

**Trilateral
Statistical Report
1999**

PREFACE

This joint annual Trilateral Statistical Report contains a compilation of statistics from the European Patent Office (EPO), the Japanese Patent Office (JPO) and the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). It is also partially based on statistics from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva.

Besides promoting a better understanding of the importance of patent rights in the world, its purpose is to facilitate an understanding of the operations of each office and to increase general awareness about the patent grant procedures of the three offices. The report is a supplement to the separate annual reports of each of the three offices, and is one of the fruits of trilateral cooperation. It is appropriate first to look briefly at general macroeconomic developments as a background to the patent statistics contained in this report. However, interpreting worldwide patenting activity behavior in terms of economic developments is difficult, because the economic factors which have major influences on the numbers of patent applications are not completely clear.

The world economy in 1999 has seen a mild recovery of business. The U.S. economy continued to grow steadily, despite confusion in the international financial markets in 1998, and achieved a higher rate of economic growth than was generally expected. In Europe, a new currency bloc was established with the start of the Euro, a bloc second in size only to the U.S. The European economy has been continuing to grow at a stable pace. On the other hand, growth rates in many of the East Asian countries including Japan turned positive after the sluggishness from 1997 due to financial and currency crises.

The economic growth in the U.S. has been supported by technology innovations in the field of telecommunications. The number of application filings in this technical field is thus expected to greatly increase.

Patent applications are a reflection of efforts undertaken in the areas of Research and Development, and worldwide expenditures on R&D are trending upwards together with the general economic growth. The value of intellectual property protection seems to be increasingly appreciated, and also the areas of research in which patents can be applied for are increasing. This leads to the conclusion that first patent filings should continue to grow in the inventors' countries.

A major feature of the 1990s has been the transition towards multinational diversification of enterprises and globalisation of markets and production. More states have been joining the Patent Cooperation Treaty and tuning their patent laws towards common international standards. This has stimulated the flow of patent applications to other countries away from the country of invention and original domestic first filing. Together with the above mentioned increases in first filings, this has led to a large continuing increasing trend in the numbers of worldwide patent applications.

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