

## MEETING MINUTES

### PATCOM Meeting, Tuesday 21 September 2010, EPO Vienna

#### **A. REPORT OF THE LAST MEETING**

PatCom confirmed their full agreement with the report of the previous meeting (CA/T 13/10).

#### **B. FOLLOW-UP FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**

##### **a) Automation plan - latest status**

It has been agreed that the Office will provide PatCom with an excerpt of the Automation Plan to PatCom each year. The Office said the Automation Plan was currently in preparation and was expected to be submitted to the Administrative Council later in 2010.

##### **b) European machine translation initiative**

The Office described the EPO's European machine translation initiative, explaining that it sought to broaden the "European machine translation programme", with a new technical concept and with the significant difference that it was planned not only to focus on English, but also French and German as pivot languages. The Office said that the programme was currently in the approval procedure. It was expected to comprise four phases.

- phase 1 - build central repository of patent documents
- phase 2 - Office will select most appropriate services for individual language pairs
- phase 3 - integrate services into patent tools
- phase 4 - ensure sustainable maintenance

In terms of risk, the Office anticipated some difficulties with the availability of translation engines for some language pairs and with a possible lack of documentation in certain languages. It stressed that its machine-translation initiative will provide a tool for the purpose of patent information and examination, but will not be able to replace legally valid human translations.

The Office said that it would be discussing with the European Commission how it could contribute to an efficient implementation. The new initiative would probably, it said, be able to dovetail seamlessly with existing machine translation activities at the EPO.

With regard to the availability of dictionaries as raw data, the Office confirmed that it would continue the practice of offering dictionaries for sale as soon as there was a closure report (agreed with the respective national office(s) concerned) and the dictionary was officially released. It reminded PatCom, that the dictionaries were seen as "one-off" products and that there were no plans for maintaining or updating them.

### **c) User survey results**

The Office informed PatCom that it had carried out a major survey of how patent information was used in industry in Europe, with the USA as a control group. This survey was largely a repeat of a similar one carried out by the Office in 2003. However, significant changes in the environment (growth in the number of member states, different characteristics in those member states), the introduction of additional questions (eg use of patent information for business purposes), and the size of companies going down on average (going up in the control group) had complicated the results of the survey, and the comparison with 2003. It would thus take some time to finalise the results. The EPO promised to publish a full report as soon as possible.

PatCom thanked the Office for the update, agreeing that it was important to have a thorough understanding of the results, so that any trends could be correctly identified.

In this context, PatCom drew the Office's attention to statements made recently by EU Commissioner Neelie Kroes, who saw it as a government duty to provide the best possible data for the private sector to take it and create value-added services.

### **d) Effect of economic crisis on renewal fee behaviour**

The Office informed PatCom that during 2009, the EPO activities had clearly been affected by the economic crisis, but that in 2010, the number of filed applications had started to recover. At the end of July 2010, the number of applications filed was about 3% above the 2009 level at the same time of the year. Total operating income continued to be ahead of plan, thanks to an on-going strong inflow of internal renewal fees. Furthermore, the July payments by contracting states of second quarter renewal fees had not show any overall deterioration, but even a small increase. On the other hand, the targets for procedural fees (adjusted for changes in the pre-paid fee positions) were again slightly missed<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Information subject to change, based on information available at the date of the meeting.

**e) PCT availability via OPS**

The Office reported that it had had some positive meetings with WIPO, and that as a result both parties would exchange databases on reciprocity and use the other's data as they wish.

**f) Visualisation tool development**

In order to make it easier for entry-level users to access the data in the PATSTAT database, the Office said, it was planning to put PATSTAT on line, however not with full functionality. It would be implementing pie charts and simple bar graphs, and further graphics, such as 3D charts. The new service would be divided into a public mode and expert mode. The public mode would present a wide range of pre-defined, pre-prepared graphics (eg by industrial sector) and would be free of charge. The expert mode, which would be password protected, would offer more options for analysing patents, such as analyses of particular patent applicants.

**C. IP5 - PROJECT DEVELOPMENT (COMMON HYBRID CLASSIFICATION)**

The Office gave a status report on the IP5 project on common hybrid classification that it was leading. The goal was to take the best-developed existing scheme and re-use it to create a new set of symbols in the IPC. Six pilot projects had been initiated to test the concept.

Good progress was being made, with two out of six pilot projects almost ready to submit proposals to WIPO for modifications to the IPC, and a further three hopeful of being in a similar position by the end of 2010. The evaluation of mapping tools will be intensified in order to scale-up the work done in the pilot projects to the whole IPC.

**D. QUALITY OF DATA SUPPLIED BY EPO**

The Office provided PatCom with a brief update on some technical developments in the databases, the most notable being:

- New citation data taken from International Search Reports, Supplementary Search Report and applicants' citations
- Improvements to the time take to make US assignment data - reduced from four months to one week.
- New legal status backfile data for:
  - Russia - from 2005

- China - from 1985 to 1990 loaded, back-file from 1995 to 2008 in progress.
- BNS extractions - here, the Office intends to provide *ad hoc* PDF extractions from the internal BNS database. The tool does not allow the extraction of large collections, but small collections can be extracted and delivered to the customers on USB harddisks. The product was not on line yet, and no price had been set

PatCom asked about the Master Classification Database. It said that some providers would like the Office to remove the "rolled-up" classifications (generated at the time of the IPC reform in 2006). The Office said this would take some time, and would be implemented in the frontfile gradually. For the backfile, it would be possible by March/April 2011. PatCom agreed to discuss this proposal and let the Office know if the timetable was acceptable.

Finally, the Office announced that it was developing an XML ST 36 schema in order to replace the current DTD (Document Type Definition)..

## E. **esp@cenet DEVELOPMENTS**

The Office confirmed that since the previous meeting it had implemented the possibility to search in esp@cenet for clean technologies using "Y02" tags, and that it had improved the way INPADOC patent families were calculated in order to take the load of EPO systems. It announced plans for further enhancements by the end of 2010:

- RSS feeds (based on a search query, and notification of changes)
- export of data into Microsoft Excel, keeping URLs for use in other applications
- a "history" feature (which remembers the search history during a session)
- improved navigation for results lists, with the addition of a scroll bar
- machine translation into/from Portuguese
- more citations (PCT Chapter II, applicant citations, etc)

The Office was also working on:

- a claims tree comparison feature (comparing the claims structure of the application as filed with the granted patent)
- a browsing feature for ECLA symbols

- integrating the European Patent Register and *espacenet* into the EPO Web environment

**a) Statistics on usage**

Usage statistics for *esp@cenet* showed a stable pattern with approximately 28 000 users per day viewing some 10 million PDF pages and downloading some 190 GB of data.

Replying to a question from PatCom, the Office said their analysis showed that some 50% of users were inside Europe.

**F. OPS DEVELOPMENTS**

PatCom congratulated the Office on its "Open Patent Services" product, saying that it was an excellent service and a model for other offices to follow.

The Office announced the following planned enhancements:

- provision of EPO Register data via OPS
- provision of ECLA class definitions via OPS
- full-text search for EP and WO documents
- extension of the country coverage for "number" searches
- introduction of "RESTful" Web services

**G. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLICATION SERVER, OPEN WEB SERVICE INTERFACE**

The Office informed PatCom of a change to the contractor for hosting the raw data server. The new contractor is the German company INIT ([www.init.de](http://www.init.de)).

**H. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**a) EP4weeks**

PatCom asked the Office if it had any usage statistics on its EP4weeks product (which offers the most recent four weeks' of EP publications over the Web free of charge). The Office said it would research the matter.

**b) IPR helpdesk**

PatCom drew the Office's attention to a recent tender announcement from the European Commission, looking for bids to run the IPR helpdesk. The Office said it was not aware of any intention to bid itself, but would be interested in learning about developments in this area.

**c) WIPO's agreement to co-operation with the commercial sector in providing tools to developing countries**

Reacting to a recent press release from WIPO, PatCom explained that some of its members had agreed to support WIPO in providing patent information in the world's least developed countries. Six PatCom members were each offering one product, either free of charge or at a substantial discount, depending on the country concerned.

**d) Date of the next meeting**

It was provisionally agreed to hold the next meeting on 22 March 2011 in Vienna.