

EPO-PatCom meeting
Tuesday, 19 March 2013, 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 5 November 2012 were approved. The chairman observed that PatCom only sent a small delegation to the meeting the previous November; PatCom reacted by confirming its continued interest in these regular meetings.

3. FOLLOW-UP FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1. EUROPEAN MACHINE TRANSLATION INITIATIVE – PROGRESS

The Office confirmed that the machine translation initiative was progressing to plan. Fourteen languages were already available for translation to and from English. All remaining EPO member state languages would be added by the end of 2013, plus Russian, Japanese and Korean. In 2014, French and German would be added to English as "pivot languages". The above timings may depend on Google's schedule.

Currently, the usage statistics showed 8000 requests per day, including 10% internal EPO usage, the most common translations being from German to English, closely followed by English to Chinese.

Responding to a question on whether or not it would be possible to make the patent corpora available to WIPO, the Office said it did not want to spread corpora before the initial goals had been achieved, including its quality goals. Nevertheless, it understood PatCom's message in this regard.

PatCom noted that, previously, the EPO's work had led to dictionaries being made available, and asked if there would be a similar by-product from the work with Google. The Office said it was willing in principle to share any dictionaries that became available, but that it wanted to clarify some quality issues before taking this step. It added that it would also like to test the level of interest for such a product before committing the necessary resources to creating it.

The Office remarked that one important aspect of providing machine translation was the availability of the underlying full-text data from which to translate. This had led to a considerable amount of Chinese full-text data entering the EPO's databases. Japanese and Russian were in preparation, and Korea was also planned for the longer term.

3.2. USER SURVEY RESULTS – CONSEQUENCES

The Office confirmed the main conclusions from its 2010 patent information survey, namely that the public seemed now to have knowledge about where to find patent information but needed additional support to use it. There also seemed to be growing demand for patent information a basis to decision-making in business. One of the other important results was that there was apparently a readiness to pay for added-value services.

It was agreed to remove this point from the agenda of future meetings until there are plans to repeat the exercise.

3.3. VISUALISATION TOOL – PROGRESS

In the area of patent data visualisation, the Office announced that from April 2013, it would be possible to link PATSTAT data to EP register data. There were also plans to introduce a stable ID for applicants and inventors. A significant recent development was the introduction of export functions to create data subsets in the same structure as PATSTAT, and the Office was looking into providing extracts formatted for specific analytical products, like Tableau.

The Office noted that the Patent Statistics for Decision Makers conference was growing in importance and stature. The 2013 event would be in Rio, in co-operation with the Brazilian Patent Office, INPI.

3.4. BNS EXTRACTION – PROGRESS

As stated in the previous meeting in Hamburg, the Office invited PatCom to explain their need for this data, so that it could take a decision on whether it was justified to make the major investment required to offer extraction from BNS. As an alternative the Office could already provide *ad hoc* data extractions, on demand.

3.5. CPC – PROGRESS; BACK FILE

Following the official launch of the CPC in January, the work now, said the Office, was to focussed on ensuring that the EPO and USPTO delivered CPC classes at the same level of quality as the EPO used to deliver for ECLA classes. The Office said that other organisations had also started

using CPC, including some EPO member states, such as SE, ES, GB and HU.

PatCom asked how CPC revisions would occur. The Office, explaining the need to bring together previous EPO and USPTO practices, said the agreement was to issue no more than one revision per month. In general, each of these would only concern a limited number of technical areas. However, due to the freezing of ECLA in 2012, a number of maintenance projects had been in abeyance pending release of CPC, so a relatively high number of CPC title improvements could be expected from April 2013, until a stable rate of change had been achieved.

In future practice, it is expected that CPC revisions will not necessarily take place every month, so there might be some months in which there would be no new release at all.

The Office pointed out that it had developed some OPS-based web services supporting use and analysis of the CPC scheme (e.g. the validation of a given symbol). These services would continue to expand in the future. It could also offer conversion table between old ECLA and the CPC, and between the CPC and Japanese FI symbols, as well as continuing to provide the old ECLA raw data product (with some enrichments). PatCom confirmed its interest in these products.

PatCom thanked the EPO for the good communication in the lead-up to the launch of the CPC.

4. UNITARY PATENT - STATUS

It looked probable, reported the Office, that the unitary patent would not enter into force until 2015, due to delays in the ratification process in some countries. Nevertheless, the EPO would be ready by 1 January 2014, in case things happened more quickly.

PatCom raised the question of what status a European patent would have in the brief period after grant, but before the proprietor took a decision to request a unitary patent. The Office said it would investigate.

5. QUALITY OF DATA SUPPLIED BY EPO

The Office listed the major news on EPO data:

- as of January 2013, CPC replaced ECLA in the weekly data deliveries.
- the previously announced rekey of Japanese publication numbers took place a few days before the meeting, and the corresponding backfile distribution of DOCCB XML would follow very shortly (roughly half the DOCCB database was affected).
- later in 2013, changes would take place to accommodate search report data in flow of XML data.

- the EPO will be able to distribute full-text in XML from April 2013; initially AT, CH and GB data will be available. FR data is under discussion.
- the modernisation exercise for the legal status data started in 2012, and changes will become more visible during 2013, with the extraction of data in XML rather than SGML. A mock-up was made available early in March for users' comments; production will start in 2014 with both the new XML and old SGML formats in parallel.
- SV and PE were now providing legal status data, and some new codes had been added to existing data sets, for example to take account of the America Invents Act in the US. Uploads for CA were delayed because a complete new backfile is in the pipeline, and there were modifications to SPC data for FR, CH and IE.
- 17 million new citations were added to DOCDB in 2012, including US pre-grant citations and other citations relating to Rule 141 EPC for AT, DK, GB.

6. ESPACENET

In 2012 the major developments in Espacenet had included Patent Translate and the CPC viewer. The Office said that 2013 was expected to be a quieter year in terms of technical development. Usage statistics remained stable at about 1.6-1.7 m monthly visits and some three million PDF downloads in January, to take one month as an example. The regional usage distribution showed that roughly half of usage was from Asia, one third Europe, the rest in US and other countries.

The Office added that it was taking stricter measures to stop robot use of Espacenet, which seemed to be meeting with some success, which could lead to a slight decrease appearing in the usage statistics - something that would be expected and welcome.

6.1. (FEDERATED) EUROPEAN PATENT REGISTER

The Office reported that deep linking was now available to some 24 member state registers from the EP register. It hoped to roll out the technical capability for a real Federated Register soon, which would make it possible to create an overview page, listing the most important legal status items across the member states, so the user can get an initial idea of the status of the patent throughout Europe. The list would be created in real time, showing the most up-to-date information possible. The project required all member state offices to make changes to their national registers, so it would take time before the Federated Register became a reality for all member state offices. Nevertheless, progress up to now had been good, and it the first countries could perhaps come on line in the course of 2013.

It was important to stress, said the Office, that the Federated Register would NOT replace INPADOC legal status, which had a completely different purpose.

The current usage statistics of the EP register showed about 600 000 visits per month; however they also showed great fluctuations - maybe a hint of robot involvement. The number of individual page views per month was 20 million.

7. OPS DEVELOPMENT

As discussed at the previous meeting in Hamburg, the Office said it had identified that a small percentage of OPS users were accounting for a very a high proportion of the volume of traffic. It had thus decided to enforce the fair use policy more rigorously, starting two weeks ago with stricter observation of the bandwidth use in the system. The same step had also been taken in Espacenet. In the second quarter of 2013, the next step would be to enforce registration for OPS usage, allowing small volume "test access" usage without registration. Later in 2013, the Office would introduce a weekly ceiling of 2.5 GB free usage, with charges being incurred for users who went beyond that. Public beta testing was scheduled for April/May 2013, and the Office hoped to have all OPS registered by about September 2013.

The Office stressed that, based on information available, it expected about 30 to 40 users to be affected by the new pricing. PatCom conjectured that charging for use may be in part advantageous for the user, as those who were prepared to pay, would not have to worry about fair use any more. The Office agreed, noting that a further benefits would be a better ability to plan, both on EPO's and the users' side.

Closing the point, the Office gave some statistical information on the use of OPS, noting that the heaviest was from users in DE, CN, GB, US, NL, FR, IE. Usage was fairly stable at 200 GB per day and 2000 IP addresses per day.

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was provisionally agreed to hold the next meeting during the EPO Patent Information Conference in Bologna, on 21.10.2013, 13.00 hrs

EPO-PatCom meeting
Tuesday, 27 March 2012, 10.00 hrs
Room 348, EPO Vienna

List of participants

PatCom

President of PatCom	Willem-Geert Lagemaat, Lighthouse IP
Secretary of PatCom	Georg Schultheiss, formerly FIZ-Karlsruhe
	Ann Chapman, Minesoft
	Jurjen Dijkstra, LexisNexis Univentio
	Cinda Harrold, CAS
	Armin Förderer, FIZ Karlsruhe
	Paul Peters, CAS
	Rob Willows, Thomson Reuters
	Stefan Winneke, Thomson Reuters

EPO

Director Publication	Pierre Avédikian
Director Promotion	Heiko Wongel
Director Special Services	Günther Vacek
Director Data Resources	Miguel Albrecht
	Valérie Gray
	Davide Lingua
	Johannes Schaaf
	Daniel Shalloe