

On November 8, 2022, the European Patent Office, the Japan Patent Office, and the United States Patent and Trademark Office met in Durham, North Carolina, for their 40<sup>th</sup> Trilateral Conference.

The theme of this 40<sup>th</sup> annual meeting was enhancing access to the innovation ecosystem for SMEs to drive economic growth. The Offices shared the results of recent IP-intensive industries reports from each jurisdiction, all demonstrating the key economic contribution that IP-intensive industries make to those countries' economies and jobs, and discussed ways these reports could be more impactful for policymakers, the innovative community and decision-makers around the world. Furthermore, the Offices reaffirmed their commitment to expand and enhance access to tools, information and other resources useful to the innovation community.

Given that SMEs account for a significant proportion of global business and patent filings, the Offices shared information and best practices for engaging and supporting the SME community in acquiring and protecting their inventions. Discussions centered on identifying and providing information and tools best suited to the needs of SMEs, with a particular focus on more direct outreach to SMEs.

The discussion of SMEs led to a deeper consideration of how the Offices can work together to make the IP system more accessible to all innovating segments of society. This covered support for all innovators, including women and youth in particular, highlighting initiatives such as mentorship and education programs, and creating networking opportunities.

Consistent with input received from Trilateral Industry, the Offices also agreed to explore possible IT improvements designed to simplify and streamline processes across the Offices to improve efficiency and reduce costs for all innovators. Among the topics discussed were AI-based tools, elimination of physical signature requirements, digital end-to-end processing of color drawings and the use of Blockchain technologies to facilitate the secure information exchange among the offices.

Going forward, the Offices agreed to explore how to achieve further meaningful progress at a strategic level by leveraging longstanding Trilateral cooperation, expertise, and experience, as well as continued input from and engagement with Trilateral Industry.