

Summary of the discussions

1. WELCOME

Mr Flammer chaired the meeting. He welcomed the PatCom members, especially the new president Ms Massiera and the new secretary Ms List.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of 18 March 2014 were approved following changes that had been agreed by both parties in written procedure. PatCom thanked the minute taker and the organising staff.

3. UPDATES FROM THE EPO

3.1. CHANGES TO DATA

3.1.1. KR LEGAL STATUS

The Office informed PatCom that legal status from Korea has been delivered in the form of a back file to 1983 and twice monthly front file deliveries. First analysis shows that the data is usable and contains a subset of office and applicant actions with trials, fees, withdrawals, lapses, PCT entry, but no change of ownership. It is expected that loading will start in November 2014.

3.1.2. LEGAL STATUS IN XML

The Office reported that raw data users have received small prototype files of legal status in XML and the EPO requested feedback. A test production file will be distributed before the end of the year and regular production in parallel to the existing format will start early in 2015. January 2015 backfile will be in the "old" format, the first XML backfile is expected mid 2015.

PatCom members wanted to know how long the parallel production would continue and if the 2016 backfile could still be produced in the old format. The Office responded that parallel productions for changes of this type are usually 6 months. Concerning the backfile request, the Office stated that, whilst every effort is made to accommodate the needs of the users, there are sometimes technical constraints that dictate the schedule. It was agreed to review the needs once the parallel production has started.

3.2. DOWNLOADING OPS DATA – PRICE AND POLICY

PatCom requested information about the implementation of the OPS pricing policy and whether there were any plans to change the price, as they consider it to be too high. The Office replied that its efforts are directed at enforcing the fair use rigorously on Espacenet and OPS, but unreasonable demands on the system are still observed. It has no plans to change the price.

PatCom pointed out that the policy might encourage robots back to using Espacenet. The Office explained that the limits were being progressively squeezed to ensure that access to Espacenet is limited to real human users. The Office re-iterated that Espacenet and OPS are free as long as the terms of the fair use agreement are respected. If the demands on the resources continue to grow it might be necessary to limit the anonymous access to Espacenet.

The Office repeated its statement that Espacenet is not intended as part of a commercial business model and its efforts in sustaining the service for human users who need the information would continue. OPS offers the means for others to get the data, free up to a limit. Around 10% of the registered users are willing to pay. To date only very few users actually reached the data limit.

As to PatCom's query on turnover, the Office replied that the great majority of the users find that the amount of data available free of charge is sufficient for their needs. It pointed out that the invoicing system was still undergoing some testing and fine tuning and therefore to date, only dummy invoices have been issued. It is unlikely that invoicing will start before the next meeting and the Office promised to give users due notice before payable invoices are sent.

PatCom urged the EPO to find a solution whereby the real abusers could be found and stopped whilst enabling those who try to follow the policy and the rules to access the data they need without undue hindrance. The Office explained that this is a challenge with the existing tools.

3.3. QUALITY OF DOCDB DATA

PatCom members pointed out that there had been issues with DOCDB data. More than once, there had been problems with character set encoding which caused problems in users' systems. The Office replied that some unforeseen effects had been observed during IT migration processes. Whilst the Office apologises for any inconvenience and will pass on the message that there is external dissatisfaction, it pointed out that it is in the situation of carrying out a major and significant overhaul of all its IT systems whilst still keeping all the business running. PatCom members expressed understanding for the situation.

3.4. IP5 GLOBAL DOSSIER

The Office informed that the IP5 Global Dossier project had started in June. It is now possible to access the SIPO file wrapper direct from the EPO register and from Espacenet complete with translations delivered by SIPO. The solution is based on an internal system that gives examiners of the IP5 offices access to the information of their counterparts, security measures are put in place to prevent transmission of non-public information. It is hoped that testing will start this year with Japan and Korea so that it can be rolled out to users early in 2015. It is expected that access to USPTO file wrappers will become available later in 2015.

4. CHANGES TO EPO PATENT INFORMATION PRODUCTS

4.1. CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

PatCom requested advance notice of any big announcements to be made at the conference, especially if there was likely to be an impact on the demand for their products. The Office replied that the conference is now regarded as a know-how exchange rather than a forum for big announcements. Nonetheless it planned to announce that DVDs would no longer be pressed from 2016 onwards. If data subscribers still require the ISO image, it may be possible to continue the production in that format for downloading.

4.2. OPEN/LINKED DATA

The Office informed PatCom that it is still monitoring the landscape of linked and open data and would welcome feedback from PatCom about patent data as part of linked data. At this stage the EPO has not taken any decision as far as adoption of linked data as a publication format is concerned. The Office sees its role more in facilitating exchange of best practice between national offices when they are asked to contribute to their government open data initiatives.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1. DATA IN PATENTSCOPE

PatCom re-iterated their appreciation for the Office's role in collecting data from other patent offices and redistributing it in a single package. However, it pointed out that WIPO now has some data from countries that are not in the EPO collection and wondered if it would be possible for them to be included. The Office responded that there is an MoU with WIPO for mutual data exchange, however the two organisations have different priorities when it comes to data. The Office collects data primarily to serve the search needs of its examiners and therefore is careful that supplied data are of the appropriate quality and delivered regularly.

5.2. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 17.03.2015 at the EPO Vienna. Exact times and room to be confirmed.

6. CLOSING REMARKS

Closing the meeting, the chairman remarked that the exchanges with PatCom are fruitful and the Office values its contributions. The PatCom president responded by wishing all present a successful week at the EPO Patent Information Conference.

EPO-PatCom meeting
Monday 3 November 2014, 14.15 hrs
Ujazdow Room, Hotel Sofitel, Warsaw

List of participants

PatCom

President of PatCom
Secretary of PatCom

Martine Massiera, Questel
Jane List, Extract Information

Rahman Hyatt, Minesoft
Jurjen Dijkstra, LexisNexis Univentio
Armin Förderer, FIZ Karlsruhe
Robert Fokkema, Lighthouse IP
Paul Peters, CAS
Cinda Harrold, CAS
Tamara Mai, Proquest Dialog

EPO

Principal Director Patent Information
Director Publication
Director Promotion
Head of Patent Data and Services

Richard Flammer
Pierre Avédikian
Heiko Wongel
Davide Lingua

Apologies

Arne Krüger, Moving Targets Consulting
Richard Lambert, Thomson Reuters