



Press release

The Trilateral Patent Offices agree on milestones at their annual conference

Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 10 November 2011 — Meeting for their Annual Trilateral Conference near Paris, France, the heads of the European Patent Office (EPO), the Japan Patent Office (JPO) and the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) – collectively known as the Trilateral Offices – progressed in their efforts to further harmonise patent systems around the globe by agreeing on steps to enhance efficiency in patent-related procedures between the three regions.

In view of the strongly growing need for innovating companies to obtain patent protection for their inventions from several patent offices in parallel, the Trilateral Offices, at their 29th Trilateral Conference, considered proposals to reduce the burden for patent applicants by increasing cooperation on procedures and improving the exchange of procedural information.

In this context, the three offices agreed to launch a new tool that will make it easier to access results from patent searches carried out by multiple offices for the same invention, the so-called Common Citation Document (CCD). Moreover, the Trilateral Offices agreed to extend the duration of their current Trilateral PCT “Patent Prosecution Highway” (PPH) pilot programme, which involves the reuse of PCT International phase work (PCT-PPH), for another two years.

The CCD tool offers a single point of access to citation data from all three offices. It enables patent examiners as well as innovators to search for and view, in a single screen, the prior art cited by the patent offices for the family members of a patent application. While designed to boost the efficiency of the offices, the CCD is also expected to save considerable time and effort for anyone using patents, for example inventors and patent analysts, as a source of information.

"The launch of the Common Citation Document is a milestone in our co-operation, and another significant step forward in improving the efficiency of the global patent system," said EPO President Benoît Battistelli. "Based on a proposal made by industry, the new tool will provide details about patent applications for the same invention filed at several different offices in parallel. Companies and inventors in particular stand to benefit from the improved access to information," he added.

Commissioner Yoshiyuki Iwai of the JPO said: "We are pleased to announce the launch of this important initiative. It is an example of our putting in place the right infrastructure to facilitate work-sharing among IP offices. We expect the CCD to be elaborated and updated further to improve its usefulness."

"To make this project possible, our three offices have developed a brand new way of exchanging citation data," said Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO, David Kappos. "While the tool includes data from the Trilateral Offices, it has also been extended to include other patent offices, making all this information digitally available worldwide."

The CCD application uses the EPO's global patent database family system and is hosted by the EPO. It can be accessed on the Trilateral website at www.trilateral.net/ccd.

The PCT-PPH pilot project of the Trilateral Offices facilitates fast-track examination by the EPO, JPO and USPTO for patent applications filed under the PCT as it allows the offices involved to exploit from each other results already available. Additionally, the EPO and the USPTO, as well as the EPO and the JPO, agreed to extend their bilateral PPH pilot programmes. All three pilot schemes will be revised with a view to enhancing their user-friendliness and efficiency.

The Trilateral Cooperation was introduced in 1983 to facilitate harmonisation of the patent systems in Europe, Japan and the US. It functions on the basis of annual work plans for technical projects that are agreed at the Annual Trilateral Conferences. The 30th Annual Trilateral Conference will be hosted by the Japan Patent Office in November 2012 .

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