

Partnerships Report 2024

Annex to the Annual Review

Executive summary

In 2024, the first full year under the Strategic Plan 2028 (SP2028), the EPO significantly advanced its partnerships to build a European patent system and network with a global impact.

We strengthened collaboration within the **European Patent Network (EPN)** with a revised and expanded set of co-operation projects tailored to member states' needs and the signing of new bilateral agreements with all 39 contracting states.

Progress continued on convergence of practice. Work was concluded on two common practice documents and advanced on two more, supported by a new transparency dashboard. Work-sharing intensified, with over 27 000 national searches performed by the EPO (a 4% increase over 2023) and the network of search co-operation partners set to expand to 21 states. Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and micro-entities was boosted by a revised fee policy, benefiting over 5 000 applications.

Globally, the EPO expanded its reach through **international co-operation**, signing validation agreements with Laos and Costa Rica, renewing key reinforced partnerships and launching new Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) pilot projects with Chile and New Zealand. Engagement in multilateral fora such as IP5 and Trilateral focused on sustainability, SME support and artificial intelligence (AI). The **Unitary Patent system** saw remarkable growth, with over 28 000 registrations in 2024 and overall uptake exceeding 25%. It was further strengthened by Romania joining the system on 1 September. An upgrade to the Unitary Patent Dashboard increased transparency on the system's evolution and impact.

In parallel, the **European Patent Academy** provided a comprehensive training and educational programme on patents and related fields. By strengthening intellectual property (IP) expertise, the Academy supported key drivers of SP2028 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 17 (partnerships). The Academy maintained its training reach, delivering 145 activities and 1 469 learning hours. Live online training attracted 26 602 registrations, while the e-learning centre recorded 23 574 active users (+25.7%), demonstrating growing demand for flexible digital learning.

While 87% of participants came from member states, the Academy's reach extended globally through co-operation with validation states, reinforced partnerships and the Knowledge Transfer to Africa (KT2A) initiative. Modular formats such as the Modular Intellectual Property Education Framework (MIPEF) reached some 1 300 students at 40 universities, more than doubling in participation since its launch in 2023. Collaboration with national patent offices (NPOs), the PATLIB network, the EUIPO, WIPO and other stakeholders continued to be essential.

The EPO's **Observatory on Patents and Technology** laid solid foundations for its mission to help build a more innovative society. Implementing its first biennial work plan, the Observatory provided insights on innovation trends, mapped critical technologies, launched new tools, connected innovation actors, and opened a transparent dialogue on patents and technology beyond IP experts – always with the close involvement of the member states.

In its first 15 months (to December 2024), the Observatory delivered the Deep Tech Finder tool, published six economic studies and two technology insight reports, launched three new technology platforms, organised six online events and participated in more than 60 outreach interventions. Integral to the character of the Observatory's projects is the continuous interaction with NPOs: thirty-two offices took part in Observatory activities in 2024, with four more expressing interest in participating in future. Social media and press campaigns significantly amplified the Observatory's efforts.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive summary | 2 |
| 1. Introduction | 5 |
| 2. Strengthening the European Patent Network | 6 |
| 2.1 Fostering co-operation with member states | 6 |
| 2.2 Pursuing convergence of practices | 8 |
| 2.3 Enhancing support for SMEs and small entities | 9 |
| 2.4 Advancing IT co-operation | 9 |
| 3. Building global bridges | 10 |
| 3.1 Validation partnerships | 11 |
| 3.2 Co-operation activities per region | 11 |
| 3.3 Patent Prosecution Highway | 13 |
| 3.4 Classification co-operation | 14 |
| 3.5 Co-operation in multilateral fora | 14 |
| 3.6 Engagement with user associations and industry | 15 |
| 3.7 Co-operation with other European institutions | 16 |
| 4. Partnering to enhance skills and knowledge | 16 |
| 4.1 Training reach, impact and delivery | 16 |
| 4.2 Training for national patent offices | 19 |
| 4.3 Training for patent professionals | 20 |
| 4.4 Training for judges and litigators | 20 |
| 4.5 Training for academia | 21 |
| 4.6 Training for business support and technology transfer | 23 |
| 4.7 Supporting the PATLIB network | 23 |
| 4.8 Professional certifications | 25 |
| 5. Reinforcing the links between IP, innovation and sustainability | 25 |
| 5.1 Observatory strategic co-operation and partnerships | 26 |
| 5.2 Observatory publications | 28 |
| 5.3 Observatory tools | 30 |
| 5.4 Observatory outreach activities and impact | 34 |
| 6. Driving innovation with the Unitary Patent | 36 |
| 7. Conclusion | 39 |

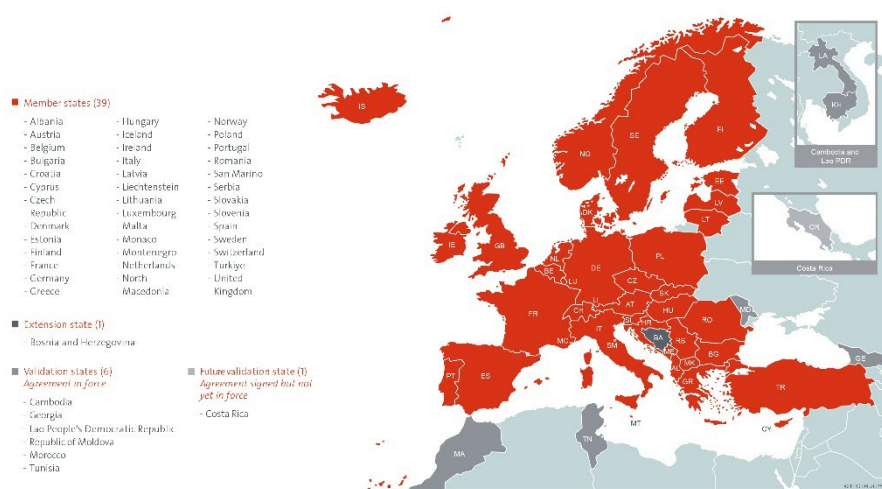
1. Introduction

The EPO is founded on co-operation. Building strong partnerships is central to achieving the goals outlined in SP2028, particularly Driver 4: "Build a European patent system and network with a global impact". This driver recognises that fostering innovation and growth in Europe transcends national boundaries and relies on stakeholders working together. Under SP2028, the EPO collaborates closely with partners to enhance the quality and accessibility of the patent system for all, ensuring innovation flourishes and the system reaches its full potential for society.

This report provides a detailed overview of the EPO's partnership activities throughout 2024, the first full year under the SP2028 framework. It details progress made in strengthening the EPN, building global bridges through international co-operation, enhancing skills and knowledge via partnerships, generating insights through collaborative efforts and driving innovation with the Unitary Patent system.

The EPO serves users by creating a far-reaching network to share patent knowledge, foster co-operation and open technological opportunities to all. Today, European patents granted by the EPO can be validated in 39 member states, one extension state and six validation states.

Figure 1 – Potential geographical coverage of European patents as of 1 April 2025



Source: EPO

2. Strengthening the European Patent Network

A cornerstone of SP2028 Driver 4 is the continuous strengthening of the EPN. This involves close collaboration with the NPOs of the member and extension states, harmonising practices, enhancing shared tools and knowledge, and supporting innovators, particularly SMEs, across Europe.

2.1 Fostering co-operation with member states

The 18th Annual Meeting on Co-operation, held in Vilnius, Lithuania, in May 2024, brought together 74 delegates from 36 member states, plus observers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and the EUIPO. This key event provided an invaluable opportunity to discuss strategic co-operation matters under SP2028. Following discussions at the meeting and input gathered through consultations with member states via various channels, including the Technical and Operational Support Committee (TOSC), the catalogue of co-operation projects was reviewed, revised and expanded. This ensures projects are tailored to the diverse needs of member states and align with SP2028 ambitions. New projects aim for a wider impact, including dedicated outreach to young people and startups, enhanced IT co-operation and novel approaches to capacity building. Following the catalogue's publication and presentation to the Administrative Council in June 2024, new bilateral co-operation agreements (BCAs) were discussed and signed with all 39 EPC contracting states.

The European Patent Organisation formally invited Bosnia and Herzegovina to accede to the EPC on 11 October 2024. This step, along with Montenegro's recent accession and ongoing work to prepare for Moldova's, will bring the total number of EPC contracting states to 41. This expansion further strengthens the reach and impact of the European patent system. The EPO also continued its collaboration with neighbouring countries Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, supporting their integration efforts through legal alignment, training and sharing of best practices. The validation agreement with Georgia came into effect on 15 January 2024.

Search co-operation agreements are a key element of work-sharing within the EPN. In December 2024, Portugal signed a working agreement, becoming the 18th EPC contracting state to do so; the agreement entered into force in March 2025. In October 2024, the Administrative Council also approved the conclusion of agreements with Ireland, Montenegro and Switzerland. Legal and technical implementation is planned for summer 2025, bringing the total number of countries actively engaged in search co-operation to 21. In 2024, the EPO conducted over 27 000 national searches on behalf of its EPN partners, a 4% increase from 2023. Notably, over 2 200 of these searches benefited from an 80% fee reduction for small entities, supporting smaller innovators.

A total of 22 seconded national experts (SNEs) from 11 contracting states worked at the EPO throughout 2024. Conversely, 19 EPO Young Professionals from the 2023/24 edition and ten from the 2024/25 edition were seconded to NPOs for periods of up to three months. Furthermore, new co-operation projects under SP2028 include initiatives such as "Increasing examiner capacity at national offices", in which EPO pensioners will be deployed to NPOs; twelve member states were selected for the pilot phase following high interest.

Collaboration with EPN members is multifaceted, focusing on enhancing knowledge, improving quality, enabling work-sharing and promoting convergence. 2024 marked a successful transition from SP2023 activities towards new bilateral co-operation under SP2028.

The SNE programme continued actively in 2024, fostering knowledge exchange and strengthening ties.

To ensure effective co-operation governance, the TOSC mandate and working arrangements were modernised.

Beyond the annual meeting, the EPO participated in significant national events, including 105th anniversary celebrations of the Estonian, Czech and Polish offices, and the 125th anniversary of the Austrian Patent Office. Collaboration also included the "Technology vs Fire" exhibition with Greek and Slovenian NPOs and the joint promotion of IP at the VivaTech fair in Paris with the French NPO and the European Innovation Council (EIC).

Figure 2 – EPO President António Campinos and State Secretary at the German Ministry of Justice Angelika Schlunck sign the amended Seat Agreement with Germany in Berlin



Source: EPO

On 21 November 2024, the EPO and the German government signed an amended Seat Agreement—simplified and streamlined—to mark a new chapter in their partnership. The amendment paved the way for the relocation of the EPO's Berlin sub-office from its historic Gitschiner Straße premises to modern, state-of-the-art facilities on Alexanderplatz, where the ceremony took place.

Situated in one of Europe's most vibrant districts, the new premises feature open-plan workspaces with ample natural light and advanced eco-friendly systems, embodying the EPO's dedication to innovation, creativity and sustainability. The move, completed in early 2025, reaffirms the Office's longstanding commitment to Berlin and Germany, and supports its strategic goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.

2.2 Pursuing convergence of practices

The second cycle of the convergence of practice programme, launched in 2023, saw significant progress. The common practices for the first two topics, "Allowable features in drawings" and "Electronic priority documents" (Working Groups 7 and 8 respectively), were concluded in early 2024. Work throughout 2024 focused on "Observations by third parties" (WG9) and "Practices concerning assignment" (WG10). Both working groups successfully agreed on draft common practices ahead of schedule, which, after positive opinions from the Committee on Patent Law and user consultations via the SACEPO Working Party on Rules, were approved by the Administrative Council in March 2025. The fifth virtual platform on convergence informed stakeholders about progress in October 2024.

Harmonising patent practices across Europe enhances legal certainty and simplifies procedures for users. The EPO actively pursues convergence within the EPN and contributes to international harmonisation efforts.

Figure 3 – Second convergence cycle 2023-2026



Source: EPO

The next pair of topics, "Broad claims" (WG11) and "Double patenting" (WG12), are set for discussion in 2025–2026, with working groups already established. Exploratory work also began on potentially extending the convergence programme to administrative topics such as data protection, diversity and inclusion, and talent management, as part of the new SP2028 co-operation catalogue.

To increase transparency on the implementation of agreed common practices – which remains voluntary – a new convergence dashboard was launched on the EPO website in February. This dashboard provides an overview of implementation status across contracting states and the EPO. An enhanced version, offering more interactivity and granularity, is available, with data kept up-to-date through questionnaires sent to NPOs.

The EPO continued working with global partners on substantive patent law harmonisation (SPLH). Progress was made towards building consensus on a common European approach reflecting a balanced package. In May 2024, the EPO hosted a Colloquium on SPLH with participation from user associations (AIPPI, AIPLA, FICPI) and patent offices worldwide, including the Group B+ Working Group on SPLH. A case law study on prior user rights was conducted in the latter half of 2024, with conclusions shared and discussed with the Committee on Patent Law in June 2025.

2.3 Enhancing support for SMEs and small entities

A revised fee policy came into effect in April 2024, containing targeted measures to support micro-entities, complementing existing support for SMEs. By the end of 2024, over 5 000 applications had benefited from these new support measures, resulting in additional savings of EUR 3.3 million for small-scale innovators. The package also included a simplification of fees to increase user-friendliness and incentivise digitalisation. The support provided through various schemes, including reductions for national searches conducted by the EPO for small entities under work-sharing agreements, significantly lowers the barrier to entry for patent protection.

Recognising that obtaining a patent is only part of the journey, the EPO initiated orientation discussions with users in 2024 on a potential model for providing support to micro-entities facing challenges in enforcing their patent rights against infringement.

In 2024, the EPO launched a new outreach programme specifically targeting SMEs and micro-entities to better understand and meet their needs. This involved 29 meetings with companies active in fields such as cancer-fighting technologies, clean tech and smart tech. Founders, CEOs, CTOs and inventors from the European Inventor Network participated in these constructive exchanges. Feedback from these meetings, along with engagement with larger applicants and user associations, is crucial for identifying focus areas, integrated into initiatives such as the Quality Action Plan 2025.

Facilitating access to the patent system for smaller players fosters broad-based innovation.

2.4 Advancing IT co-operation

Digital transformation across the European IP landscape is driven by collaboration, and brings cost savings for all participants as well as system-wide quality improvements. While detailed information on the tools and technologies is available in the dedicated Digital Transformation Report, the partnership aspects of IT co-operation are highlighted here.

- **ANSERA-based SEARCH (AbS):** the roll-out of the EPO's cloud-based prior art search tool accelerated through close partnership with NPOs. In February 2024, the Estonian Patent Office became the first NPO to switch exclusively to AbS. By year-end, 14 more countries had followed, with 15 offices having fully decommissioned the legacy EPOQUE Net system. AbS was live across 32 EPC states, used by over 1 800 active national examiners – rising to 1 927 examiners across 35 NPOs by March 2025. Extensive training support was provided by the EPO.

The IT co-operation programme focuses on enhancing digital tools, decommissioning legacy systems and fostering interoperability in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders.

- **Front Office:** this web-based online filing solution is being adopted by NPOs, supported by a working group comprising 14 NPO representatives, the EUIPO, WIPO and the epi to guide its development. By the end of 2024, 10 countries had begun, and five countries had completed, implementation, with over 38 000 filings received across various IP rights, up from some 4 000 in 2023. Version 2.1, including bulk transactions and enhanced PCT support, was delivered. Further implementations were in preparation for three NPOs.
- **Digital Toolkit (DTK):** highlighting the SP2028 focus on IT partnerships, the DTK offers a flexible, modular system enabling NPOs to implement digital end-to-end patent workflows tailored to their needs. A proof of concept demonstrating module connectivity was completed in 2024. After 21 NPOs expressed interest in pilot testing various "bricks" such as the Legal Interactive Platform, Translation or Classification, specifications for the first pilot projects were planned.
- **Single Access Portal (SAP):** this portal consolidates digital platforms, offering a single access point for EPO/NPO matters. A dedicated working group (11 NPOs + the EUIPO) steers its enhancement. New services added in 2024 included delegate registration tools, reimbursement services, reports and statistics, the SP2028 progress dashboard, status of ratification procedures, the document exchange platform and email subscription tools.
- **Data Quality:** obtaining high-quality patent data from member states is crucial. In 2024, platform implementations were successfully advanced in Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal and Greece for migration from older systems, with 14 other states having adopted a new data exchange platform and flow.

3. Building global bridges

SP2028 Driver 4 emphasises building a network with a global impact. The EPO actively engages with partners worldwide to extend the reach of the European patent system, promote harmonisation, facilitate work-sharing and support innovation ecosystems beyond Europe.

A range of co-operation models are deployed, including validation agreements as well as reinforced partnerships and technical co-operation via Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). At the end of 2024, the EPO had seven signed validation agreements (six of them in force today), 13 reinforced partnership MoUs, and 12 technical co-operation MoUs across all continents.

3.1 Validation partnerships

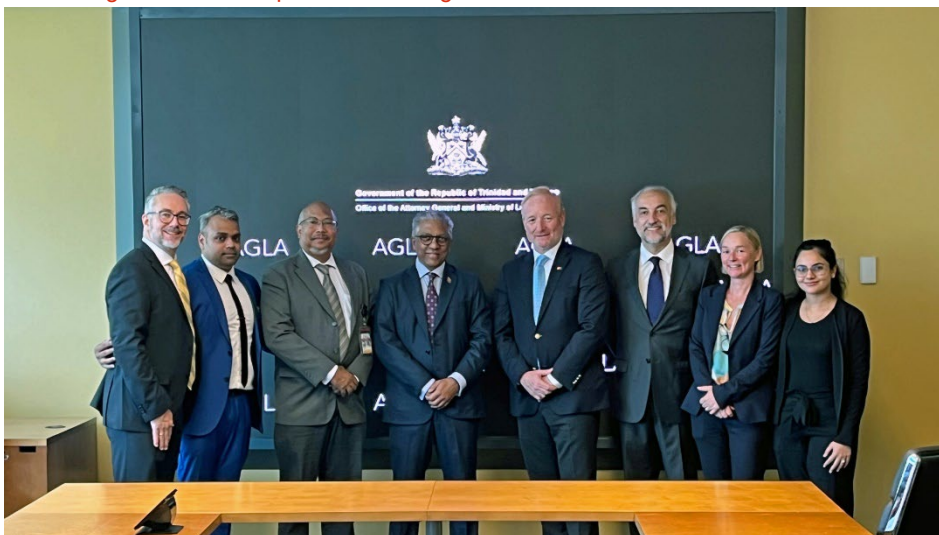
2024 saw several noteworthy developments for the validation system.

- The agreement with **Georgia** entered into force on 15 January 2024.
- An agreement with the **Lao People's Democratic Republic** was signed on 13 May 2024, making it the second validation partner in Southeast Asia.
- An agreement with **Costa Rica** was signed on 13 December 2024, the first in Latin America.
- The Administrative Council authorised the opening of formal validation negotiations with **Mexico, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago**, and **Djibouti** following requests from the corresponding governments.
- Efforts continued towards reaching an agreement with **Ethiopia**, where the EPO organised a symposium in February 2024 to engage local stakeholders.

Strong co-operation continued with all validation offices (Morocco, Tunisia, Republic of Moldova, Cambodia, Georgia, Laos, Costa Rica), focusing on data exchange, capacity building and strengthening the local innovation ecosystems.

The validation system allows applicants to extend the protection of their European patent to a non-member state based on a single request and fee, where it has the same effect as a national patent. This supports international trade, investment and technology transfer, reinforcing the global role of the European patent system.

Figure 4 – Formal opening of negotiations on a validation agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and the European Patent Organisation



Source: EPO

3.2 Co-operation activities per region

Africa

- Co-operation with **Morocco** (OMPIC) and **Tunisia** (INNORPI), our validation partners in the region, remained strong. Activities included participation in the KT2A programme (linking universities to partners in Belgium and France), coaching sessions for examiners (e.g. on solar energy), support for Morocco's access to Front Office and for Tunisia's development of new patent legislation. The EPO also provided Morocco with analysis on a potential provisional application system and continued involvement in the Certificat d'Animateur en Propriété Industrielle (CAPI) training programme. The work plan with INNORPI was renewed in July.

- The EPO also hosted **ARIPO** examiners for training and progressed on a patent drafting course with AfriPI and ARIPO.
- First contacts were established with the **African Continental Free Trade Area** (AfCFTA) Secretariat.

Reinforced partnerships strengthen the global patent system by providing partner offices with direct access to EPO work products. Technical co-operation involves a wide range of initiatives tailored to specific partner needs.

Asia and Oceania

- Technical and legal preparations commenced to implement the newly signed validation agreement with **Laos**.
- The 2024-2025 Work Plan with **Cambodia** (MISTI) was signed.
- The first annual Work Plan between the EPO and the **ASEAN Working Group on Intellectual Property Co-Operation** (AWGIPC) was concluded.
- A delegation from the **Singapore** IPO (IPOS) visited the EPO to exchange on the activities of the EPO's Observatory, advances in search tools, patent analytics, and the latest developments in examination processes and systems.
- Expert exchanges and examiner courses on computer-implemented inventions (CII) and biotechnology were held with **Indonesia** (DGIP) and **Malaysia** (MyIPO). MyIPO examiners received a demo of the "Geo Tool" for consulting EPO file wrappers under the representative name (RP).
- A second "Comparative Study on the National Patent Laws and Procedures of the Southeast Asian Countries" was initiated focusing on CII, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals.
- Looking at **China**, the EPO-CNIPA PCT pilot project allowing applicants to select the EPO as International Search Authority (ISA) continued successfully. Direct payment of the search fee in CNY to CNIPA has been possible since 1 December 2024. The pilot project saw 1 314 applications in 2024 (up 20% from 2023), with 4 284 applications since inception. The EPO-CNIPA Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2024 was implemented and AWP 2025 signed, reinforcing strategic collaboration including specialised training for CNIPA examiners. The 18th Heads of Office Meeting in Chengdu reaffirmed the partnership.
- Co-operation with the **Japan Patent Office** (JPO) focused on digitisation initiatives, with high-level visits and strategic exchanges during IP5/Trilateral meetings.
- A high-level bilateral meeting with the **Korean Intellectual Property Office** (KIPO) took place in June 2024, leading to the signature of a new biennial work plan 2025-26 in December. This plan covers a wide range of activities, including classification, data sharing, and exchange of information on quality, IT tools and AI.
- Long-standing co-operation with the **IP Office of New Zealand** (IPONZ) culminated in the signature of a Bilateral Arrangement on Technical Co-operation, a Biennial Work Plan (2024-2026) and a PPH MoU in July 2024.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

- **Costa Rica** signed a validation agreement, the first in the region.
- Mandates to negotiate validation agreements were issued by the Administrative Council for **Mexico**, **Panama** and **Trinidad and Tobago**.

- Reinforced Partnerships were renewed with **Mexico** (IMPI) and **Brazil** (INPI). EPO experts participated in benchmarking studies conducted by INPI Brazil.
- Bilateral Work Plans were signed with **Chile** (INAPI) and **Peru** (INDECOPI) to implement existing RP MoUs.
- A Work Plan with **Argentina** (INPI) was concluded to implement its RP MoU.
- Online exchanges on EPO guidelines were held with IMPI Mexico and INDECOPI Peru.
- The EPO contributed expertise to activities organised by the EU-funded projects "IP Key Latin America" and "AL Invest Green".
- Data exchange meetings were held with LAC offices involved in the LATIPAT project.

Middle East

- The Work Plan with **Jordan** was renewed. Online coaching sessions were provided to Jordanian examiners (e.g. on AI and wind turbines). Negotiations on validation are ongoing.
- Co-operation with the **Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property** (SAIP) intensified following several exchanges, notably a high-level visit by the SAIP CEO in September 2024. SAIP adopted the EPO's Quality Management System as a benchmark, and joint activities included review meetings on reuse, coaching sessions (AI, greenhouse gas emissions), an introduction to the "Geo Tool", demo of the CPC text categoriser and exchanges on PCT procedures.

North America

- A bilateral CPC MoU was signed with the **Canadian Intellectual Property Office** (CIPO), ensuring continuity with the previous one, and followed by the conclusion of a biennial work plan focusing on CPC integration and exploring further co-operation.
- Co-operation with the **United States Patent and Trademark Office** (USPTO) included a high-level bilateral meeting alongside IP5, reaffirming commitment to international co-operation. Three high-level USPTO delegations visited the EPO to discuss quality assurance, talent development, inclusion and AI.

3.3 Patent Prosecution Highway

New PPH pilot projects were launched with Chile (INAPI) in June 2024 (for a three-year period) and New Zealand (IPONZ) in December 2024. The existing agreement with Brazil (INPI) was extended for a second five-year period, effective from 1 December 2024. Negotiations with Bahrain paved the way for launching a further PPH pilot project in early 2025.

At the end of 2024, the EPO had 17 active PPH agreements with national and regional offices across Asia, Oceania and the Americas.

The PPH network facilitates accelerated examination for applicants seeking patents in multiple jurisdictions by allowing offices to reuse work previously done by another PPH partner office.

3.4 Classification co-operation

Currently, 38 IP offices and organisations use the **Co-operative Patent Classification** (CPC) system, including 23 EPC states. Twenty-two offices exchange CPC data with the EPO. Around 77 million patent documents are classified in the CPC, accessible worldwide.

The 11th CPC Annual Meeting was held in Geneva, providing updates and facilitating exchanges on classification practices.

CPC training was provided to INDECOPI Peru examiners, and online collective training events were held for all CPC offices in six technical areas. Dedicated training was provided to CNIPA China and an introduction to AGEPI Moldova.

The AI-powered CPC text categoriser tool, suggesting CPC symbols from free text input, enhances accessibility for users.

The EPO actively participates in multilateral classification activities (IP5 Working Group on Classification, WIPO IPC Committee of Experts). EPO-managed projects led to revisions of CPC and IPC in emerging technologies such as drones (B64U), computer vision (G06V), robots (B70R), cellular immunotherapy (A61K 40/00), food preservation (A23) and semiconductor technology (H10).

Bilateral CPC MoUs were renewed with Canada, Mexico and South Korea.

The CPC, jointly managed by the EPO and USPTO, is a vital tool for patent search and knowledge sharing.

3.5 Co-operation in multilateral fora

The 17th annual **IP5** high-level meetings, hosted by KIPO in Seoul in June 2024, reaffirmed the group's commitment to sustainable development and inclusive innovation. Key discussion topics included advancing the UN SDGs within the new IP5 Vision Statement, creating an accessible and inclusive patent landscape – especially supporting SMEs – and addressing advances in new technologies such as AI. The IP5 Offices shared initiatives to support SME growth through IP. An International IP Protection Conference organised by KIPO alongside the meetings facilitated exchanges on IP and AI with stakeholders.

Collaboration within multilateral frameworks such as IP5 and Trilateral is crucial for addressing global challenges, promoting harmonisation and enhancing the efficiency of the international patent system.

Figures 5 and 6 – Meetings of IP5 (Seoul) and Trilateral (Tokyo)



Source: EPO

The focus of the **Trilateral** (EPO, USPTO, JPO) in 2024 was on sustainable industrialisation and supporting enterprises.

- The EPO hosted the first Trilateral Training Network Meeting in May, discussing training, outreach, digital tools, SME support and e-learning accessibility.

- The Trilateral Offices led a technology transfer roundtable at the PATLIB 2024 conference.
- The 42nd Trilateral Conference took place in Tokyo in October 2024, focusing on IP initiatives for sustainable industrialisation (UN SDG 9). Discussions covered SME patent strategies, digital tools and innovation policy.
- A meeting with industry representatives in Japan explored patent policy, business IP management and sustainable development, aiming to improve IP accessibility and tools for enterprise growth.
- Following the previous year's booklet on SDG 4 (Quality Education), a Trilateral Digital Booklet on SDG 9 was published, showcasing initiatives supporting sustainable industrialisation, innovation and resilient infrastructure, including efforts on IP awareness, patent quality and SME support.

Close co-operation with **WIPO** continued across PCT system activities, data exchange, classification, automation and patent information. A new Annual Work Plan for 2025 was signed in December 2024. Key priorities remain supporting the international patent system and users, including the integration of ePCT into EPO filing tools.

The EPO also attended the WIPO Diplomatic Conference on IP, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge as an observer in May 2024, providing support to EPC contracting states. The outcome of the conference was the adoption of a new international treaty which, once in force, will require patent applicants to declare the country of origin of any genetic resources used in the invention as well as the indigenous peoples or local community from which the associated traditional knowledge stems. EPO member states used the Committee on Patent Law as a forum to jointly prepare for the conference and assess its outcome afterwards – based on a first outline from the Office of a potential implementation of the new treaty in the context of the EPC.

3.6 Engagement with user associations and industry

In 2024, the EPO held 33 exchanges with the epi, BusinessEurope, national user associations (DE, UK, FR, IT, NL) and international partners (USA, JP, KR, CN). Long-standing partnerships with associations such as the US Bar, JIPA, JPAA, JETRO, AIPPI, AIPLA and FICPI were maintained and enhanced. Annual meetings with top management covered key developments such as quality management, AI integration, the Unitary Patent, and SP2028 feedback. The US Bar-EPO Liaison Council held its 40th annual meeting, focusing on quality, harmonisation, the Unitary Patent, and best practices for US applicants. The EPO highlighted efforts to enhance accessibility and affordability, aligning with discussions such as the Draghi report.

In-depth engagement also occurred through 26 meetings with large applicants from industry and research, discussing strategic and operational matters tailored to their interests. Regular topics included the Unitary Patent, the Observatory, quality, MyEPO Portfolio, CII and AI. Feedback received was key for initiatives such as the Quality Action Plan 2025. "The Voice of Our Users" interview series was launched, sharing insights from user meeting representatives.

Direct engagement with users – including business associations, patent professionals, industry, and research organisations – is vital for ensuring the EPO's services meet their needs and for gathering feedback on strategic direction.

Promoting the EPO's digital transformation and online services (MyEPO Portfolio, Mailbox, Online Filing 2.0, two-factor authentication) was a priority, supported by 21 public seminars reaching over 5 400 participants, plus numerous tailored workshops.

3.7 Co-operation with other European institutions

Partnerships extend beyond the IP sphere to organisations with shared interests in science, technology and innovation. Notable interactions in 2024 include:

- **European Southern Observatory (ESO):** a second high-level meeting in January established a framework for future collaboration on technical matters and administrative best practices.
- **European Space Agency (ESA):** preparations for a new co-operation instrument, likely a Letter of Intent, concluded in early 2025, covering initiatives on technological platforms and exchange of best practices. ESA participated in several EPO events in 2024.

4. Partnering to enhance skills and knowledge

The European Patent Academy plays a central role in delivering on Driver 4 by providing comprehensive training and education, strengthening IP expertise and fostering collaboration across the innovation ecosystem. Its activities support the EPO's SP2028 and contribute to UN SDGs, particularly 4 (Quality Education) and 17 (Partnerships). Guided by principles of co-operation, sustainability, quality, accessibility, modularity and digitalisation, the Academy reached a diverse audience in 2024.

Figure 7 – UN SDGs targeted by Academy training (all activities contribute to SDG 4)



Source: EPO

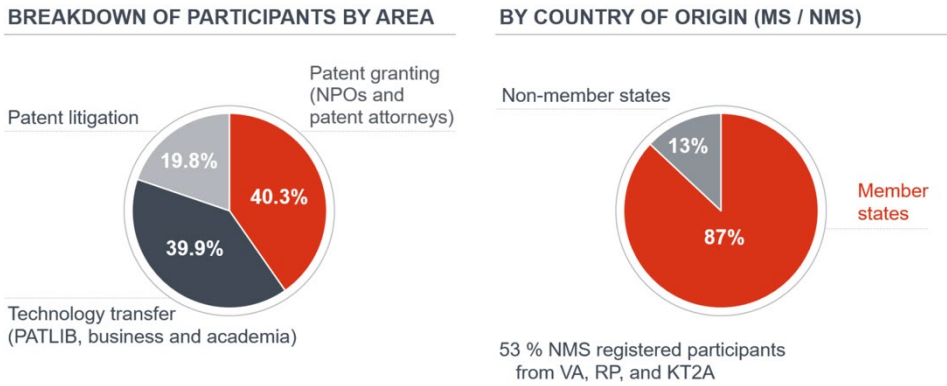
4.1 Training reach, impact and delivery

In 2024, the Academy delivered 145 training activities, accumulating 1 469 hours of learning. Live training, predominantly online, attracted 26 602 registrations, engaging 16 415 actual participants. This engagement was spread across key areas.

- Patent granting (NPOs and patent attorneys): 6 614 participants (40.3%)
- Patent litigation: 3 244 participants (19.8%)
- Technology transfer: 6 557 participants (39.9%), of which over half from PATLIB centres

The e-learning centre also continued its growth, recording 23 574 active users (a 25.7% increase from 2023) and 233 272 visits (a 15.7% increase). Key drivers for e-learning engagement included the training in support of European patent administration certification (EPAC) and European qualifying examination (EQE) certifications. The most active courses were EQE pre-exam/Paper F, EPAC, patent information tools and the MIPEF entry course.

Figure 8 – Participation to live training activities



Source: EPO

The Academy's digital-first approach fosters global reach. While EPO member states accounted for 87% of live training participants and 59% of registered e-learning users, significant engagement came from non-member states (13% live, 41% e-learning). Collaboration with validation states, RPs and the KT2A initiative further expands this reach.

Figure 9 – Percentage of active users at the e-learning centre by member state



Source: EPO

Gender inclusivity remained strong, with 51.2% female participation in training activities, demonstrating the positive impact of accessible learning formats.

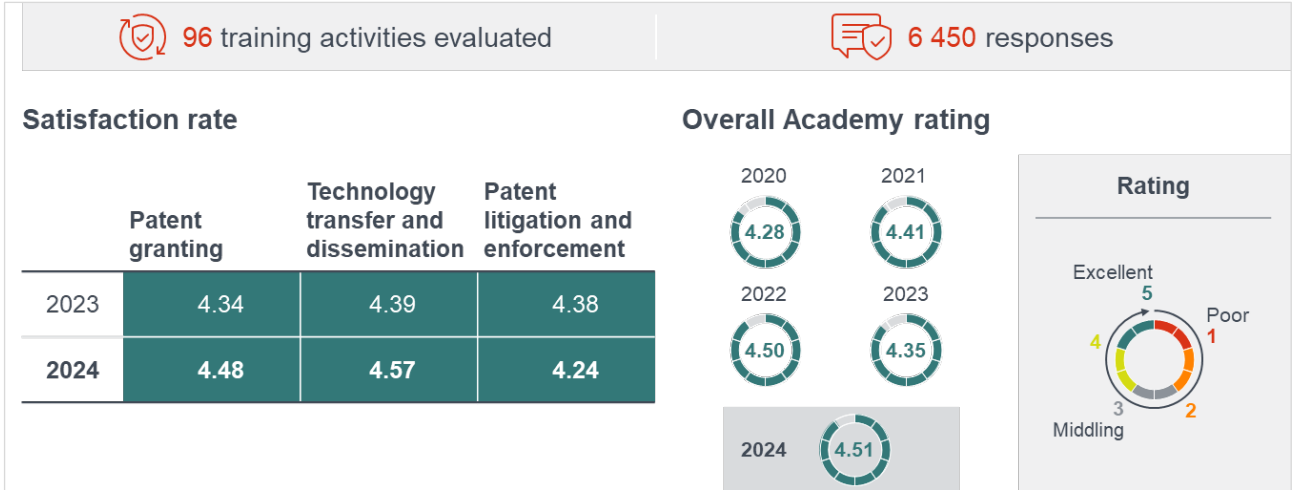
Figure 10 – Participants in Academy training programmes by gender



Source: EPO

User satisfaction with the Academy's offer remained high and increased slightly, with an average rating of 4.51 out of 5 across 96 evaluated activities (up from 4.35, based on 65 activities, in 2023). The Academy enhanced its impact measurement by implementing new indicators focusing on professional development and learning outcomes such as user loyalty rate, certificate issuance, NPO staff participation tracking, judge training metrics and specific KPIs related to Pan-European Seal (PES), MIPEF and PATLIB training under SP2028. The user satisfaction survey was also improved with more granularity.

Figure 11 – User evaluation of Academy training activities



Source: EPO

4.2 Training for national patent offices

Figure 12 – Training for national patent offices



Source: EPO

Twenty-seven training activities (460 hours) were organised for NPO staff, attracting 3 337 participants from 4 417 registrations, a 30% increase compared to 2023. Training covered exchange platforms, CPC seminars, AI, CII, patentability, thematic workshops (e.g. chemistry), and crucial support for the roll-out of the AbS tool.

Tailored training supports NPO staff development and the implementation of shared tools.

Over 850 NPO staff members from 28 offices received hands-on AbS training (beginner/advanced levels, train-the-trainer), with an additional 631 users following the open AbS e-learning course.

Figure 13 – Academy training on ANSERA-based SEARCH



Source: EPO

The iLearn Together Day in October facilitated knowledge sharing between NPO and EPO staff on topics such as biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and the examination of CII.

The 2025 Training Catalogue for NPOs was designed collaboratively throughout 2024. The language training project remained popular, with 19 NPOs participating (77% learning English, 10% French, 13% German).

4.3 Training for patent professionals

Figure 14 – Training for patent attorneys and paralegals



Source: EPO

Seventeen training activities (140 hours) engaged 3 277 participants from the patent profession. Key events included the Opposition Matters conference (>600 participants), discussing procedural and substantive developments; the Guidelines2day lecture series (>700 participants), covering new topics in the 2024 Guidelines; and PCT update lectures (>350 participants).

Specialised training addressed CII patenting and cross-field inventions (additive manufacturing, medical fields) via the Tackling the Future series. Collaboration with the epi was central to many activities.

Supporting patent attorneys and paralegals is crucial for maintaining high standards across the profession.

4.4 Training for judges and litigators

Figure 15 – Training for judges and litigators



Source: EPO

Fifteen training activities (147 hours) reached 3 244 participants; in terms of registrations this area saw an increase of 11% compared to 2023. Highlights included the Litigation Matters conference (co-organised with EPLAW/EPLIT, >600 participants) focusing on early UP/Unified Patent Court (UPC) experiences; the Boards of Appeal Case Law conference (899 unique participants); and the European Judges' Forum in Venice (co-organised with IPJA/EPLAW) reviewing the UPC's first year.

The annual judicial internship programme combined patentability training with Boards of Appeal (BoA) visits and attendance at the Munich International Patent Law Conference. The Academy supported the annual training for UPC judges and clerks, which took place in Vienna in collaboration with the Austrian Patent Office, and formalised an MoU for future support.

Ensuring judicial expertise keeps pace with legal and technological developments is vital, especially with the advent of the UPC.

4.5 Training for academia

Figure 16 – Training for academia



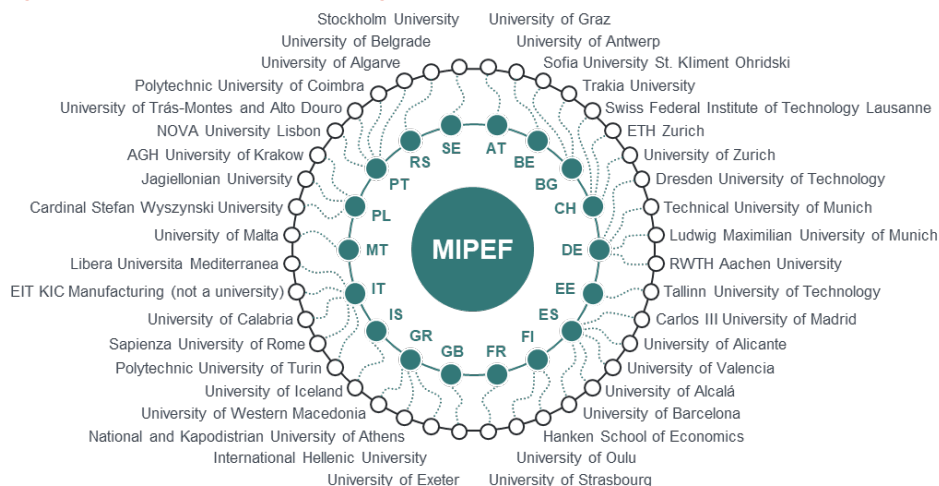
Source: EPO

Eleven lectures engaged 1 579 participants. Topics covered included the Unitary Patent, specific technologies (photovoltaics) and, in collaboration with the European IP Helpdesk, IP issues in biotechnology, digital communication, green tech and AI in MedTech for researchers. The Inspiring Inventors Talk series featured European Inventor Award winners.

In addition, 1 669 students registered for the two MIPEF courses across 40 universities in 17 countries, and 1 283 actively participated. This represents a doubling in the number of participating universities since the launch of MIPEF in autumn 2023. Thirty-seven of these universities offered STEM degrees; 26 were part of the PES programme and 19 granted ECTS credits. 647 students (50.5% of active participants) successfully passed the courses.

MIPEF integrates scalable IP education into the curricula of partner universities.

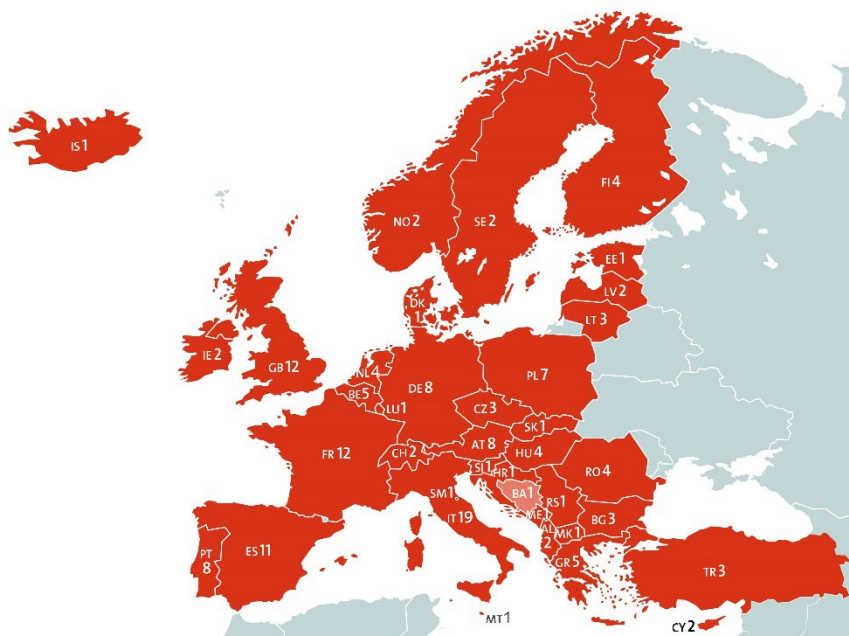
Figure 17 – Universities participating in MIPEF in 2024



Source: EPO

The EPO's Young Professional programme provides graduates from partner universities with first employment opportunities at the EPO. At the end of 2024, the EPO employed a total of 202 Young Professionals from 150 participating PES universities across all our member states. Eighty-two per cent of PES universities offer STEM degrees, progressing towards the SP2028 target of 90%.

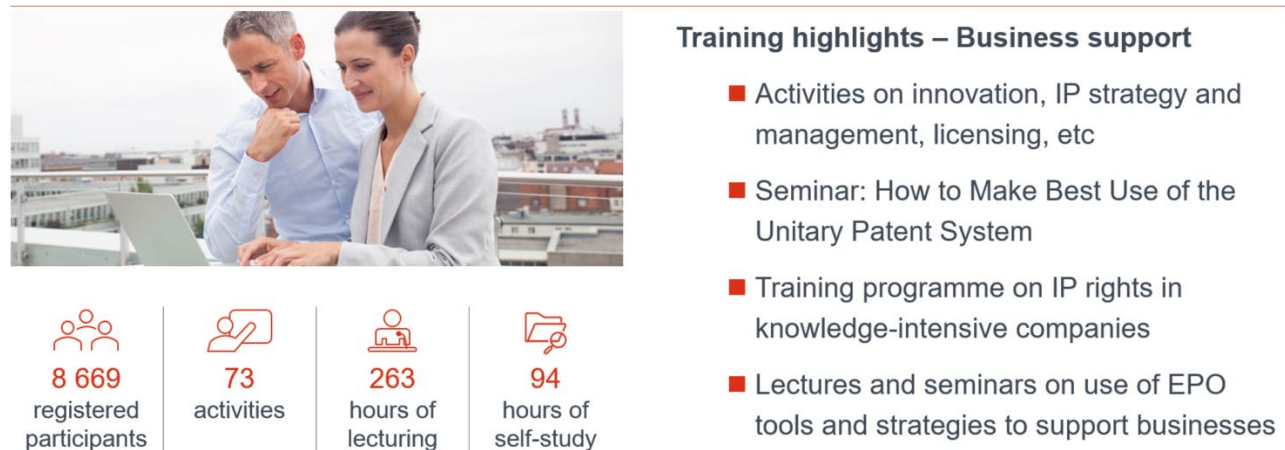
Figure 18 –PES universities per country



Source: EPO

4.6 Training for business support and technology transfer

Figure 19 – Training for business and technology transfer



Source: EPO

Seventeen training activities (126 hours) engaged 1 397 participants from the business community, a 7% increase in registrations. Activities focused on open innovation, IP strategy, licensing and financing; a new seminar, "From Lab to Market", on the Unitary Patent with the EIC and IP Helpdesk; a new training programme with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the EUIPO for KICs and SMEs; and seminars on using EPO tools for business decisions (IP Assessment, Patent Information, Search Tools).

Another 56 activities addressed the technology transfer (TT) community, including the PATLIB network, KT2A, and users of patent information tools.

The new "Patenting Innovation" course, accredited by the Alliance of Technology Transfer Professionals (ATTP), was launched, earning Continuing Education points towards their RTTP qualification. Nineteen participants successfully completed the first edition. A certified TT learning offer is now available to PATLIB members.

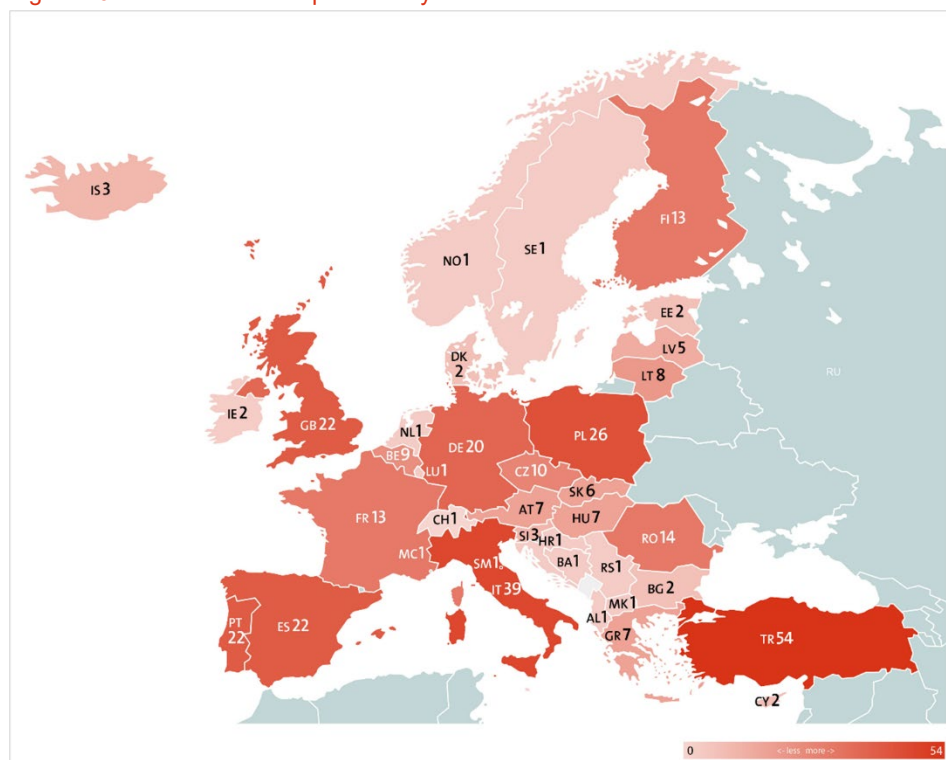
4.7 Supporting the PATLIB network

The main event for the PATLIB network was the PATLIB 2024 conference in Ankara, Türkiye. Co-hosted with TÜRKPATENT, it attracted over 2 600 participants. Five "Shaping the Future Together" seminars allowed some 300 PATLIB staff to share their experiences with EPO tools and technology transfer.

The PATLIB Learning Path, covering IP regimes, patent granting and EPO tools, saw its total completions reach over 8 000 staff since its launch. A dedicated PATLIB project in the new co-operation catalogue aims to boost service levels by offering TT training and certification.

The network of 332 patent information centres (PATLIBs) across 37 countries plays a crucial role for providing local IP support to innovators.

Figure 20 – PATLIB centres per country



Source: EPO

The Digital Service Package provided funding for 59 activities in 2024, including conference attendance (35), external TT training (19), certification/software licences (3), and sponsorship of PATLIB events (2).

By the end of 2024, the KT2A programme involved 76 universities across 24 African countries. Thirteen active twinning partnerships linked universities with PATLIB centres. Fourteen tailored online training sessions reached 330 participants, and were further complemented by 95 online exchanges with universities. A new "IP Basics for Innovators" course launched specifically for KT2A universities, and a dedicated KT2A webpage showcased successes. Both PATLIBs and universities reported very positive outcomes.

The KT2A initiative fosters collaboration between PATLIBs and African universities to enhance their technology transfer capacity.

4.8 Professional certifications

Approximately 2 000 candidates from 58 nationalities, 40% of them women, participated in the 2024 edition of the EQE – comparable with previous years. This was the final edition under the old regulations involving a pre-examination. Preparation for the revised EQE 2025 format advanced significantly, with publication of a revised Guide for Preparation, online courses, live tutoring and a mock exam for the new Paper F. Work continued on developing the new M1-M4 papers for introduction in 2026–2027.

The Candidate Support Programme (CSP), launched in 2012 to support candidates from member states with fewer qualified attorneys, continued to bear fruit. Over its lifetime, 204 candidates from 19 states have been selected. To date, 128 CSP candidates from 18 countries have passed the EQE, with others still enrolled. Twelve alumni now serve as trainers/coaches.

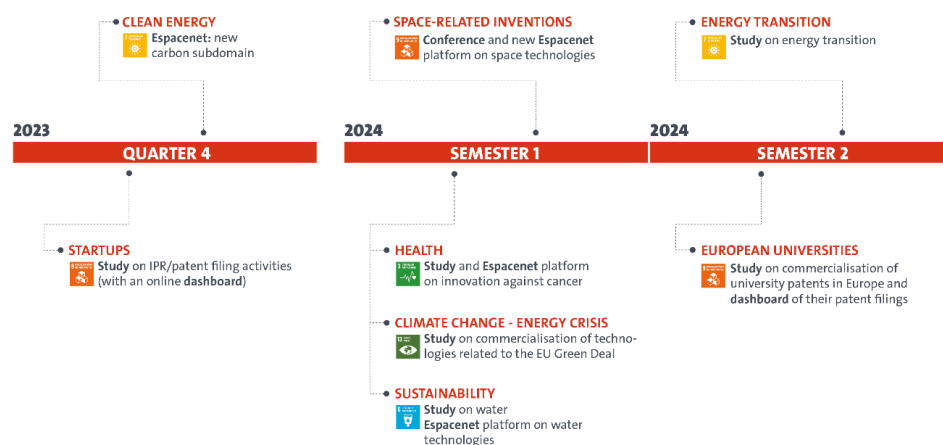
The EPAC, which recognises the skills of patent administrators and paralegals, continued consolidating its position in its third year, with some 360 candidates passing the October 2024 examination. Around 80% of successful candidates work in industry or private practice, 7% at patent offices and 13% in other roles. Since its 2022 launch, EPAC has attracted over 1 100 candidates from 60 countries. Of these, 87% were from EPC states, with notable participation from Asia and Australia (10%). The EPO actively supports candidates; 850 followed dedicated Academy training courses for the 2024 exam.

Maintaining high standards in the patent profession relies on robust qualification frameworks.

5. Reinforcing the links between IP, innovation and sustainability

The EPO's **Observatory on Patents and Technology**, launched in October 2023, aims to build a more innovative society by providing unique insights, mapping technology trends, offering tools, connecting actors and fostering dialogue on patents and technology beyond IP experts. Collaboration is fundamental to its mission.

Figure 21 – Timeline of Observatory activities 2023–2024



Source: EPO

5.1 Observatory strategic co-operation and partnerships

One ambition of the Observatory is to encourage extensive participation within the innovation ecosystem and to foster partnerships with key stakeholders. Combining expertise and knowledge from diverse backgrounds and perspectives is key to ensuring that the output, whatever the topic, is as solid, comprehensive and balanced as possible.

Firstly, the collaboration with EPO member states was instrumental in enhancing the quality and relevance of Observatory deliverables and in reaching out to national innovation ecosystems. During the first year, following the first call for interest, 32 NPOs were actively participating in Observatory activities. That number has increased to 36 following the call for interest launched in October 2024 for the activities to be implemented in 2025.

Working closely with EU institutions enabled the Observatory to raise the interest of IP in innovation networks and align its research with broader European innovation policies and priorities, particularly those covered under Mario Draghi's report on the future of European competitiveness, published in September 2024.

The Observatories of the EPO and the EUIPO explored synergies and co-operated in economic studies of common interest. The inauguration of the EPO's Observatory focused on patents and startups; financing was based on a study co-published by the two institutions.

Additionally, the EPO's Observatory followed the principle of dynamic engagement, whereby different stakeholders were gathered according to a specific topic to bring complementary expertise and diverse plurality of views. Some examples are listed below.

- For the preparation of the "Combatting cancer" project, the preliminary findings were presented to the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA), the European Association for Cancer Research (EACR) and the EU Commission (DG Health), among others.
- The "Space innovation" project allowed three main international organisations in this domain, the ESO, the ESA and the European Space Policy Institute (ESPI), to associate with the EPO.
- For the preparation of the "European Universities' patenting activities" project, the Observatory engaged in a rich dialogue with multiple representatives of the highest European academic levels such as the European Universities Association (EUA), the Association of European Science and Technology Transfer Professionals (ASTP), the League of European Research Universities (LERU), the EIT Higher Education Institutions initiative (EIT-HEI), as well as universities such as Cambridge (UK), KU Leuven (NL), TU Munich (DE), Athens (GR) and Zurich (CH).

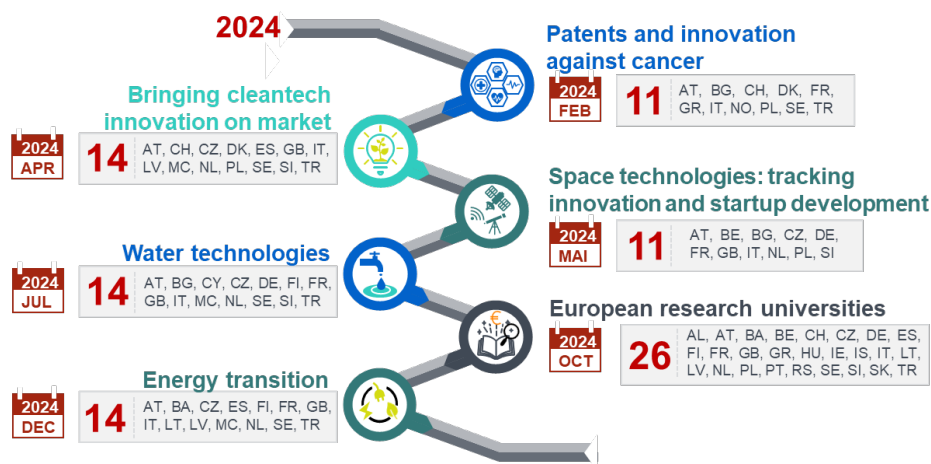
The Observatory has also engaged with well-established networks. These included the European Inventor Network (EIN), the PES Universities and the PATLIB centres. EIN members have been updated about Observatory projects and participated as guest speakers in Observatory events. PES Universities were involved in the "Patents in European Universities" event as both participants and speakers. The Observatory was part of the 2024 PATLIB conference and this network is continuously updated on the ongoing Observatory activities.

Since its early days, the Observatory has prioritised building strategic co-operation and partnerships with key stakeholders and aimed at bringing real added value to the innovation ecosystem.

Collaboration with EPO member states

In 2024, a total of 32 NPOs engaged in collaborative activities within the Observatory projects, fostering European co-operation and knowledge exchange to drive shared goals and initiatives. All projects were supported by a group of interested NPOs, and the role of European universities in innovation notably engaged 26 NPOs.

Figure 22 – Collaboration with EPO member states on Observatory projects



Source: EPO

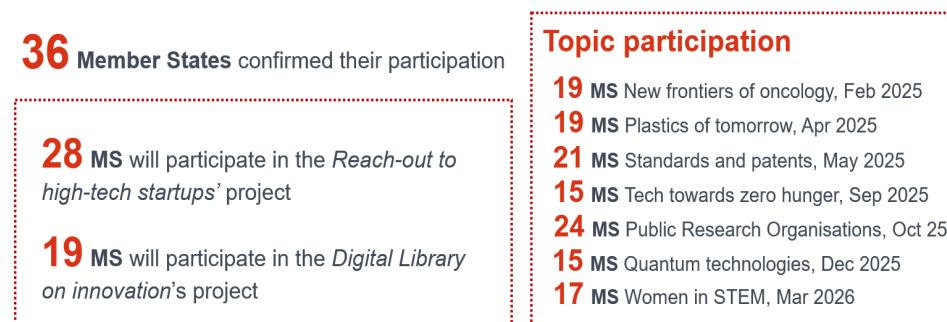
The participation of the NPOs' experts was organised according to three different tracks. The interested NPOs could opt to participate in one or all of the tracks, depending on their interest and expertise.

- Technology track: with co-operation activities including the validation of cartography, ANSERA search concepts, Espacenet search statements; text and test roading and debugging the technology platform
- Economics track: with the appreciation of the data features and provision of feedback on an early draft of the study, and the contribution of bringing in related work of the NPO as inputs for the studies or reports
- Communications track: with actions such as the creation of a list of contacts potentially interested in the topic, reaching out to internal networks, publicising deliverables through all available channels; and collaborating in possible follow-up actions with regional or national actors and networks

In the period October 2023–December 2024, a total of 22 technical meetings concerning these types of participating areas were organised with NPOs to co-ordinate and align efforts on the Observatory projects, ensuring effective collaboration and successful execution.

A call for interest for 2025 project participation was launched at the end of 2024, with 36 member states confirming their involvement in the implementation of this year's activities.

Figure 23 – Call for interest for 2025 Observatory initiatives



Source: EPO

Collaboration with EU institutions

The Observatory was also particularly active in the innovation ecosystem at European level. It was invited to participate in a multitude of conferences (e.g. making research results work for society and Water Innovation Europe organised by the European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and Water Europe respectively), presentations of main outcomes of studies and tools to specialised audiences. This resulted in opportunities for networking to raise awareness on the Observatory's emerging activities of high relevance for European stakeholders.

The EPO engaged in several working arrangements, Letters of Intent (Lols) and MoUs with such EU entities as the DG RTD, the EIC and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), the EIT, and the European Investment Bank (EIB). These have been of considerable significance for the Observatory's activities in facilitating connections, aligning on shared goals of transparency and fostering innovation, strengthening the EPO's presence and visibility in the technology and innovation landscape, raising awareness on IP topics and fostering a supportive ecosystem for R&D.

Representatives of DG RTD and the EIC/EISMEA participated as key speakers at public events organised by the Observatory while other EU actors actively contributed to the Observatory's publications as specified in the next point.

Partnerships for joint publications

The Observatory partnered with key institutions to co-publish economic studies, leveraging their expertise and networks to increase the impact and quality of the studies. Some examples are the study with the EUIPO, the ESPI, the EIB, the International Energy Agency (IEA), the ESA and Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research (details in the table below).

5.2 Observatory publications

The studies of the Observatory provide economic insight into issues relating to patents and innovation. They aim to contribute to high-level expertise and analysis in public and expert fora, and to foster well-informed debate on the economic impact of the patent system, the commercialisation of innovation and ongoing technology trends.

During these first 15 months of activity, the Observatory delivered a total of eight publications, collectively achieving a total of 48 000 downloads.

Economic studies

The Observatory published six economic studies.

Figure 24 – Economic studies



| ECONOMIC STUDIES | | |
|---|---|--|
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Partners | | Launch |
| Patents, trade marks and startup finance | | October 2023 |
| Patents and innovation against cancer | | February 2024 |
| Financing and commercialisation of cleantech innovation | | April 2024 |
| Innovation in water-related technologies | | July 2024 |
| The role of European universities in patenting and innovation | | October 2024 |
| Patents for enhanced electricity grids | | December 2024 |

Source: EPO

Technology insight reports

Regarding the technology insight reports, previously known as patent insight reports, two publications were related to Observatory activity.

Figure 25 – Technology insights reports

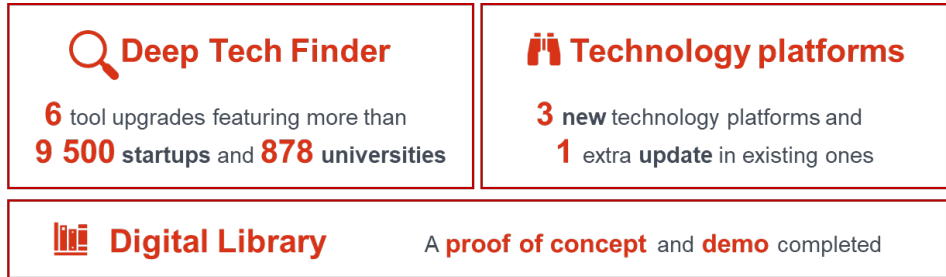
| TECHNOLOGY INSIGHTS REPORTS | | |
|---|---|---------------|
|  |  | |
| Partners | | Launch |
| Propulsion systems for space | | May 2024 |
| Assistive robotics for people with special needs | | December 2024 |

Source: EPO

5.3 Observatory tools

The Observatory also aims to facilitate access to the wealth of knowledge stored in the EPO databases, with dedicated tools made freely available via the EPO website and non-IP experts specifically in mind. Some important milestones were reached during 2024 concerning the Deep Tech Finder (DTF), the Technology platforms and the Digital Library preparations.

Figure 26 – Observatory tools



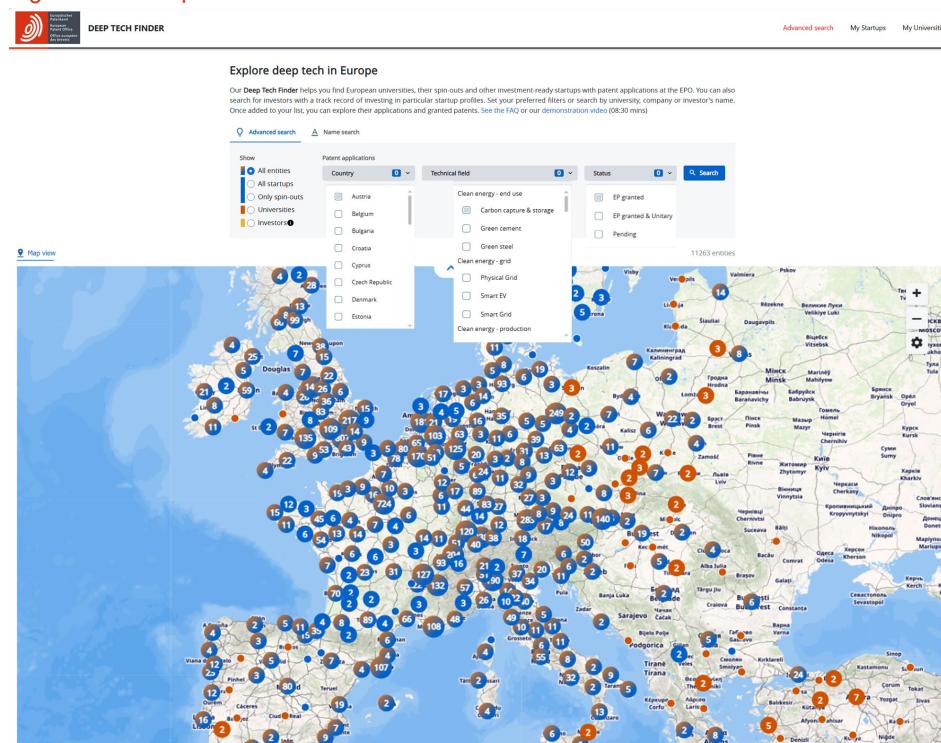
Source: EPO

Deep Tech Finder (DTF)

With the release of the DTF, the Observatory introduced the first free, user-friendly platform to seamlessly integrate both patent data (portfolios of European patent applications, with legal status and technology information and a direct link to Espacenet) and business information data (ID cards of featured entities, geolocation and access to the funding history of startups via a link to dealroom.co). It serves as a gateway to understanding Europe's tech ecosystem at a glance, providing practical and valuable insights for investors, startups, universities and policymakers alike, whether they are new to IP or experts. Its launch represented the first time such detailed and specific data on patent applications tied to startups has been made available free of charge, fostering collaboration and investment opportunities.

The DTF helps find European universities, their spin-outs and other investment-ready startups with patent applications at the EPO. The tool makes it possible to filter them by the technology fields of applications. It also allows to search for investors with a track record of investing in particular startup profiles.

Figure 27 – Deep Tech Finder



Source: EPO

The DTF was released in October 2023 and presented during the inaugural Observatory event on startups. Since its public release, it has undergone six major upgrades, incorporating new technical field filters (clean energy, oncology, green energy, space, water) and adding functionality to find universities and spin-outs.

As of December 2024, the DTF featured 9 500 startups and 878 universities, with more than 35 000 views during those 15 months of activity.


Technology platforms

The EPO provides several technology platforms which make it easier for scientists and researchers to explore our free patent database, [Espacenet](#), making expert patent search strategies developed by experienced EPO patent examiners available to the public.

A total of three new technology platforms were released as part of Observatory project activities during 2024. Another upgrade was introduced for the existing technology platform for clean energy technologies, with the addition of carbon capture and storage technologies.

Figure 28 – Technology platforms


TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS



Clean energy

In today's world, we face a multitude of energy-related issues both as a society and at an individual level. However, one issue that affects us all is climate change.


[→ Learn more](#)[→ Demonstration video](#)



Combating cancer

As medical science reduces mortality from many other diseases, the incidence of cancer is expected to increase rapidly because of ageing populations, unhealthy lifestyles and unfavourable environmental conditions. Innovation in technologies for fighting cancer is essential to address this challenge.


[→ Learn more](#)[→ Demonstration video](#)



Space innovation

Space innovation is critical both for expanding our understanding of the cosmos and for improving life on Earth. The growing engagement of private actors has accelerated the pace of space innovation, increasing the need to track new developments.

[→ Learn more](#)[→ Demonstration video](#)



Water innovation

Critical water challenges are on the rise globally. Both the lack of access to clean water and dangers from ever more frequent flood events need to be addressed urgently. Innovation in water-related technologies must be a priority when fighting the effects of climate change and global warming.

[→ Learn more](#)[→ Demonstration video](#)

Launch

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------------|
| Clean energy technologies | UPDATE | - |
| Technologies combatting cancer | NEW | February 2024 |
| Space innovation | NEW | May 2024 |
| Water technologies | NEW | July 2024 |

Source: EPO

The technology platforms developed under the Observatory have so far attracted over 15 000 visits during this first period.

Digital library

In 2024, a concept for a new digital library encompassing EPO studies and other relevant publications was developed based on a user-centric approach, placing the end-user's needs at the heart of the design process.

The user journey begins with a home page offering three search methods to suit different user experiences: direct access to the latest addition, collections of pre-search topics on the innovation ecosystem, and a specific keyword search with auto-suggestion of available resources.

Next, the user can tune (refine or expand) the search results with filtering options and a preview of the resources. Finally, a page displays the detail of the selected resource, including a summary, bibliographic information, access to web pages on the subject and the document itself.

The user experience design was followed by an implementation of a Proof of Concept (POC) to validate technical feasibility, demonstrate value and communicate with a real system.

A demo video showcasing the features of the POC was presented in November 2024 during the TOSC meeting.

The Observatory's digital library will soon offer a gateway to a growing number of works of leading analysis on technology and innovation. This digital library will provide easy access to all EPO-published studies on technologies, economics, patent data and IP law, as well as other publications published by our partners.


epo.org | 32


Figure 29 – Homepage of the Digital Library POC

Digital Library

Observatory on Patents and Technology

How can we help?






The Observatory's digital library is a gateway to a wealth of critical analysis on technology and innovation.

It provides easy access to studies by the EPO – some co-published with expert partners – and studies by our expert and stakeholder networks on technologies, economics, patent data and intellectual property (IP) law.


By making these resources more accessible, our main goal is to support those who scrutinise how our IP system is used and who investigate trends in technological and economic development: policymakers, academics and journalists. Their work in turn gives us data and insights from various perspectives on the forces and actors in our innovation ecosystem.

Collections


In this library, curated collections guide you through various aspects of innovation ecosystems. Whether you're interested in who innovates, how it's fostered, or where it happens, collections help you explore related topics based on your interests.




Actors of innovation
The "who" in innovation: Organisations, Individuals and public bodies




Countries and regions
Innovation varies across regions and countries



Environment and sustainability
Innovation aimed at greater sustainability and protecting the environment




Industries
Trends and patterns in selected industries



Science and technology
Technology and the science behind it

Latest additions




16.01.2025 • PUBLICATION • EPO

Mapping investors for European innovators

The latest study by the European Patent Office (EPO) maps specialised technology investors and introduces a novel metric to help startups identify the...

Actors
Countries and reg...

[→ Overview](#)
[Full piece](#)



PUBLICATION


09.01.2025
by EPO/EUIPO

Intellectual property rights and firm performance in the European Union - Firm-level analysis report

This joint study by the EPO and EUIPO provides an updated analysis of the ownership and use of intellectual property rights (IPRs) by SMEs and large f...

Actors
Countries and reg...

[→ Overview](#)
[Full piece](#)



PUBLICATION


18.07.2024
by EPO

Innovation in water-related technologies

This EPO study gives insights into trends in innovation in water-related technologies aimed at both the provision of and protection from water. Despit...

Actors
Countries and reg...
Environment and ...
Industries

[→ Overview](#)
[Full piece](#)



PUBLICATION

25.04.2024
by EPO/EIB

Financing and commercialisation of cleantech innovation

A joint report by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Patent Office (EPO) shows that 22% of clean and sustainable technologies developed g...

Actors
Countries and reg...
Environment and ...
Industries
Science and tech...

[→ Overview](#)
[Full piece](#)

Source: EPO

5.4 Observatory outreach activities and impact

One aim of the Observatory is to engage with key stakeholders and innovators beyond IP experts. During the first 15 months of activity, the Observatory organised six public events fostering direct and live engagement with its audience, while cumulative views across all events exceeded 32 000. All events are recorded, and the material is freely available on the Observatory webpages.

The Observatory also participated in more than 60 external events or initiatives that allowed it to connect with over 3 100 innovation professionals, sharing insights on Observatory material and the latest technological developments, which have started to be cited in well-known external publications.

Figure 30 – Outreach activities



Source: EPO

Observatory events

As stated above, the Observatory organised six online events during its first fifteen months of activity, accumulating over 32 000 total cumulative views.

- Boosting startups with IP (October 2023)
- Carbon capture and storage: a new frontier in clean tech? (December 2023)
- Combatting cancer: how innovation actors are changing the landscape (February 2024)
- Bringing cleantech innovation to market (April 2024)
- Space technologies: tracking innovation and startup development (May 2024)
- Patents and innovation in European universities (October 2024)

Reaching out to high-tech startups

The Observatory participated in the *Science 4 Industry* fair in Madrid, Spain, in January 2024, showcasing the DTF. In May 2024, a larger EPO delegation, including President António Campinos, attended *VivaTech* summit in Paris, in collaboration with INPI France.

Based on this experience, the Observatory will contribute to the new project "Reach-out to startups" included in the co-operation catalogue, which has already attracted the interest of 28 NPOs. To be implemented in 2025, the project aims to continue to raise awareness among startups about the benefits of IP for securing investment and to support active participation by NPOs in entrepreneurial, research universities and incubator events and tech fairs.

Other interventions

The Observatory also participated in another 61 external interventions including attending conferences, events, summits and bilateral meetings with stakeholders to promote the Observatory and its initiatives, reaching out to a total audience of 3 100 participants.

Some examples are the participation in the Munich Ecosystem Innovation Meetup in February 2024, the Water Innovation Europe conference held in June 2024 and the LERU Enterprise and Innovation (ENTE) Policy Group meeting in October 2024, where Observatory resources were presented.

Impacting other publications

The research and analysis for the economic studies and patent insight reports conducted under the Observatory have already started to be cited in various authoritative sources, contributing to the broader discourse on IP and innovation.

Examples include references in the European Commission report on [the future of European competitiveness](#) written by Mario Draghi, the European Parliament study on [the cost of non-Europe in health policy](#) or the Centre for European Policy Studies' (CEPS) analysis report on [empowering the single market](#).

Social and press media

A total of 57 000 views were achieved for all the Observatory communication promotional materials, including new items, press releases and events programmes within the EPO website.

Regarding social media coverage, the total organic reach across Observatory projects and events reached 504 000, with organic engagement totalling 18 000. Additionally, video views garnered 424 000, reflecting strong audience interaction and content visibility.

Across press media, the six economic studies published generated 2 000 clippings, which reached a clean audience of 51 000 000, highlighting extensive media coverage, including tier 1 media such as *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *La Repubblica* and *CNN*, among others.

Startups are key to the innovation ecosystem. During its launch in October 2023, the Observatory addressed how startups use IP rights to foster innovative solutions and how these IP rights encourage and reward investment.

6. Driving innovation with the Unitary Patent

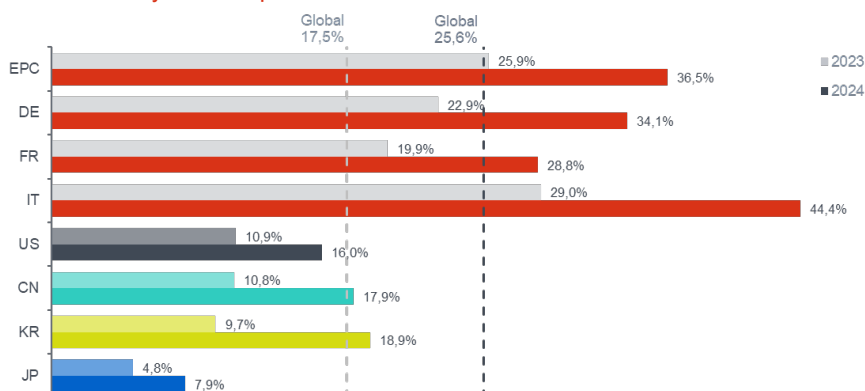
The successful launch and continued growth of the Unitary Patent and the Unified Patent Court (UPC) represent a landmark achievement of European partnership, significantly enhancing the accessibility and efficiency of patent protection across participating member states. The new system exemplifies the EPO's strategic commitment under Driver 4 to achieve impact through external partnerships, yielding tangible benefits for innovators across Europe and beyond. Its realisation was a complex undertaking that required seamless collaboration between the EPO, the participating EU Member States and their national patent offices, the European Commission, and the user community. While the EPO played a central role in administering the Unitary Patent and supporting the establishment of the UPC, the system's success is fundamentally rooted in this deep and sustained co-operative effort.

Launched on 1 June 2023, the Unitary Patent system saw significant and growing interest in 2024, greatly exceeding expectations.

Uptake and growth

The Unitary Patent system saw remarkable growth in 2024, greatly exceeding initial expectations on uptake. The EPO received 28 125 requests for unitary effect in 2024. This signifies a substantial increase in the proportion of granted European patents for which applicants requested unitary effect, with the global uptake rate rising to 25.6% in 2024 from 17.5% in 2023. Among European applicants, the uptake rate was even higher, climbing from 25.9% in 2023 to 36.5% in 2024. By the end of 2024, some 45 000 Unitary Patents were in force across participating states, exceeding initial expectations on uptake.

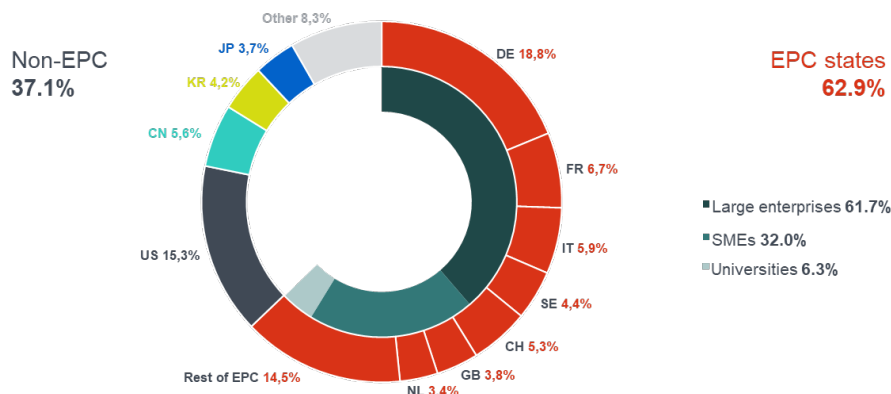
Figure 31 – Unitary Patent uptake 2023-2024



Source: EPO

This strong uptake demonstrates increasing user confidence in the new system, driven by the benefits of reduced costs, simplified administration, and broader country coverage. European industry was the primary beneficiary, accounting for 62.8% of all requests for unitary effect originating from Europe in 2024. Germany, the US, France, Italy, China and Switzerland were the top sources of requests. Significantly, almost 40% of requests were filed by SMEs, individual inventors, universities and public research organisations, demonstrating the system's accessibility and its value to smaller entities.

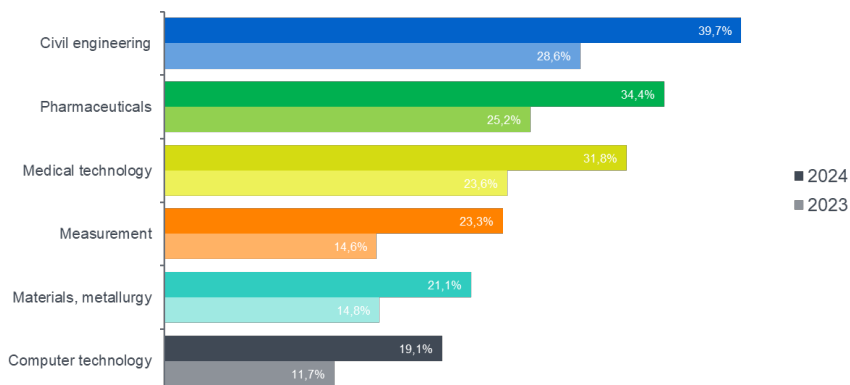
Figure 32 – Unitary Patent proprietor makeup in 2024



Source: EPO

Building on the overall growth, the Unitary Patent also saw significant uptake across a range of technology fields in 2024. The sectors with the highest share of unitary effect requests were medical technology, accounting for 12% of the total, followed by measurement (6%), digital communication (5%), computer technology (5%), and transport (5%). Comparing to 2023, key industries experienced notable growth in uptake. For example, civil engineering saw its uptake rate increase significantly from 29% to 40%, while medical technology also rose from 24% to 32%. This demonstrates the broad applicability and value of the Unitary Patent system to innovators working across diverse technological areas. The higher uptake rates observed among European users in these fields compared to the global average highlights the system's particular relevance and benefits for the European innovation ecosystem.

Figure 33 – Unitary Patent uptake in selected technology fields



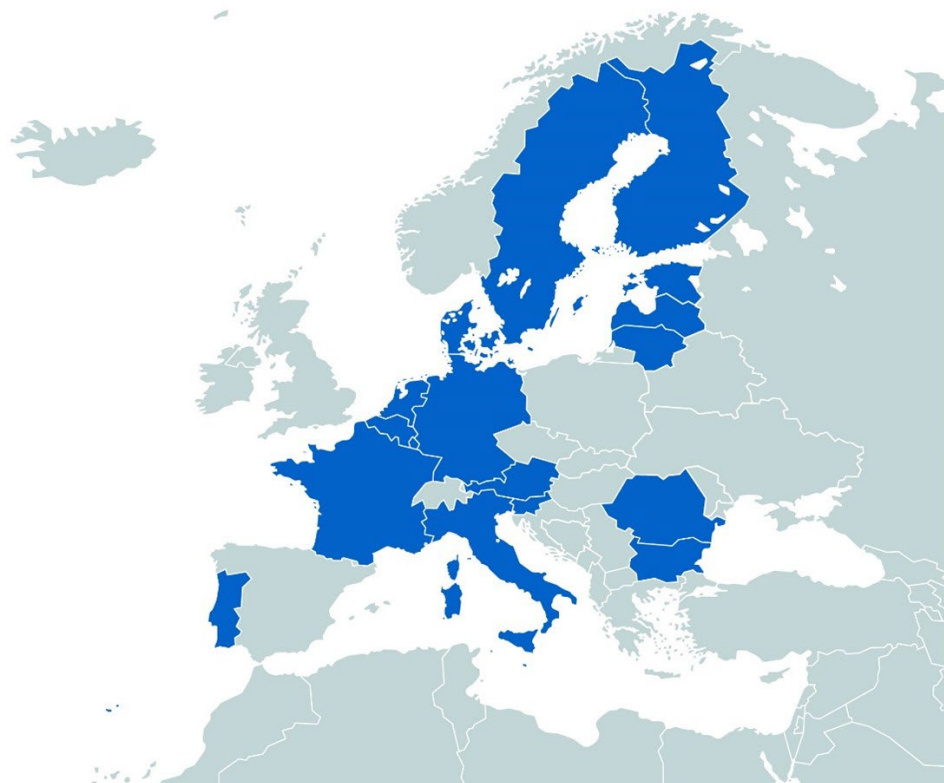
Source: EPO

Despite this increased demand, the processing of requests by the Unitary Patent Protection Division (UPPD) remained efficient and timely, with processing time averaging less than ten days. A remarkably low percentage of requests were rejected, primarily due to ineligibility or missed deadlines. Users continued to value the option to file early requests for unitary effect upon receipt of the grant decision, with the UPPD processing 3 579 early requests in 2024.

System expansion and enhancement

The Unitary Patent system expanded its geographical coverage in 2024, further increasing its attractiveness to innovators. Romania officially joined the system on 1 September 2024, following the deposit of its instrument of ratification on 31 May 2024. This accession increased the number of participating EU Member States to 18, marking the beginning of a "second generation" of Unitary Patents and adding a market of some 19 million people to the territory covered by Unitary Patents registered from that date.

Figure 34 – States participating in the Unitary Patent system as of 1 September 2024



Source: EPO

The smooth implementation of the necessary technical, financial, legal, and communication measures for this transition showcased the effective partnership between the EPO and Romania. Users particularly appreciated the option to delay registration of their patent to benefit from the extended geographical coverage, with 1 706 requests benefiting from this measure. The growing coverage provides innovators access to a broader market without additional costs, particularly benefiting SMEs. The importance of expanding the system was further underscored by the Draghi report, which subsequently urged more EU Member States to adopt the system.

The EPO continued to enhance the user experience of the Unitary Patent system throughout 2024. The Unitary Patent Dashboard, initially launched in July 2023 to provide transparency on the system's status and users, was upgraded in March 2024 with additional information on proprietor profiles and geography. New features, such as uptake by country and for the European Union, were also added in October 2024. Work also began on a more interactive version for launch in Spring 2025.

Romania's accession to the UPC Agreement on 1 September 2024 marked the beginning of the second generation of Unitary Patents, which now cover 18 participating member states.

Furthermore, EPO online services via MyEPO were expanded to allow users to register transfers of rights and licences, or request certified copies or extracts related to Unitary Patents free of charge, simplifying administrative processes for proprietors. Activity in the Unitary Patent Register increased steadily in 2024, with 22 licences and rights in rem and 55 statements of licence of right registered by the end of the year.

Unified Patent Court

As the judicial arm of the new system, the UPC has also proved highly successful in its first full year of operation, rendering its first substantive decisions within a year as planned. The ongoing development of the court strengthens the overall legal framework, encouraging investment by providing more predictable, affordable, and efficient enforcement in Europe. The EPO continued to support the UPC in 2024 through various means, including training activities for judges and clerks, and through enhanced co-operation on IT related matters to facilitate information exchange and develop a case management system (CMS) for the court.

The EPO's close partnership with the UPC is crucial to the system's success.

The processing of EPO opposition proceedings running in parallel with infringement or revocation cases before the UPC was expedited since January 2024.

Legal framework developments

An updated Unitary Patent Guide was published in November 2024, covering early requests, Romania's accession and the second UP generation. Developed in close consultation with users, the first-ever set of Unitary Patent Guidelines, providing comprehensive guidance on UP proceedings before the EPO, were pre-published in early 2025.

In response to EU sanctions against Russia published in June 2024, and following consultations, the Administrative Council and its Select Committee adopted amendments to the EPC Implementing Regulations and UP Rules. These ensure Russian applicants cannot obtain Unitary Patents or validate European patents in EU Member States while sanctions are in place.

7. Conclusion

The year 2024 demonstrated the EPO's deep commitment to building and strengthening partnerships across Europe and globally, firmly embedding the principles of SP2028 Driver 4 into its operations. Through enhanced co-operation with member states, expansion of international collaborations, dedicated knowledge sharing via the Academy and insightful analysis from the Observatory, the EPO is fostering a more integrated, accessible and effective patent system. The continued success of the Unitary Patent underscores the power of collaboration in delivering tangible benefits to innovators. Looking ahead, the EPO will continue to nurture these partnerships, adapting to the evolving needs of the innovation ecosystem and working collectively towards a sustainable future built on shared knowledge and mutual support.