EPO-PatCom meeting
Thursday, 13 October 2016, 14.00 hrs
Room 348, EPO Vienna

Summary of the discussions

1.   INTRODUCTION

Richard Flammer, Principal Director for Patent Information and the European Patent Academy, welcomed the participants and opened the meeting.

2.   APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the 32nd meeting was approved.

3.   MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 15 March 2016 were approved.

4.   WORLD WIDE LEGAL STATUS DATABASE IN XML (LEGSTAT/XML)

The Office reported that the migration of the legal status data to XML format (frontfile and backfile) would be completed in Q4 2016. The T12 format would be decommissioned in that quarter. Starting January 2017, the data would only be provided in XML format. A major correction exercise with the XML roll-out had led to data quality improvements. New data, including legal status data from Greece and more comprehensive US patent term extension data, had also been added. The Office thanked PatCom for their support in testing during the transitional phase. The users had confirmed that they had not spotted any problems with the XML format and were waiting for the XML data to become officially available.

5.   QUALITY AT SOURCE (QAS) PROJECT

The Office gave an overview of the project, which consisted of two phases. Phase one covered the frontfile and aimed at standardising the format of the data provided by the member states, including full text. This phase was currently being implemented with twenty member states and was progressively being extended to all thirty-eight EPC countries. Phase two covered OCRing of the backfile documentation. Preparatory work had started with five offices. The PatCom members requested a detailed list which is added here below:

National offices already engaged in the Quality at Source project: AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CZ, DK, EE, ES, FI, GR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, TR (some are more advanced, others just started).

Already completed Quality at Source and soon to start back-file collection: CH, EE, ES, HR, LT, PT.

Concerning the enquiry from PatCom as to whether and how the data were made available to them, the Office stated that it was prepared to distribute the data according to the same rules as other data sets, pending approval by the member states. Download would be enabled via the OPS service. Answering a question regarding the timeline, the Office explained that the approval was being sought in the spring meeting of the Technical and Operational Support Committee (TOSC). Depending on the availability and completeness of the data, the collections were being uploaded step by step to Espacenet and made available for download via OPS.

Regarding the pricing, the Office confirmed that it would stick to the current patent data distribution policy, with a threshold volume of data (currently 2.5 GB per week) for free download. The limit for free downloads might be increased slightly in order to enable free reading of all documents published per week. As the administration of the fees should be as simple as possible, the Office was considering a flat rate for data volumes beyond the threshold. In parallel, the acquisition of national data collections via the respective national offices should be possible.

PatCom members stressed their wish to have access to full-text data as soon as it became available on Espacenet. The Office confirmed that currently frontfiles from some small offices were already being loaded on the Espacenet level I service. Level II only included full-text data if it was in English, French or German. Responding to a PatCom members' enquiry as to how to identify newly loaded data in OPS, the Office replied that it needed to create a content list with information on coverage and data availability.

Regarding the data coverage, the Office made clear that the service was limited to documentation from the member states. US full text was available on Espacenet, but not via OPS, due to legal restrictions.

Finally, the Office reiterated that the aim of the project was to enhance the completeness of data available for searches. It understood the preference of PatCom members to receive data via one single channel. It would do its best but stressed that it had no direct influence on data distribution policies of national offices.

6.   FEDERATED REGISTER

The Office gave an overview on the status of the service.

The Federated Register was progressively being rolled out, with 15 offices (AT, CH, CZ, ES, FI, GR, HR, IE, LT, LU, MK, NL, RO, RS, SI) currently in production. Countries in advanced state of preparation and expected to join soon were BE and

TR. A number of member state offices had announced an intention to join in Q4/2016 or Q2/2017.

Deep linking was operational with 30 countries. The eight remaining countries had no electronic register yet.

According to their announcements the Office expected possibly up to 20 countries to be in production early next year, but technical conditions, like web services, needed to be established. For the largest offices DE, GB, FR the Office had no concrete dates yet. Validation states could be added sooner or later.

7.   EUROPEAN PATENT REGISTER

The Office reported that a new version of the European Patent Register would be rolled out end of October/early November, containing among others the technical arrangements for including unitary patent information. Furthermore, there would be an extension of the Global Dossier functionality to include data available in WIPO CASE, in a first release for CA and PCT (WO). An agreement with WIPO and respective offices had been concluded for linking to CASE. Data were accessed via web services. Countries expected to come next were Israel, UK and Australia.

8.   SEQUENCE LISTING BACK-FILE

The EPO reported that there were no news yet on the back-file for sequence listings, but it was working on the issue.

9.   SEARCH STRATEGIES PROJECT

The Office reported on the pilot project making available information on search strategies in form of a facsimile document. The service should contribute to transparency in the search process. Technically, the search strategy document was part of the file wrapper, accessible via the file inspection in the European Patent Register.

The information, filled in by the examiners contained classification symbols and keywords used. In summer, the Office had conducted a survey to collect users' feedback on the service, which was generally positive. SACEPO/PDI members had requested the inclusion of more information, in particular regarding classification symbols used during the search.

The users appreciated to see what actually happened and understood better examiners' working method. It was also an indicator how to write claims.

Answering a PatCom member's question the Office confirmed that non-patent literature was not included.

10.   UNITARY PATENT (UPP)

Regarding the patent information related aspects of the European patent with unitary effect, the Office confirmed that all relevant systems were ready to provide the information as soon as the political situation was clarified. In the SACEPO/PDI meeting, a common understanding had been reached with respect to users' requirements and to the format of the information, search functionalities and retrieval. The unitary effect would be reflected in the bibliographic information (EBD data) and propagated to other databases. A special kind code was under consideration. A possibility would be a code "H", according to WIPO ST16, marking an exceptional legal event. The information would be statistically processable.

PatCom welcomed the initiative.

11.   NEW EPO PATENT INFORMATION PRODUCTS TO BE ANNOUNCED AT THE EPO PATENT INFORMATION CONFERENCE 2016

Concerning the "New Espacenet" project, the Office reported that in addition to the QaS input (see above), further functionalities would be added and it was planned to modernise the user interface with the aim of making the use easier for non-experienced users. Command-based search would still be available while semantic or similarity searching was also envisaged.

PatCom underlined that commercial providers invested heavily in semantic and similarity search. Functionalities in a free-of-charge tool should be distinct from commercial products. Commercial providers needed to know if the EPO was developing this kind of feature. The Office made clear that focus was not on extending capabilities, but on enhancing the usability for occasional users. Replying to a question regarding non-patent literature (NPL), the Office explained that most NPL was subject to copyright, and thus normally only available in house.

Following a comment from PatCom that WIPO had launched Chemsearch, a functionality to search chemical compounds, the EPO stated that this WIPO initiative had also triggered thoughts at the Office as to how far it could improve chemical information in its patents by presenting this information in ways different from images. PatCom's feedback on good solutions was welcome.

Regarding the new price list for products in 2017, the Office confirmed that adjustments were in the same range as every year. It was looking into introducing a flat rate for using OPS in future.

12.   UPDATE ON INNOVATION PROJECT

The Office reported that it had launched a survey via platforms in industry and associations to better understand the use of patent information in the innovation process and in which phase of innovation patent information was used. Results were expected before the end of the year and would have an impact on where and how

EPO patent information would be promoted in future. Results would be made available to interested circles.

PatCom members said they found the initiative very interesting, also for commercial providers. They proposed a partnership project between the EPO and commercial providers to share the outcome.

13.   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

PatCom informed the Office about some gaps in the data in DOCDB, for instance missing applicants' names in Korea documents since 2015 and missing titles and abstracts in utility models from China. The Office stated that the gaps were the result of incomplete data deliveries and proposed that PatCom members should send a list of issues to allow for structured follow-up.

The Office referred to a discussion round planned at the EPO Patent Information Conference in Madrid on data protection and security. It enquired whether the commercial patent information providers encountered any concerns on the security of transactions. PatCom replied that there were differences between US users who were more open and European users who were more sensitive. In general there were no major issues, especially with patent data. Nevertheless, users' credentials had to be handled carefully.

Coming back to the QaS project, the users indicated a great interest in data from small offices, even in national languages.

14.   DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The spring PatCom meeting should be organised back to back with the raw data day. The Office said it would make proposals.

32ND EPO PatCom Meeting

13 October 2016, 14:00 hrs, EPO Vienna, room 348

Participants

PatCom:

President	Martine Massiera, Questel, FR
Secretary	Jane List, Extract Information
	Jurjen Dijkstra, LNU
	Ann Chapman, Minesoft
	Margit Hoehne, PatentGATE GmbH
	Paul Peters, CAS
	Lee Smith, RWS
	Anna Maria Villa, PatentSight, GmbH

EPO:

Principal Director Patent Information and European Patent Academy	Richard Flammer
Director Publications	Pierre Avedikian
Director Promotion	Heiko Wongel
Director Specialised Services	Günther Vacek
	Daniel Shalloe
	Roland Feinäugle
	Nikolaos Chardalias
	Nigel Clarke
	Heidrun Krestel
	Christian Soltmann