

Data protection statement on the processing of personal data within the framework of Patent Knowledge User Support

Protecting your privacy is of the utmost importance to the European Patent Office (EPO). We are committed to protecting your personal data and ensuring respect for data subjects' rights when performing our tasks and providing our services. All data of a personal nature that identify you directly or indirectly will be processed lawfully, fairly and with due care.

The processing operations described below are subject to the EPO Data Protection Rules ([DPR](#)).

The information in this statement is provided in accordance with Articles 16 and 17 DPR.

1. What is the nature and purpose of the processing operation?

This data protection statement relates to the processing of personal data in the context of Patent Knowledge User Support.

The European Patent Office (EPO) provides a range of Patent Knowledge related products and services to end users. User Support is provided in relation to those products and services including:

- Espacenet
- EP Register
- Federated Services
- Global Dossier
- Common Citation Document
- Patent Information Services for Experts (PISE)
- Bulk Data Services
- Open Patent Services
- European Publication Server
- Linked Open EP Data
- Any other queries and requests directed at Patent Knowledge

The support requests - available to anybody - arrive via ServiceNow corporate tool, direct email or phone or other contact means.

It is necessary to establish communication with users in order to deliver the support services, and to that end contact details and other information relevant to the particular user support case must be processed.

Once the user establishes contact, the contact details of the user and the details of the support required are recorded in the ServiceNow tool. The information is then routed to the support team within the EPO deemed most appropriate to process the issues at hand. Should the selected support team judge that another team may be more appropriate to handle the issue at hand, the issue and associated personal information will be forwarded to a new team. This forwarding process may be repeated as required. A response is then routed to the user that submitted the enquiry.

Therefore, in the scope of this activity, the EPO processes personal data for the purposes of:

- Delivery of support in relation to Patent Knowledge products and services
- Communication with users.

The processing is not intended to be used for any automated decision-making, including profiling.

Your personal data will not be transferred to recipients outside the EPO which are not covered by Article 8(1), (2) and (5) DPR unless an adequate level of protection is ensured. In the absence of an adequate level of protection, a transfer can only take place if appropriate safeguards have been put in place and enforceable data subject rights and effective legal remedies for data subjects are available, or if derogations for specific situations as per Article 10 DPR apply).

2. What personal data do we process?

The following categories of personal data are processed for EPO employees and externals (not all the categories are processed for every data subject):

- Patent process related data: patent record bibliographic and meta data, personal data potentially included within the content of patent procedure related information and publications;
- Contact information: contact details, country, phone numbers, working email address;
- Correspondence: personal information provided voluntarily;
- Education and skills: education and training history, languages;
- Personal identification: first name, full name, gender, surname.

3. Who is responsible for processing the data?

Personal data are processed under the responsibility of the Principal Director of the Patent Intelligence Principal Directorate acting as delegated EPO data controller.

Personal data are processed by the EPO staff involved in providing and maintaining the services referred to in this statement.

External contractors involved in providing and maintaining certain services may also process personal data, which can include accessing it.

4. Who has access to your personal data and to whom are they disclosed?

The patent record content can be made available to anyone who uses the service. These users may be world-wide.

If necessary to perform its tasks, non-patent personal data may be shared on a need-to-know basis with staff undertaking duties in the following areas of the EPO: Patent Intelligence, BIT, DG1 and senior EPO management (Observatory on Patents and Technology, VP5 Office, President Office, CGS, MAC, PD Communication, D022, Channel Management). Additionally, the workflow applied foresees that tickets that require re-routing after receipt by Patent Knowledge User Support will be re-routed to whichever EPO unit is deemed appropriate.

Personal data may be disclosed to third-party service providers for maintenance and support purposes.

Personal data will only be shared with authorised persons responsible for the necessary processing operations. They will not be used for any other purposes or disclosed to any other recipients.

5. How do we protect and safeguard your personal data?

We take appropriate technical and organisational measures to safeguard and protect your personal data from accidental or unlawful destruction, loss or alteration and unauthorised disclosure or access.

All personal data are stored in secure IT applications in accordance with the EPO's security standards. Appropriate levels of access are granted individually only to the above-mentioned recipients.

For systems hosted on EPO premises, the following basic security measures generally apply:

- User authentication and access control (e.g. role-based access control to the systems and network, principles of need-to-know and least privilege)
- Logical security hardening of systems, equipment and network
- Physical protection: EPO access controls, additional access controls to datacentre, policies on locking offices
- Transmission and input controls (e.g. audit logging, systems and network monitoring)
- Security incident response: 24/7 monitoring for incidents, on-call security expert.

In principle, the EPO has adopted a paperless policy management system; however, if paper files containing personal data need to be stored on EPO premises, they are locked in a secure location with a restricted access.

For personal data processed on systems not hosted on EPO premises, the providers processing the personal data have committed in a binding agreement to comply with their data protection obligations under the applicable data protection legal frameworks. These systems are required to have implemented appropriate technical and organisational measures such as: physical security measures, access and storage control measures, securing data at rest (e.g. by encryption); user, transmission and input control measures (e.g. network firewalls, network intrusion detection system (IDS), network intrusion protection system (IPS), audit logging); conveyance control measures (e.g. securing data in transit by encryption).

6. How can you access, rectify and receive your data, request that your data be erased, or restrict/object to processing? Can your rights be restricted?

As a data subject, you have the right to access, rectify and receive your personal data, not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing, to have your data erased and to restrict and/or object to the processing of your data (Articles 18 to 24 DPR).

If you would like to exercise any of these rights, external users should write to DPOexternalusers@epo.org, otherwise contact the delegated data controller at PDPatentIntelligence-DPL@epo.org. In order to enable us to respond more promptly and precisely, you always need to provide certain preliminary information with your request. We therefore encourage you to fill in this [form](#) (for externals) or this [form](#) (for internals) and submit it with your request.

We will reply to your request without undue delay and in any event within one month of receipt of the request. However, Article 15(2) DPR provides that this period may be extended by two further months where necessary in view of the complexity and number of requests received. We will inform you of any such delay.

7. What is the legal basis for processing your data?

Personal data is processed on the basis of Article 5(a) of the DPR, i.e. processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the exercise of the official activities of the European Patent Organisation or in the legitimate exercise of the official authority vested in the controller, which includes the processing necessary for the Office's management and functioning.

8. How long do we keep your data?

User data is retained for maximum 7 years. If considered appropriate, data is deleted if it can reasonably be expected that there is no operational need anymore.

Information contained in the patent records is public data which is never deleted.

In the event of a formal appeal/litigation, all data held at the time the formal appeal/litigation was initiated will be retained until the proceedings have been closed.

9. Contact information

External data subjects who have any questions about the processing of their personal data should contact the Data Protection Officer and/or the delegated data controller at DPOexternalusers@epo.org.

EPO employees should contact the delegated data controller at PDPatentIntelligence-DPL@epo.org.

Internals may also contact the Data Protection Officer at dpo@epo.org, while externals may contact our Data Protection Officer at DPOexternalusers@epo.org.

Review and legal redress

If you consider that the processing infringes your rights as a data subject, you have the right to request review by the controller under Article 49 DPR and, if you disagree with the outcome of the review, the right to seek legal redress under Article 50 DPR.