

European Patent Academy Report 2021

Annex to the Annual Review



Executive summary

The European Patent Academy's framework was completely overhauled in 2021. Building on the pillars of co-operation, certification, digitalisation and modularity, the blueprint for a new Academy was approved by the European Patent Organisation's Administrative Council in October 2021. The goal is to transform the Academy into a benchmark for excellence in intellectual property (IP) training.

This report presents the Academy's achievements over the past 12 months in the context of broader changes in the learning landscape. 2021 was a busy year for the Academy, which provided over 2 200 hours of training in the areas of patent granting (66%), technology transfer (26%) and patent litigation (8%).

A landmark achievement in 2021 was the launch of the electronic European qualifying examination (e-EQE). After the 2020 examination was cancelled due to the pandemic, almost 3 800 candidates enrolled for the new EQE last year. Going digital also helped the EPO achieve its goal of providing accessible certification to patent professionals across Europe in a convenient, cost-effective manner. Organising one of the most demanding and prestigious professional examinations was made possible by rapid technological development and the combined efforts of many at the EPO, the candidates and the profession.

Last year saw a record high of 23 500+ participants enrol for training provided via the Academy's digital e-learning platform. Registrations on the e-learning platform have soared by 342% since 2019, reflecting growing demand for convenient, cost-effective IP training delivered digitally.

To increase the outreach and impact of the European patent system, the Academy also provides training for staff at national patent offices in non-contracting states as part of the EPO's international co-operation activities. In 2021, representatives from as many as 45 non-contracting states participated in the Academy's activities and enrolled on its digital learning portal.

Digitalisation was ramped up in 2021 with six types of virtual educational activities on offer: conferences, courses, lectures, workshops, seminars and study visits. Patent granting training focuses on the complete patent granting procedure – from formalities examination and prior-art searching to substantive examination and post-grant procedures. Over 9 600 participants attended 710 hours of lecturing and self-study in this area in 2021.

To promote technology transfer and the dissemination of IP knowledge, the Academy set up a new modular IP education framework "From lab to market" last year. Ten training modules combining theory and case studies based on the experience of finalists and winners of the European Inventor Award are specially designed to meet the needs of technological and scientific universities.

A total of 36 events targeting businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises and IP management professionals were also held last year, including two highly popular flagship events, Search Matters and the High-growth technology business conference.

In the area of patent litigation, the Academy partnered with the Unified Patent Court (UPC) Preparatory Committee to provide a third round of basic training on patentability and infringement for UPC candidate judges. It also compiled a new patent enforcement database, enabling users to search and compare national patent enforcement measures and procedures.

In preparation for the launch of the European Patent Administration Certification in 2022, the Academy designed the syllabus and started drafting learning materials. This harmonised certification will be open to all formalities officers working in European Patent Organisation member states, creating a "knowledge network" of highly qualified formalities officers to support patent professionals.

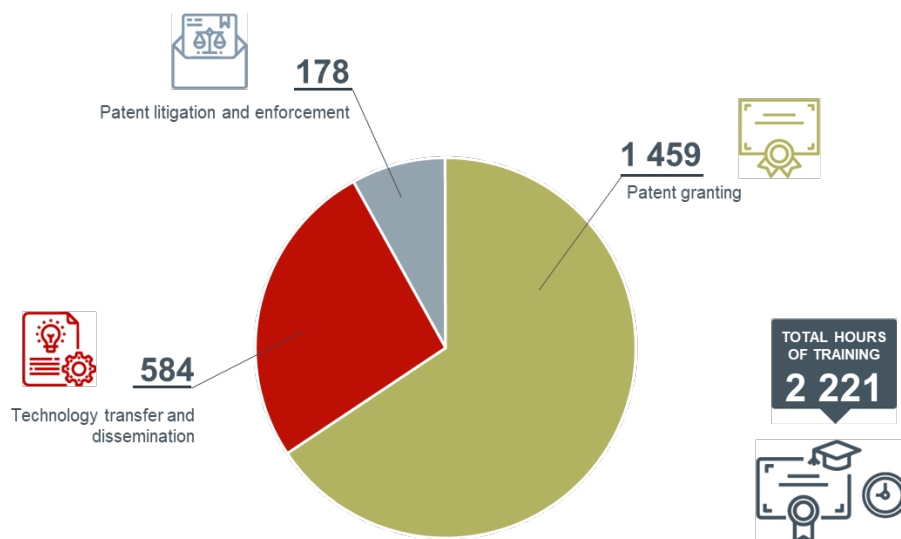
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1. Outreach

In 2021, the European Patent Academy set up and enabled 2 221 hours of patent training, an increase of 420 compared to 2020. 66% of these hours pertain to the area of patent granting, 26% to the area of technology transfer and dissemination, and 8% to the area of patent litigation and enforcement.

Figure 1 – Total hours of training

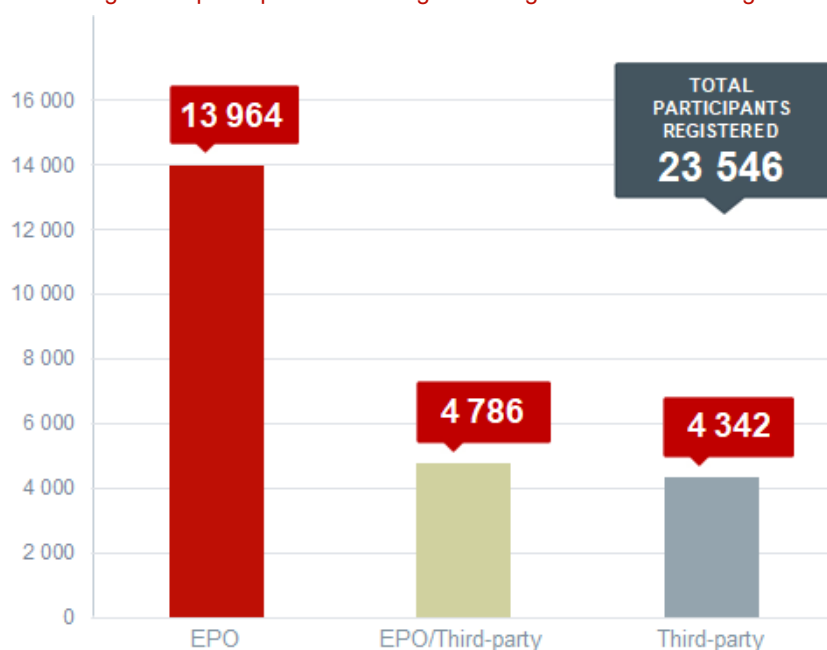


Source: EPO

The number of participants enrolled in EPO training courses, EPO/third-party co-organised training courses and supported third-party events reached a record high of 23 546. A breakdown into areas shows that 57% enrolled in sessions on patent granting, 40% in technology transfer and dissemination, and 3% in patent litigation and enforcement.

In 2021, the e-learning platform reported 2 221 hours of training, 23 546 registered participants, and 15 737 active users.

Figure 2 – Registered participants according to the organiser of the training



Source: EPO

The European Patent Academy e-learning platform is central to delivering online educational activities to users all over the world. On 31 December 2021, the platform had 15 737 active users in 138 countries, 70% of those from the member states.

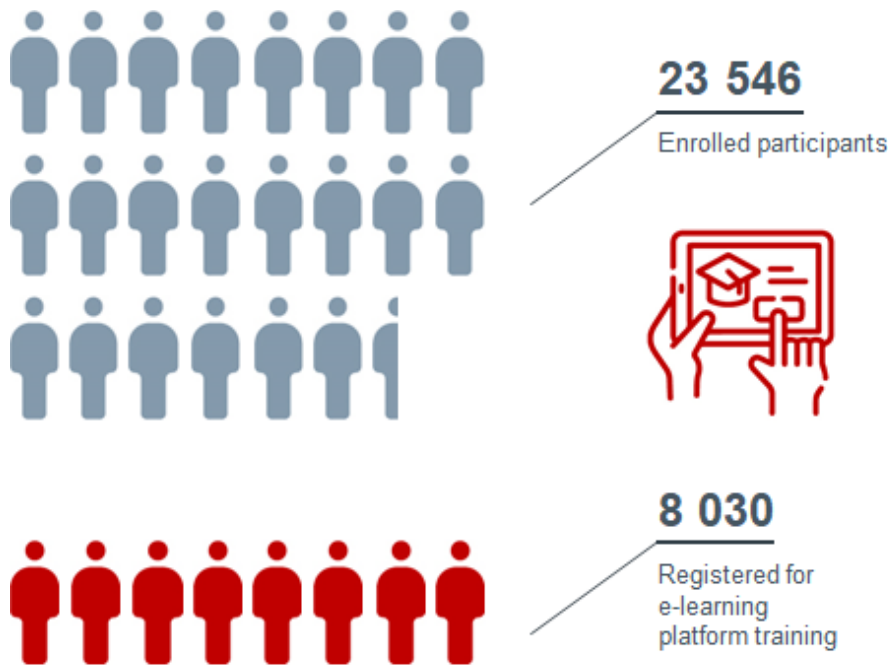
Figure 3 – Breakdown by member state of registered users on e-learning platform (in percent)



Source: EPO

In addition, 8 030 participants enrolled for self-paced online courses requiring registration.

Figure 4 – Enrolled participants in general training and users of e-learning platform

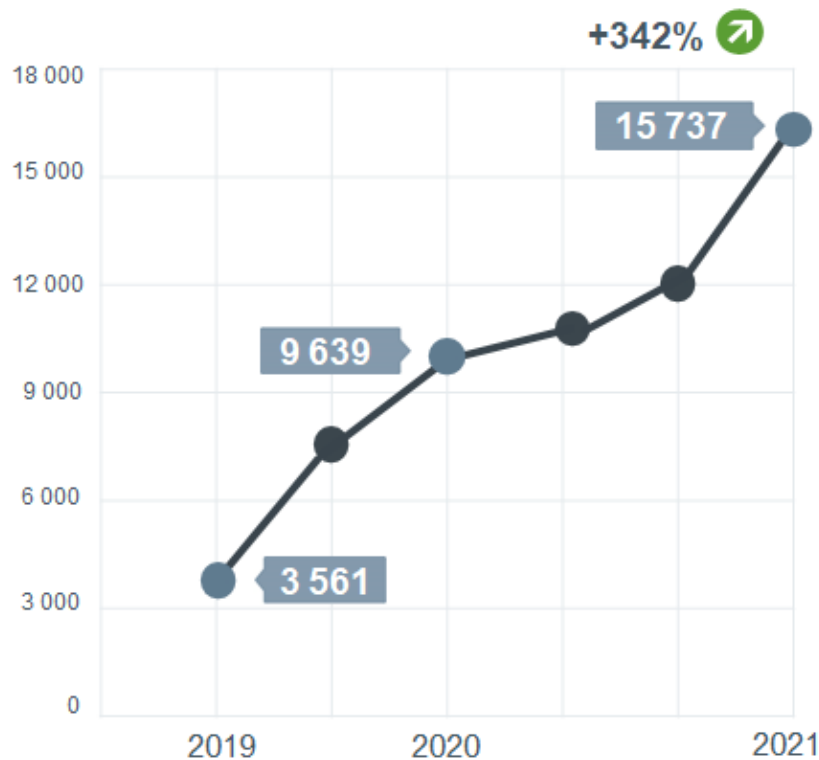


Source: EPO

Enrolments via the e-learning portal in 2021 followed the sharp rise already observed in 2020, with 6 088 new users. Over the two-year period, user registrations have increased by 342%.

In 2021, 8 030 people registered for e-learning platform training and 6 088 new users enrolled for the e-learning portal.

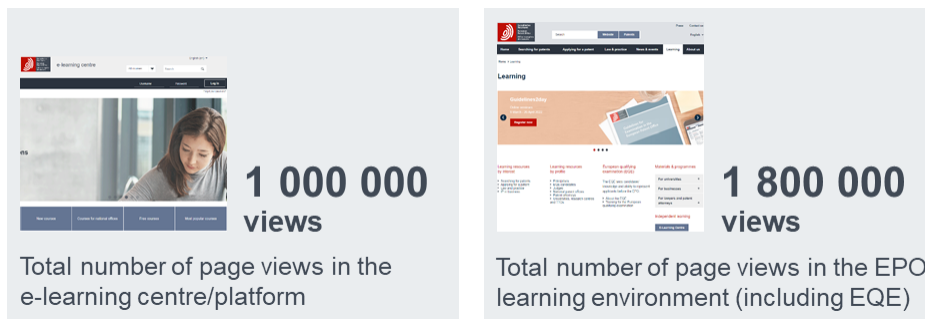
Figure 5 – Increased user registration figures for the e-learning centre of the European Patent Academy



Source: EPO

The EPO learning environment had 1 800 000 page views in 2021, which includes the external training activities and the EQE. The e-learning platform alone boasted an additional 1 000 000 page views.

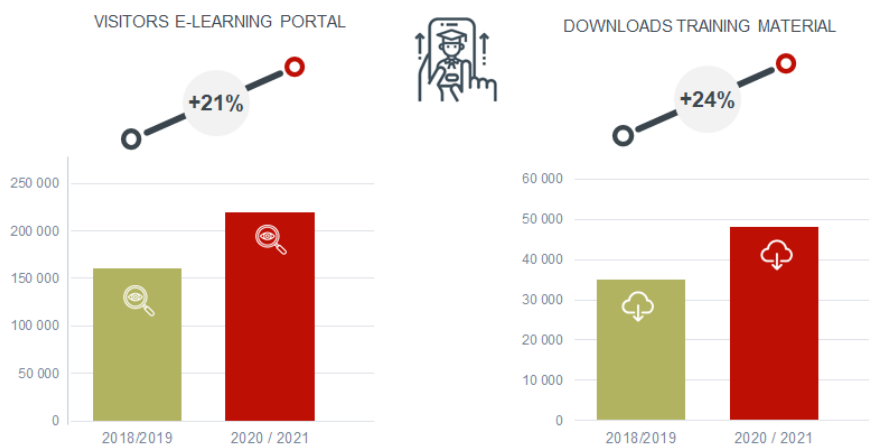
Figure 6 – Page views of EPO learning environments



Source: EPO

The growing trend observed in the use of the e-learning platform as of 2019 has continued. The high number of accesses was accompanied by a high number of downloaded educational materials: 2021 saw a 24% increase compared to the pre-pandemic years 2018/19.

Figure 7 – e-learning portal: visitors and downloads

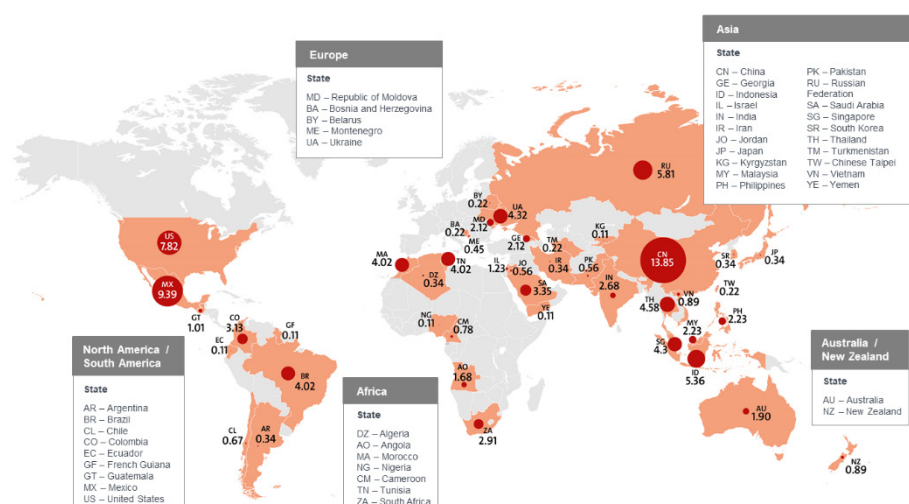


Visitors to the e-learning portal and downloads of training material increased by 21% and 24% respectively in the period 2020-21.

Source: EPO

One of the goals mentioned in CA/64/21 is to increase the impact and outreach of the European Patent Academy. This is achieved by promoting its activities and attracting participants from beyond the member states. Within the framework of the EPO's international co-operation, training is provided to staff of national offices of non-contracting states, in particular to European Patent Convention extension and validation states, as well as to those joining forces with the Office under the Reinforced Partnership framework. In 2021, representatives from as many as 45 non-contracting states participated in activities organised by the European Patent Academy.

Figure 8 – Increased impact and outreach of the European Patent Academy: breakdown by nationality of participants in Academy's live events



Source: EPO

2. Modernisation of the structures of the European Patent Academy

The Strategic Plan 2023 announced the revision of the governance of the European Patent Academy. The process materialised in October 2021, when the Administrative Council approved the reform of the Academy. The President presented a comprehensive report on the Academy to the Administrative Council, an account of past and future activities, as well as the possibility of setting up member state working groups and creating patent education expert committees and certifications under the framework of the Technical and Operational Support Committee (TOSC).

Internally, three broad training areas devoted to patent granting, transfer and litigation were also set up in 2021. They were designed to reflect the life of patented innovation. This set-up fostered the development of learning trajectories and products that cut across different fields and audiences, thereby meeting the needs of stakeholders interested in more than one specific area.

The new structures also reflect the modernisation of the Academy's training programme, implementing education based on the four pillars described in this report, seven harmonised educational activities and the online training formats.

New roles for the Administrative Council, the TOSC and patent education and certification committees as of October 2021

3. The four pillars of the *Blueprint for the European Patent Academy*

The *Blueprint for the European Patent Academy* introduced a framework to design and implement patent education based on four pillars, namely co-operation, digitalisation, certification and modularity. These pillars and educational activities were added to the 2021 catalogue of training activities. Learning products and educational projects were developed via a matrix approach that combines stakeholder groups and thematic areas devoted to patent granting, transfer and enforcement.

Figure 9 – Three training areas with wide audiences

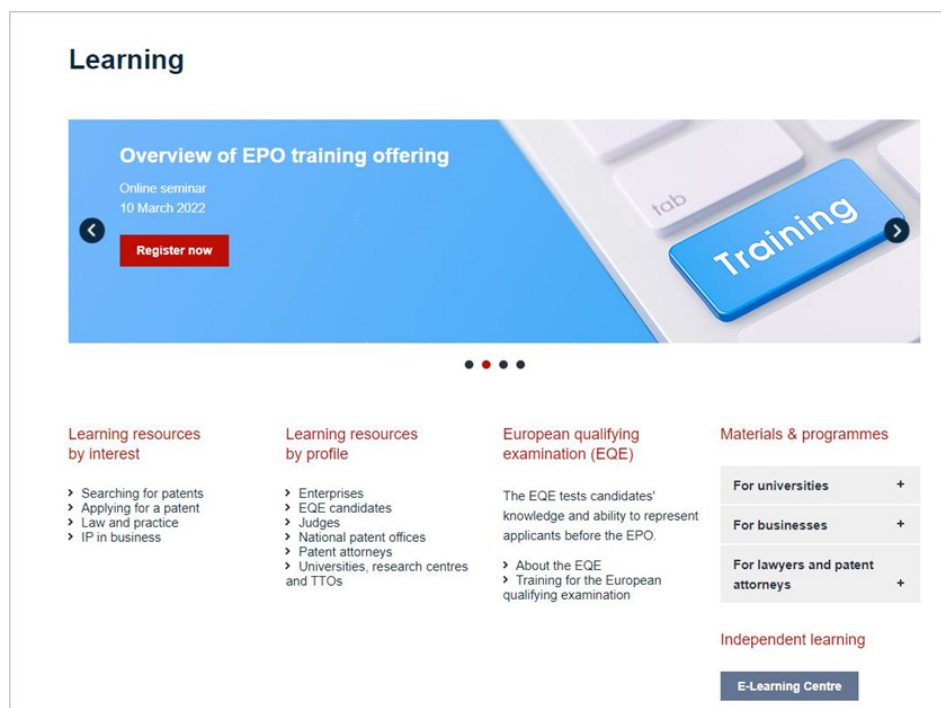
Training areas	Audiences: Professional	Institutional
Patent granting	■ patent examiners formalities officers/paralegals	national patent offices
	■ patent attorneys formalities officers/paralegals	patent attorney firms professional associations of patent attorneys and formalities officers
Technology transfer and dissemination	■ scholars IP managers students and PhD students researchers	universities research centres technology transfer associations PATLIBs
	■ IP managers CEOs and managers	technology transfer associations SMEs business associations
Patent enforcement and litigation	■ judges lawyers prosecutors patent attorneys	courts IP associations professional associations

Source: EPO

3.1 Digitalisation

Digitalisation was further pursued in 2021 to increase the opportunities to reach users and increase the global impact of the European patent system. The means of delivering education, the methodologies and the output were conceived and implemented in the digital environment with a view to removing the physical barriers and associated costs. Innovative virtual formats, new tools, events and programmes were implemented and made available as infrastructure and resources for third-party use.

Figure 10 – Digital learning environment



Source: EPO

All Academy activities were implemented in a virtual environment and the format of training sessions was further adapted to better meet online learning needs. This required attentive listening and flexibility to adjust the programme. In addition to the standalone activities implemented, over 35 new courses were created in the Learning Management System (LMS).

After responding to the pandemic in 2020, 2021 saw a consolidation of formats for the different educational activities aimed at simplifying user interaction and standardising the training programme. Lecture-based events were offered in lighter formats, with simple registration and implementation using Zoom. The Moodle environment was profiled to host activities where interaction with materials, participants and tutors is more demanding.

In 2021, the requirements were defined to achieve closer integration of the LMS platform in the epo.org website; the technical implementation started with a view to rolling out the new setting in 2022. Users will find the complete training programme in the new learning portal and be guided seamlessly to authentication, registration and course contents, in turn opening a personal dashboard with their training history.

Also in 2021, the Academy explored the use of new authoring tools to create standalone e-learning modules with media elements and interactive sections. Likewise, a range of measures was implemented to enhance participation, including smaller groups, new formats, mocks, extensive use of the chat and polling functions, and a combination of plenaries and breakout sessions.

Digitalisation has enabled outreach beyond traditional target audiences of the European Patent Academy. In addition to removing physical barriers to participation, this expansion is due to other reasons. Various activities are now live-streamed internally and most online courses are freely available on the Academy e-learning platform, enabling access at any time and from any location.

3.2 Co-operation

Co-operation facilitates bespoke programmes to meet the needs of diverse audiences, render training activities more attractive and assist third parties in implementing learning programmes. Co-organisation of training and the exchange of both experts and information ensure that the training provided by different stakeholders is complementary.

In 2021, the bilateral co-operation agreements signed with member states included a strong component of training and education activities. Professional associations, training centres and public institutions also featured prominently in co-operation actions.

The main elements and objectives of the training programme for the European Patent Network were presented at the Info Day, the Annual Meeting on Co-operation and at the first TOSC meeting with the participation of the Academy. Additionally, co-operation was pursued via exchanges in the context of the training activities, the monthly newsletter, bilateral meetings and the consultation process on the new structures of the European Patent Academy.

Co-operation with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) resulted in the organisation of two public online seminars (on IP in cinema and IP in packaging technology) and the participation of EUIPO in the EPO learning week, in the workshop for national offices on e-learning and in the context of the Academic Research Programme. In November 2021, the organisations held their first joint meeting with the staff in charge of training at the national offices.

This co-operation was also mirrored internally in 2021. The Academy relied on the expertise of patent examiners, formalities officers and lawyers as drafters of materials and speakers in Academy activities. The Boards of Appeal also shared their expertise. Many Academy activities were made possible by the close co-operation with other units of the Office, notably DG 1, the Talent Academy, the Chief Economist unit, Patent Knowledge and Communication. One important objective was to maximise co-operation between the two EPO academies. This includes pooling materials and trainers, sharing skills and technology expertise, developing content together and implementing a single data management system for content production. Collaboration between the two academies will be even stronger next year.

Member states are the main addressees of co-operation in training and education, together with EUIPO, training institutions and professional associations.

3.3 Modularity

Modularity facilitates knowledge acquisition by structuring short, specific units into cumulative thematic paths. Participants can customise their learning trajectory by adding small educational units from the training portfolio, making it flexible, cumulative, efficient and easy to communicate. A modular, measurable educational programme requires a thorough design and clear learning objectives.

The development of content for a hierarchical knowledge base covering all the fields pertaining to the training of patent examiners made important progress in 2021, maximising the possibilities of re-using training material. Standalone e-learning modules with media elements and interactive parts enabling users to further explore content were also developed in 2021 for academic institutions. They can be implemented as self-learning or in university programmes.

The course builder, e-learning modules and learning paths enable modularity, leading to a flexible, cumulative, efficient learning programme that is easy to communicate.

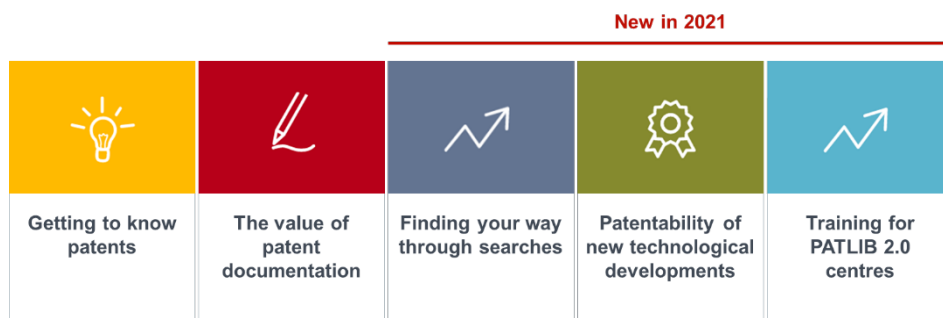
Figure 11 – IP education modules for academic institutions

Part I		Level	Duration
Module 1	Introduction to IP	Entry level	15 hrs
Module 2	Patent essentials	Entry level	20 hrs
Module 3	Patent information introduction	Entry level	10 hrs
Module 4	Patent information practice	Entry level	15 hrs
Module 5	Developing and IP strategy	Entry level	15 hrs
Part II		Level	Duration
Module 1	Grant of patents	Advanced level	20 hrs
Module 2	Enforcement of patents	Advanced level	15 hrs
Module 3	Scouting and assessment of technology	Advanced level	10 hrs
Module 4	IP commercialisation	Advanced level	20 hrs
Module 5	Use of IPRs	Advanced level	10 hrs

Source: EPO

Thematic learning paths, either freely available or for restricted access, were also developed in 2021. Learning paths are recommended course sequences that build up knowledge in a certain area. Three new learning paths (Finding your way through searches, Patentability of new technological developments and the PATLIBs learning path) were added to the two existing ones (Getting to know patents and The value of patent documentation).

Figure 12 – Learning paths



Source: EPO

3.4 Certification

The modularity of the European Patent Academy programme and the harmonisation of its content along the lines of the European certification standards aim to encourage universities and training centres to include the European Patent Academy's training in their official portfolios. Discussions on such formal recognition materialised in several cases.

A second initiative to respond to university needs and codes was undertaken in 2021 with the launch of a project for content development support. Covering a broad spectrum of topics and fields, renowned universities develop and introduce content of interest in the area of innovation and patents as part of their official programmes.

The European Patent Academy currently grants certificates of registration, attendance and successful completion of educational activities, the latter subject to a test. These certificates may be of interest for patent attorneys and other audiences to meet continuous professional development requirements.

In 2021, the Academy designed the syllabus and started drafting learning materials to support the implementation of the European Patent Administration Certification (EPAC). It will cover formal and administrative aspects of the patent procedure, from the perspectives of formalities officers working in private practice, at the EPO and at the patent offices of the member states.

The EQE is regarded as a stamp of quality for both the European patent system and the patent attorney profession. In 2021, the largest number of candidates ever – 3 733 – enrolled for the EQE, with a backlog of nearly 2 000 candidates from the previous year. The EQE 2020 had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Prior to that, the EQE consisted of handwritten, onsite examinations, organised in 13 centres all over Europe.

In line with the EPO's digital transformation, and with the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating this process, candidates were able to take the examination in 2021 using a computer in a location of their choice. The process to make this examination possible started in June 2020, with the decision whether an online EQE was feasible having to be taken by summer 2020. Subsequently, the system had to be chosen and further developed to meet the EQE features and invigilation standards. Then, security features had to be tightened and adapted to the 2020 papers. The option of adapting some papers also had to be considered and decided on. At the same time, alternative solutions had to be identified in case the e-EQE could not ultimately be achieved. Naturally, candidates also needed to be able to test the system well in advance of the examination.

The above decisions and measures made it possible to set up one of the most complete online examinations ever, as the image below captures, with three invigilation lines monitoring candidates' audio, image and computer. A total of 130 examination pages were made available simultaneously in the three official languages of the EPO. Candidates were able to use electronic resources under the supervision of a team of 80 invigilators, who provided technical assistance and advice. This experience will benefit the new EPAC, aiming to provide European-level certification for paralegal or formalities officers in the second half of 2022.

Figure 13 – EQE 2021



Source: EPO

4. Bringing innovation and learning together

The Strategic Plan 2023 mandate is to bring innovation and learning together. For this purpose, the European Patent Academy has modernised its educational methodologies, formats and resources. It has also increased research in the domain of IP education. Research into users' needs and demands leads to the development of materials embedded in courses, modules and learning paths, including videos, infographics and activities that exemplify the endeavour to innovate and make the learning experience attractive and impactful.

In addition to the educational resources for courses, the Academy prepared to launch a range of tools that will be delivered in 2022: an automated course builder, an automated patent enforcement comparative tool, a case study series on patent litigation, an e-book series and the expansion of the podcast series.

The material of the course builder is made up of scripts, exercises and PowerPoint presentations, and covers 11 large topics, split into 92 concepts described by more than 600 knowledge units for three levels of difficulty. The knowledge units are independent and can be reused in a discretionary way when setting up a course, following the paths defined in the various curricula.

Course builder:
11 large topics
92 concepts
600 knowledge units

In the area of patent litigation and enforcement, a newly developed tool was introduced in 2021. It consists of a patent enforcement online comparison database to facilitate the search and comparison of national patent enforcement measures and procedures to enforce orders issued in the context of patent rights.

The relevance of educational resources in audio format as a tool to supplement other main products has increased. By the end of 2021, the number of podcasts jointly produced with Principal Directorate Communication reached 19; new topics covered patents in selected technical fields, the outcome of the Academic Research Programme and a series on IP commercialisation, including a series on the new technology transfer case studies.

Figure 14 – Example: Talk Innovation

Training for the PATLIB centres

An integral part of the PATLIB 2.0 project is the training offered to the centres. Courses are designed for the levels and skills recommended in the Porto paper. The Academy provides the training content in a dedicated space for the potential participants (350+). In 2021, we focused on patent granting and patent information tools. In 2022, we will offer courses on PATLIB centre services for levels I to III and on soft skills.

[Find out more on the training for PATLIB centres](#)

"Talk innovation" podcast

The Academy's first "Talk innovation" podcasts were the "Patents in progress" series in which patent examiners spoke with an EPO colleague about their technical field. Since then, the Academy has supported podcasts on case studies, selected technologies and results of research projects funded by the EPO. New themes are in the pipeline, with a six-episode series on IP commercialisation planned for 2022. More to come!

[Find out more on the training podcasts](#)

Source: EPO

Two new publication series were also under development to supplement educational resources. A series of 15 e-books combining courses and materials will range from hands-on, course-design titles to training manuals in the areas of patent granting, transfer and enforcement. They will be accompanied by a new series of patent infringement case studies customised for use as educational resources.

A new framework and the fifth call for the Academic Research Programme (ARP) were launched. The objective is to increase impact and generate visible output, actively involving relevant EPO departments. The new ARP intends to promote long-term, impactful IP research, foster collaborative research and expand the IP research network. Two streams were defined to broaden the scope of topics: "The new frontiers of innovation" and "Digital technologies for IP". Relying on the analysis of 10 peer reviewers, a scientific committee made recommendations for the final selection. Also in the context of the ARP, the annual ARP workshop took place in January 2021.

Figure 15 – Academic Research Programme

Source: EPO

EPO podcasts in
co-operation with
Principal Directorate
Communication

5. Activities in the three areas

5.1 Patent granting

Training in the patent granting area focuses on the complete patent granting procedure, from formalities examination and prior-art searching to substantive examination and post-grant procedures. The two main target audiences are (i) staff of the national offices, government institutions and public-sector organisations, and (ii) professional representatives and paralegals.

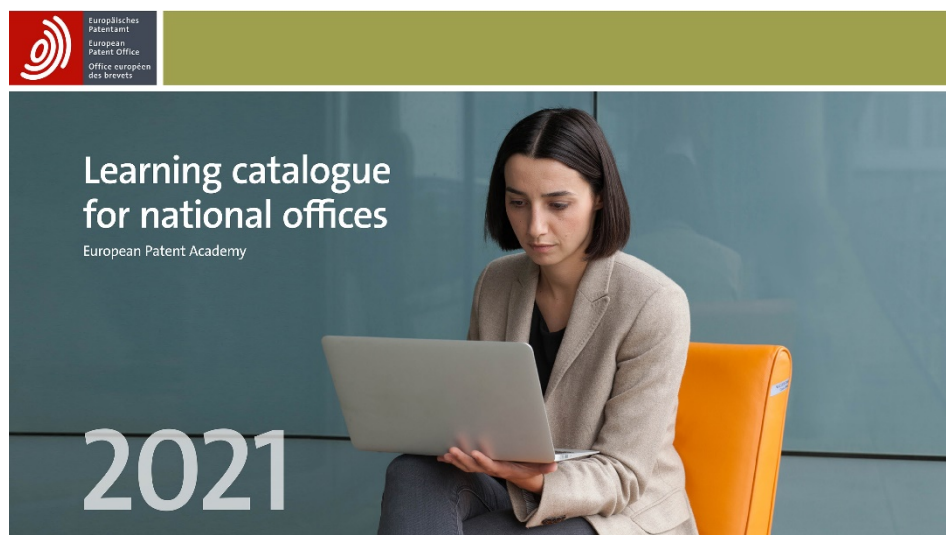
The training offered in this area amounted to a total of 73 events, which altogether lasted 710 hours of lecturing and self-study, attended by 9 644 participants. Responses to lecture requests reached an audience of 3 261 people. Additionally, the Academy's e-learning platform provided 458 training resources in the patent granting area, ranging from self-paced courses to recorded lectures, for a total of 749 training hours.

It is estimated that more than 6 252 participants accessed training resources with registration in 2021. The system does not permit the number of visits to be counted for the open access e-learning modules.

The 2021 training programme for national patent offices was designed following feedback received in the consultation process on training activities and methodologies held in 2020. The main objective of the programme was to ensure participants' involvement and engagement in the activities. A total of 43 training activities were offered to national offices: tutored courses and seminars (19), "flipped" P07 events (5), conferences (5), workshops (3) and self-paced courses (11).

National offices:
5 560 participants
43 training events
141 hours of lecturing
272 hours of self-study

Figure 16 – Learning catalogue for national offices, 2021



Source: EPO

The Academy adjusted the formats to the demands of national offices, with tutored programmes, exchange platforms with national offices, newly developed e-Academies comprising self-study ahead of the online sessions, a series of technical workshops focused on specific technical and procedural questions, and a series of specific seminars offering a mix of theoretical and practical sessions.

Training included the two e-Academy workshops, the tutored training programmes on clarity, non-unity, novelty, inventive step and EPOQUE Net and six Cooperative Patent Classification field-related sessions. The Common Search Tool was also introduced to the participating member states, standalone seminars were held on online communication skills and three expert workshops took place, including an exchange on best practices in e-learning. In addition, three conferences were organised: presenting the progress of convergence of practice, artificial intelligence, and the training year for patent examiners focused on convergent technologies.

Two further conferences were organised for staff of national patent offices and other interested audiences, one presenting two major decisions of the Enlarged Board of Appeal and the other on emerging technologies in the health sector. Five exchange platforms took place, jointly organised with the national patent offices, involving a first day for an internal audience at the national patent office and a second, public day. Users of the patent system were also offered training on Online Filing 2.0 in the three EPO languages. A general seminar was also held on the European patent system from filing to grant.

Regarding activities devoted to professional representatives, the shift to online was consolidated. The flagship conferences Examination Matters and Opposition Matters, newly introduced in 2020, were highly appreciated. In light of their success, they were "reloaded" later in the year with presentations by EPO examiners, lawyers, patent attorneys and judges, reaching out to 600 participants.

Online Filing 2.0
attracted an audience
of 2 694 participants

Patent attorneys:
4 084 participants
30 training events
97 hours of lecturing
200 hours of self-
study

Figure 17 – Learning catalogue for patent attorneys, 2021



Source: EPO

Courses and seminars organised included the Guidelines2Day series of lectures, Patent Cooperation Treaty seminars covering updates and advanced topics, and Behind the scenes, enabling patent attorneys to experience the work of EPO examiners and members of the Boards of Appeal. New seminars were also introduced, directed towards new technologies, in particular patent drafting in computer-implemented inventions.

The Academy also supported the organisation of training related to topical issues, including the workshop "Adaptation of the description" and the conference "Artificial Intelligence – a patent practitioner's perspective", both very well attended. Due to high demand, the second led to the organisation of similar events. This was also the case for oral proceedings via videoconference, which was accompanied by a series of lectures, one seminar and a workshop, and included mock exercises.

5.2 Technology transfer and dissemination

The area of technology transfer and dissemination focuses on universities and higher education institutions, other educational organisations, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups. The goals are raising awareness, nurturing the next generation of engineers, researchers, managers and entrepreneurs, and helping businesses make optimal use of the IP system.

In 2021, the European Patent Academy supported 46 educational activities organised by universities and networks. Special emphasis was placed on strengthening co-operation with the universities involved in the Pan-European Seal Professional Traineeship Programme. The focused support resulted in numerous new technical universities joining the programme.

Academia:
2 466 participants
46 training events
153 hours of lecturing
38 hours of self-study

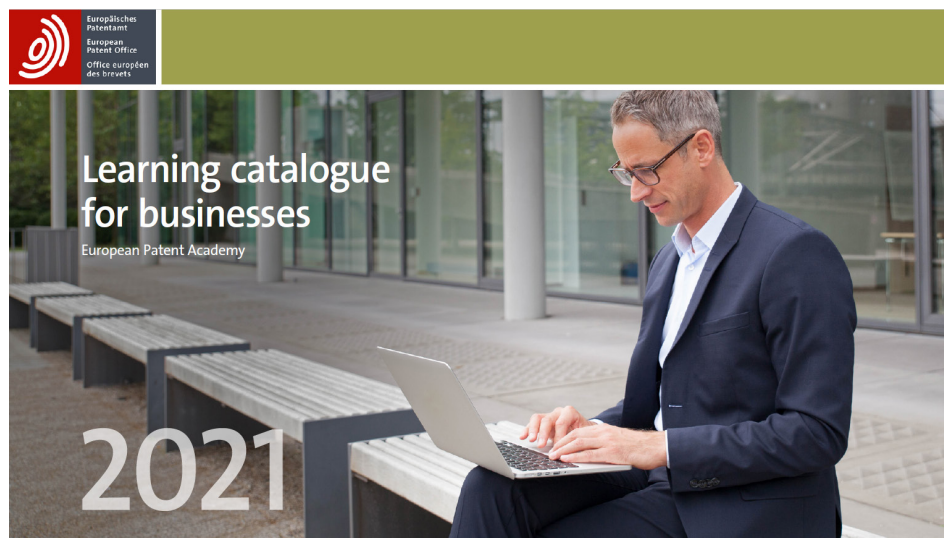
Figure 18 – Learning catalogue for academia, 2021



Source: EPO

New digital training formats launched in 2021 were well attended and appreciated, such as the advanced lecture series on food and green technologies and the virtual study visits. Self-paced courses were customised to better serve academic institutions. New lectures were produced to update the content, with a view to adjusting the duration and using these courses as mandatory reference material before organising live training events.

Figure 19 – Learning catalogue for businesses, 2021



Source: EPO

The Academy set up a new modular IP education framework entitled "From lab to market". It comprises ten modules designed to meet the needs of technological and scientific universities, combining theory and case studies based on the experience of finalists and winners of the European Inventor Award.

Some 36 events were organised or supported to address businesses, SMEs and IP management professionals. Two important conferences were Search Matters and the High-growth technology business conference. The former is a flagship event that has successfully transformed into an online conference and was fully booked well in advance. A launch conference for the High-growth technology business initiative introduced the main topics for the series of technology commercialisation workshops held in autumn 2021. The workshops were further developed by seminars on financing and protecting database innovations, new technology transfer case studies, IP assessment, business use of patent information and using EPO search tools for business decisions.

To maximise the synergies between the various training courses, the training syllabus has a modular format. Content developed and tested in a specific project undergoes a post-event evaluation to integrate it in training courses. To further promote dissemination, the content and training sessions on IP strategy, evaluation, protection and commercialisation are either digital only or recorded and post-produced for dissemination.

Businesses:
5 165 participants
36 training events
190 hours of lecturing
91 hours of self-study

5.3 Patent litigation and enforcement

The area of patent litigation and enforcement focuses on creating and promoting relevant legal expertise for judges and legal professionals, and co-ordinates training activities in the field. A total of 105 study and lecturing hours were organised for 1 045 participants.

The Academy implemented its partnership with the Unified Patent Court (UPC) Preparatory Committee and provided a third round of basic training on patentability and infringement to UPC candidate judges. The infringement course was also open to national judges with a similar level of experience. In separate workshops, specialised national judges met with members and chairs of the Boards of Appeal to exchange notes on practices and approaches to substantive issues, specifically claim construction and the amended Guidelines for Examination.

Patent enforcement:
1 045 participants
8 training events
53 hours of lecturing
52 hours of self-study

Figure 20 – Learning catalogue for patent enforcement, 2021



Source: EPO

The Venice Conference (the European Judges' Forum) was organised online and specialised judges exchanged notes and debated with patent litigators and Boards of Appeal members. The Boards of Appeal and key decisions conference welcomed over 800 participants with approximately half from outside the EPO, comprising mainly patent attorneys, in-house counsel and judges.

6. Conclusion

Learning plays a key role in ensuring that users of the European patent system have the knowledge and skills required in today's complex world. Continuous learning is particularly important in the area of patents, since it allows to evolve and adapt successfully to an area that is constantly evolving. The educational products and activities of the European Patent Academy help promote understanding, ensure sustainability and drive Europe's innovation capacity.

Against the backdrop of changing times, evolving priorities, new educational needs and technological disruption, the EPO launched the *Blueprint for the European Patent Academy* in 2020, which builds on the pillars of co-operation, certification, digitalisation and modularity. As described above, 2021 was an important year for the implementation of the blueprint and the Strategic Plan 2023. The year concluded with key developments in the structures of the Academy and an exponential increase in both the range and number of users of the Academy's services, boosted by the digital transformation.

The needs we responded to in 2021 will continue in 2022. The Academy strives to build on the experiences of 2021 to meet stakeholder expectations and accompany technological developments, implementing more hybrid programmes and consolidating its digital activities in the process.