data delivery.

A number of products and services are also made available by the Office within the framework of cooperation programmes for use by national offices for their own benefit or for the end-user oriented services of the Patent Libraries.

The office develops and produces best suited tools to

- allow the public the best possible access to patent data
- support Patent Information Providers by offering data sets as well as network services (OPS) to create value added services on their own

This business process area directly facilitates the Office's role in the strategic innovation objectives laid down in the Lisbon Agenda.

The main customers are the users of the European patent system, including:

- Industry (patent departments, research and patent information departments)
- Patent attorneys in private practice
- National patent information libraries and centres
- Financial and banking institutions, universities, NGOs and the general public.

Charges for external products and services, where made, are subject to policies laid down by the Administrative Council.

The main business drivers for this area are:

Change: technological progress and increased awareness of the value of intellectual property in general, and of patent protection in particular. Consequential demands for statistical and economic analyses. Increase in

understanding the value of technical and financial information contained in patents and patent data.

Growth: increased use of patent information services by the financial world (investors, venture capitalists and bankers), universities & research institutions interested in the content of patents and their legal enforcement

Quality: increased customer service needs and expectations; the higher risk in incomplete results of free patent information services

Efficiency: the need to contain costs in the European patent system

Transparency: the need for transparency of the Patent Granting procedure to ensure the confidence of the users of the patent system

In response to these business drivers, the EPO has adopted the following strategic automation objectives for the External Products and Services BPA:

- Provide new and innovative mechanisms for e-learning [**Efficiency, Quality, Transparency, Change**]
- Integrate the various internal tools developed at the EPO and make some of them available to the general public. This may be done directly or via intermediaries [**Transparency**]
- Timely dissemination of data such as on the date of publication [**Quality**]
- Cover patent data of geographical areas with increasing economic importance (China, Korea, India) [**Quality**]
- Provide direct support to commercial providers to facilitate their development of added-value solutions for their customers [**Efficiency, Transparency**]
- Seek powerful technologies that enable similar or better functionality to be provided at lower cost than at present [**Efficiency**]
- Improve the access to EPO products and services for users worldwide by providing sophisticated tools for ordering [**Efficiency**].
- Attract increasingly East Asian users of Patent Information services by providing tools in non-European languages in order to facilitate the understanding and usage of the European Patent system [**Efficiency, Transparency**]

b) Automation projects and activities

Based on the strategic automation objectives for the BPA of External Products and Services, the areas of new technologies, increased automation, new services and quality are being addressed as follows

- New Technologies
 - A. Continue to develop the existing products and services for the creation of databases and their delivery on a range of media to take into account new developments in storage and access technology in order to meet the demands of different types of users (ESPACE®, MIMOSA).
 - B. Enhance the access via Web Services to all public data held at the EPO as well as secure Web Services for authorised users of unpublished or chargeable material (OPS).
 - C. Replace the search engines used for esp@cenet® and EPTOS with the new EPO search engine (esp@cenet®).
- Integration
 - D. Progressively rationalise and improve the EPO's information services according to clearly defined user's needs, whilst retaining the clear distinction between patent information data (esp@cenet®) or EPO procedural data (RegisterPlus) being made available on-line and the EPO's own publication services on a variety of media (European Publication Server and ESPACE®).
 - E. Consistent adoption of ST. 36 for the delivery of all data to help users store and manipulate it according to their own requirements and to provide value-added services (OPS, EPOSOAP and data delivery on physical media).
- Increased Automation
 - F. Further enhance the publication server, integrated with all other external products and services, for use by the EPO and national offices as the official publication medium for the European Patent system.
 - G. Enhanced web services for the delivery of bulk data to Trilateral offices, national offices and commercial partners (EPOSOAP, physical media)

- New Services
 - H. Integration of automatic translation into the EPO's Internet and Web Services to provide access to and from technical data not otherwise available in English (esp@cenet®)
 - I. Make bulk data of complete collections or subsets of collections either as a single delivery or through incremental updates available via web services, internet download or on physical media (EPOSOAP).
 - J. Provide on-line virtual classrooms and off-line training tools for both novice and expert users of external products and services already existing in the Office also to national offices (eLearning).
 - K. Simplify access to EPO data and EPO services to a very rapidly growing number of users of various EPO services in East Asia, namely in Japan, China and Korea. In the frame-work of co-operation with the Japanese Patent Office, the EPO has started to develop a Japanese language interface of esp@cenet® and of epoline® services.
- Quality
 - L. Develop systems that automatically monitor and measure adherence to the service charters where appropriate

(i) Enhanced access and Distribution of Electronic Patent Information Services

The amount of patent information is growing rapidly, both in number and size of the patent documents. Totally new products are urgently requested by the European industry, e.g. English translations of Chinese patent documents.

In order to keep the existing patent information services of the EPO accessible and attractive it is very important to implement such requests as well as adapt the products to emerging standards like web services while guaranteeing compatibility with legacy systems and products.

In particular the expected growth in the number of documents together with the broader use and more complex search profiles (e.g. for the new IPC 8 data) requires the update of the database system used in ESPACE® products.

To increase flexibility e.g. easily adapt developments for use in member states' offices or by third parties some elements need to be re-designed in order to create

and use common APIs or increase modularization and apply / convert to programming techniques like JAVA.

(ii) Virtual classroom

As reported in CA/30/05 Add. 1, user surveys revealed a strong demand for tutor-lead virtual classroom seminars. The Office therefore decided to offer training content on different EPO patent information products and services based on externally hosted service.

The requirements have been defined and a tender has been carried out in 2006. A supplier was chosen and the contract has been signed in July 2006 for a duration of two years plus one optional extension year.

These services shall be continued in the next years. The bulk effort will be on the license fees with some adaptations/ maintenance only as needed.

(iii) Other project, systems and services

Using **Register Plus**, applicants have access to the current status of any dossier at the EPO, including all the images of the documents in the file, as well as to the family members and their legal status.

New versions of Register Plus have been implemented, improving the usability of the display of bibliographic and procedural data and improving the performance. Developments have also aimed at providing the possibility to hyperlink Register Plus-related cases within the My.epoline® portal and at migrating the application to the latest version of WebSphere portal (WPS 5.1) and EPTOS. In addition, a hyper-linking facility to the European Publication server has been implemented.

On 15 August 2006, the earlier products of Online Public File Inspection and the Online European Patent Register have been phased out while at the same time the new system has been enhanced.

Priority documents exchange services are expected by the end of 2006, a first version of Register Plus in EPTOS is expected for Q3 2006 while Trilateral Document Access with WIPO will come in 2007.

The Office will continue to review how best to manage and present the data to the Patent Information and Patent Granting user communities currently available through Register Plus and esp@cenet®. The information shown via these services partly overlaps, the search masks are very similar and users have in the past expressed their confusion about the provision of two different patent search

services. At the same time, there is a need to avoid any confusion for the users as to the quality of the data and who is certifying it.

It is therefore being considered how to provide a common platform for the maintenance of the various search tools for patent information, improving efficiency by looking at the possibility of combining:

- tools, developments, testing and other standard procedures;
- individual patent search tools offered by patent offices to one single point of access.

Achieving these aims would avoid an overhead in maintenance costs, consolidate and strengthen the cooperation between the Patent Offices in Europe and facilitate the access to patent information.

The Office decided to suspend any development on **Similarity Discovery Service** as it could no longer be financed through the co-operation budget as originally intended. Due to the legal conditions of the tender and the offer of the selected bidder, this meant in practice a cancellation, as no contract could be concluded within the validity period of the successful bid.

The **esp@cenet®** service offers the general public free access to worldwide patent information via the internet.

Access to esp@cenet® is through servers hosted at each office of the member states of the organisation. The architecture allows the customisation of the user interface in one or more languages used in each country. Provision of the online help and extended offline support is the responsibility of each member state.

Future developments of esp@cenet® will be based on user input, and availability and maintainability criteria. In the mid-term, developments will not be constrained by artificial limitations, allowing users to fully profit from the esp@cenet® service.

Integrated user support measures such as help files and e-learning will be developed in parallel to underpin the technical developments. Other development drivers will be the performance and features of other free-to-use Internet services competing with esp@cenet® in the same user sector. However, all esp@cenet® developments will be responsibly constrained within resource availability.

Since its official implementation as the authoritative source for patent documents published by the European Patent Office on 1 April 2005, the **European**

Publication Server was improved to reflect the newest developments and to make some enhancements to the service offered:

- Change from SGML to XML publication format
- Introduction of the new IPC
- Loading of the back-file of European patent documents
- Introduction of a link to Patentscope service of WIPO
- Implementation of a web service access

In response to requests coming from a number of national offices of our member states, the source code of the European Publication Server was made available for their own use or for evaluation.

The use of authoring has been successfully implemented for the production of the Office's and **MIMOSA** compatible intellectual property information products within the framework of EPO co-operation activities in a number of member states, other patent offices and with commercial data providers. The JPO uses MIMOSA Authoring for the production of their series Patent Abstracts of Japan (PAJ), which belongs to the most important sources of Japanese patent information in the English language.

The MIMOSA Authoring software based on GTI5 is now available for the Windows, LINUX and UNIX operating systems offering data preparation chains suitable for both large-scale, mass production of CD/DVD-ROMs and creation of update files to be distributed through other channels.

For certain projects the MIMOSA Authoring V3.2, which is based on GTI V3 technology, suffering from certain limitations with respect to index size, intermediate file size or number of records is still applied. Therefore this version was upgraded to handle IPC-8 classification symbols

The changes described above as well as further format changes and corrections need amendments. As the data preparation process further evolves and the number of patent information products increases, minor adaptations and enhancements to the authoring software will continue to be required to support the publication procedure.

With the EPO and other IP offices going the internet route the MIMOSA application software had to be adapted to cover this distribution channel as well. Furthermore

IP offices started to use MIMOSA for publication of the whole portfolio of IP including utility models, designs, trademarks, appeal decisions etc. The bulk of this work will be done within the next 3 years. Thereafter the annual budgets can be reduced to cover minor adaptations and enhancements and to maintain the application software for search-and-retrieval of patent information from new ESPACE products.

On **INPADOC**, the former "microfiche" services on DVD were stopped at the end of the year 2005, with only the weekly "IPG" reports being continued. On the other hand additional services have to be provided, including full text data, drawings, citations, and later on also BNS facsimile data. It will also be necessary to allow users to select data in a more sophisticated way than currently offered.

Further software implementation will be necessary, especially for HDDs and for web based services. This work will start in 2007, but the main efforts will come in the following years.

The new version of **Web Register MT** to be launched in December 2006 will include new features, the most important being that instead of monitoring and informing the user about all events on a particular dossier they can specify particular groups of events they are interested in and therefore receive less notifications.

ce in Q4 2006.

M. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

a) Introduction

This BPA covers all processes and users which support EPO management in the decision making process, including the definition and communication of the Office strategy and monitoring of the daily business.

b) PATSTAT

In October 2005 the OECD Patents Statistics Taskforce accepted the EPO's proposed Data Catalog for the new database **EPO Worldwide Patent Statistical Database** (PATSTAT). The project initiated was presented in detail in CA/30/05 Add.1.

Between January and April 2006, 35 GB of data was assembled from several sources, including the EPO's databases DocDB and Register and the USPTO's Register.

This data was reformatted into the agreed dissemination format for loading into a relational database and stored as compressed data of 12 GB on a set of 3 DVDs. These DVDs have been distributed to selected policy advisors and academics under the EPO's Patent Information Marginal Cost policy under distribution agreements prepared and administered by the Office on condition that the raw data is not to be used for commercial purposes.

In Q4 2006 the second edition of the database will be issued, adding patents published since January 2006. The next edition, including data from Q1 2007, will follow in April 2007.

In October 2006 the EPO Patent Academy will organise a workshop on 'Patents Statistics for Policy Decision Making' jointly with the OECD, JPO, USPTO, WIPO, NSF and the European Commission. It is expected to hear papers on studies of the database. Thereafter, the OECD Patents Statistics Taskforce will meet in Vienna to discuss changes and additions to the database.