EPO-PatCom meeting
Tuesday, 18 March 2014, 14.00 hrs
Room 348, EPO Vienna

Summary of the discussions

1.   PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Mr Avédikian chaired the meeting, deputising for Richard Flammer, Principal Director for Patent Information and the European Patent Academy, who was unavailable.

2.   MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 19 March 2013 were approved. PatCom thanked the minute-taker and the organising staff.

3.   FOLLOW-UP FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1.   EUROPEAN MACHINE TRANSLATION INITIATIVE – PROGRESS

At the end of 2013, Patent Translate had reached its target. The Office confirmed that Patent Translate was thus entering a more stable phase during which the emphasis would be on maintaining quality. It said that the corpora for the translation engine would be subject to *ad hoc* enhancements in batches, often with the focus on less resourced languages.

Responding to a question from PatCom requesting access to the MT corpora, the Office said that it was concluding its original project with the current partner, but that after that it would be looking at further possible uses for the patent corpora.

In terms of usage, the Office reported that about 17 000 translation requests were being received by Patent Translate each day, the most popular language pair being German-English. Chinese was also heavily used.

3.2.   USER SURVEY RESULTS

The Office reported that it had carried out two surveys in late 2013: one looked at the profile of Espacenet's users; the other surveyed users' opinion on the European Patent Register.

The **Espacenet survey** had shown that users most frequently were in the chemical and mechanical engineering industries and that many people used Espacenet on a daily or at least weekly basis. Users listed the most appreciated features as: advanced search, document download, smart search, Patent Translate and classification search. Many respondents were in favour of an Espacenet app.

The **Register survey** revealed a high satisfaction level among users, file inspection being rated particularly highly, as were the links to national registers and the integration of Register Alert. More than 50% of respondents supported a dedicated Register app.

Focus groups had taken place in the UK, France and Germany on an Espacenet app. About 85 participants took part, the goal being to gather input for developing a business case. The consultants' report was not yet ready. The Office agreed to put the Espacenet app on the agenda of the next meeting.

3.3. VISUALISATION TOOL – PROGRESS

With regard to the PATSTAT database, the Office announced that it could now be expanded to include European Patent Register and worldwide legal status data. It drew PatCom's attention to PATSTAT online, where subscribers had the means to do searches online on a hosted system. The Office had, it said, noted a clear demand for a more user-friendly way of accessing PATSTAT online and was therefore looking at a simple query wizard to help people to get started with meaningful queries. It said it intended to hold focus groups to support its thinking in how to develop this new wizard. The Office confirmed that PATSTAT would remain an SQL database.

3.4. BNS EXTRACTION – PROGRESS

The Office reiterated its invitation to PatCom to explain their need for this data, so that it could take a decision on better assess the need for an improved extraction tool from BNS. As an alternative the Office could already provide *ad hoc* data extractions, on demand, but for limited collections.

3.5. CPC – PROGRESS; BACK FILE

Following its launch in January 2013, the CPC was now fully operational, said the Office. However, there were nevertheless some interesting details to report:
- in 2014 the Office will start receiving classified data from China, Korea and Brazil; in these cases, classification will initially be limited to certain technological fields
- Finland, Sweden, Spain and the UK now classify in CPC the documents that they used to classify in ECLA. Austria, Denmark,

Greece and Hungary (possibly also Norway and the Czech Republic) plan to start classifying in CPC

- in the above cases, classification will initially be limited to certain technological fields
- thanks to this work, the databases will soon include many additional documents in languages that the EPO does not classify in, contributing to a total of about two million documents per year receiving CPC symbols.

With regard to **CPC** Revisions, the Office said it currently expected these to take place every two or three months. It was planned, it said, to announce the revisions in advance in the form of a "pre-release" one month before the revision took effect.

The Office also reported that the former ICO codes, now called "2000 series" codes would soon be presented in Espacenet as part of the "normal" scheme in an interleaved way. It also announced that it planned to publish a validity file for cross-checking validity of CPC symbols.

PatCom asked if information was available on which documents from China, Korea and Brazil were already receiving symbols and how this information would be updated in future. The Office said it would investigate.

Referring to the previous plans for a "CHC" (Common Hybrid Classification), the Office said that co-operation among the IP5 offices was focussed on channelling the most useful parts of the CPC into the IPC.

4. UNITARY PATENT - STATUS

On the unitary patent, the Office confirmed that work was on-going behind the scenes. The main issue currently on the table for patent information users was the question of how to ensure that unitary patents were easily identifiable in the databases. It was aware of this and considering the options. There was still time, as it looked like the first unitary patents would enter into force towards the end of 2015.

5. COST OF DOWNLOADS

This agenda point concerned the pricing of data downloaded via the Office's "Open Patent Services" (OPS).

Following the introduction of compulsory registration for OPS, the Office had been able to verify that OPS had several hundred users, but that only a handful exceeded the monthly download limit of 2.5 GB. The next step had been to issue some "fictitious" invoices for the consumption in January and February to companies that exceeded the limit in order to validate the measurement of the amount of data downloaded.

PatCom said that their own observations did not concur with the information in the fictitious invoices in some cases. The Office promised to investigate such cases with the utmost care, but stressed that it had not identified any systemic problems with the invoicing process. Users had access to an API to interrogate their own consumption at any time, although it was not possible to break this down by IP address. Any user experiencing suspiciously high usage reports should change their security token urgently to ensure that the high usage was not the result of hacking or similar.

The Office said there would be one more round of fictitious invoices in April 2014 to iron out the final details and that from May on, real invoices would be issued.

PatCom asked why the free monthly limit had been set at 2.5 GB. The Office explained that this was the level necessary to allow users to download a full week of EP publications, thus meaning that the EPO continued to fulfil its legal obligations without passing costs onto users.

6.   QUALITY OF DATA SUPPLIED BY EPO

The Office listed the major news on EPO data:
- the creation of unique application identifiers to avoid confusion in cases of duplicate publication numbers.
- forthcoming major change in citation area scheduled for Q3 2014, indicating the relevant passages in the cited documents, as shown in the search report, starting with EP and then, depending on the ability to deliver of respective Offices, expanding to all IP5 offices. The change will allow better incorporation on of NPL citations.
- full text of French national applications now available in XML. Approximate price: EUR 10 000 for backfile starting in the year 1900 onwards, EUR 2 500 for an annual subscription to the frontfile including weekly updates
- the modernisation project for the legal status database will concentrate on data extraction in XML in 2014, with the aim of having a prototype ready by the end of the year
- Korea has promised to send Korean legal status to the Office for inclusion in the databases – no specific information available yet, however
- the Office Task is contributing to WIPO's legal status task force – one aim is to approach an agreed standard on legal status and how to group the event codes

Additional note, following the Raw Data Day on 19 March 2014: Relating specifically to EP publications, members of PatCom were of the opinion that the EPO should provide official A4 publications when making available citations for the supplementary search reports carried out when PCT applications entered the EP regional phase, in view of the attribution of citations to their specific publication steps.

7. ESPACENET

The Office provided the latest usage statistics for Espacenet:

- approximately 2.5 million visits per month, representing a 60% increase over the year
- about 50% of users were in Asia, 30% in Europe, then USA, then the rest.

8. (FEDERATED) EUROPEAN PATENT REGISTER

As a preliminary remark, the EPO confirmed that the Federated Register project should be regarded as a complementary project to the INPADOC legal status data collection.

With respect to the existing **European Patent Register**, the Office reported that usage was at about one third of the level of Espacenet, i.e. about 800 000 visits per month. The usage profile was, however, very different: Europe 50%, USA 25%, Japan 10%, then the rest of world.

Progress on the **federated register** project was good. The Office reported that the Register now offered deep links to 27 countries, including the recent addition of Italy and Turkey.

The second phase of the federated register project would be to create an overview table of major events within the European Patent Register, gathered on the fly from member states' registers. The necessary software developments on the EPO side were ready and the Office was now waiting for a sufficient number of offices to implement web services for their register.

A new project called "**Global Dossier**" or "**IP5 public file wrapper**" had recently been launched. The Office reported that the objective was to enable user to look into "file inspection" types of data across all five IP5 offices. Progress would depend, it said, on developments that were needed across all five offices. The target was to have a demo version ready during the summer of 2014.

In response to a question from PatCom, the Office said that the agreement within IP5 was that each Office would run its own service for this, rather than centralising in a single location.

9. OPS DEVELOPMENTS

This point was a continuation of point 5 above. As a result of its new usage policy for OPS, the Office confirmed that it had observed a drop in data downloading from several hundred GB per day to between 50 and 100GB; the number of requests had fallen on average from 7 million to 2

million per day. The users' geographical distribution had also changed – previously heavily Asia-weighted, the concentration of users was now to be found in Europe, then US, then Japan.

10.   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1.   LETTER FROM CENTRAL PROCUREMENT

PatCom expressed consternation at a letter its members had received from the EPO's Central Procurement Department, asking them to complete a very complex questionnaire. The provision of such information would normally require at least a non-disclosure agreement with the EPO. The Office promised to investigate and report back.

10.2.   DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was provisionally agreed to hold the next meeting during the EPO Patent Information Conference in Warsaw, on 3.11.2014, 13.30 hrs. The Office will confirm the definitive date by the end of June 2014.

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List of participants

PatCom

President elect of PatCom   Martine Massiera, Questel
Secretary of PatCom   Georg Schultheiss, formerly FIZ-Karlsruhe

                            Ophir Daniel, Minesoft
                            Jurjen Dijkstra, LexisNexis Univentio
                            Luc Smith, RWS
                            Armin Förderer, FIZ Karlsruhe
                            Rob Willows, Thomson Reuters
                            Robert Fokkema, Lighthouse IP
                            Gert Frackenpohl, Lighthouse IP

EPO

Director Publication   Pierre Avédikian
Director Promotion   Heiko Wongel
Director Special Services   Günther Vacek

                            Nigel Clarke
                            Valérie Gray
                            Davide Lingua
                            Daniel Shalloe
                            Christian Soltmann