

Partnerships Report 2025

Annex to the Annual Review

Executive summary

Building strong partnerships is central to achieving the objectives outlined in the EPO's Strategic Plan 2028. In 2025 the EPO made substantial progress in all areas of co-operation.

Starting with the European Patent Network (EPN), 2025 saw an updated co-operation catalogue, 39 bilateral co-operation agreements concluded and the 19th Annual Meeting on Co-operation in Reykjavik. Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova were supported with meeting the requirements for accession in 2026 and new working agreements on search co-operation entered into force with Portugal, Ireland and Montenegro, while another agreement was finalised with Switzerland.

Under the Convergence of Practice programme, the Administrative Council unanimously adopted the common practices on "Observations by third parties" and "Practices concerning assignment" while "Broad claims" and "Double patenting" were completed in December. The EPO also hosted the sixth virtual platform on Convergence of Practice in October 2025.

As part of its work-sharing efforts, the EPO carried out over 26 000 searches on behalf of national offices, of which nearly 2 000 benefited from the 80% fee reduction for small entities. The EPO also launched a new dashboard and Fee Assistant to increase transparency and awareness of all available measures to support smaller users of the system.

The EPO made significant progress on co-operation with other offices in 2025, including updating the policy on validation agreements – ten years after the very first such agreement with Morocco entered into force. By the end of the year, the EPO maintained 17 active patent prosecution highway (PPH) agreements with national and regional offices. France acceded to the Cooperative Patent Classification system, bringing the number of IP offices and organisations using it to 39.

At the multilateral level, the IP5 Heads of Office and Heads of Office and Industry meetings focused on the strategic role of intellectual property in supporting innovation and economic development while the 43rd Trilateral high-level meetings focused on the use of artificial intelligence in patent procedures. Close co-operation with WIPO continued, and the EPO played a leading role in IPC governance and revision.

During 2025, the EPO held 130 meetings with representatives from 42 user associations, 45 SMEs and micro-entities, 26 large corporations and 17 universities and public research organisations (PROs). The Voice of Our Users interview series was expanded to include representatives from universities and PROs and the User Day in September 2025 attracted over 9 000 viewers from 68 countries.

The European Patent Academy had a strong year, delivering 136 training activities included training targeted at national patent offices, patent attorneys and paralegals, judges, universities and research centres, and business stakeholders. The continued shift towards online delivery further improved accessibility and resulted in 29 749 registrations, up from 26 602 in 2024.

Engagement through the Academy's e-learning centre increased to 23 140 active users and 295 509 visits, a 26.7% annual increase. Women accounted for 53.2% of all participants.

The annual PATLIB Conference attracted nearly 4 000 viewers in total, while the KT2A initiative promoting collaboration between PATLIB centres and African universities reached 80 universities in 29 countries. More than 3 000 students from 90 European universities enrolled for Modular IP Education Framework (MIPEF) courses created by the EPO.

Modernisation of the European Qualifying Examination (EQE) advanced with the introduction of the new foundation Paper F. A total of 32 candidates were nominated, 82% of them women, to the Candidate Support Programme. Participation in the European Patent Administration Certification (EPAC) reached a three-year high, bringing the total number of candidates to more than 1 800 since 2022.

In the second phase of its first 2023-2025 biennial work programme, the Observatory delivered 14 publications (economic studies, technology insights reports and innovation case studies) including "Mapping investors for European innovators" and "IPRs and firm performance in the European Union" (jointly with the EUIPO Observatory).

The second biennial work programme for the Observatory, covering 2026 and 2027, was made public in October. It has three themes: breaking barriers to the innovation ecosystem, shaping a better future with technology and empowering innovation actors. The Observatory also laid the groundwork for the EPO's 20-year foresight study, "Scenarios for the Future 2025-2045". It mirrors the major project launched two decades ago, and will be published on the EPO's 50th anniversary.

There were five major content upgrades to the Deep Tech Finder (DTF) in 2025 and a new DTF app for mobile devices was released in June 2025. Three new technology platforms were released: Plastics in transition, Digital agriculture and Quantum technologies. The new digital library tool was launched in November 2025 and includes all Observatory publications. Six podcasts were posted in connection with Observatory projects.

An upgraded and expanded Unitary Patent Dashboard was launched in June 2025, providing additional insights into the impact of the new system. By the end of 2025, the EPO had registered almost 79 000 Unitary Patents, with uptake on the rise in Europe and beyond. The first-ever set of Unitary Patent Guidelines were released in February 2025 and, in December, the EPO published its contribution to the European Commission's upcoming report on the operation of the Unitary Patent system.

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1. Introduction

The EPO is founded on co-operation. Building strong partnerships is central to achieving the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan 2028, particularly Driver 4, which recognises that fostering innovation, competitiveness and sustainable growth transcends national boundaries and depends on close and effective collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders. Under SP2028, the EPO works closely with its partners to enhance the quality, accessibility and coherence of the patent system, ensuring that innovation can flourish for the benefit of society.

This Partnerships Report 2025 provides a comprehensive overview of the EPO's partnership activities throughout the year. It highlights progress in strengthening the European Patent Network (EPN), building global bridges through international co-operation, enhancing skills and knowledge via partnerships, generating insights through collaborative efforts, and driving innovation through the Unitary Patent system.

Through this far-reaching network of partnerships, the EPO supports users by sharing patent knowledge, fostering collaboration and opening up technological opportunities across borders. Today, European patents granted by the EPO can be validated across an extensive geographical area, reinforcing the global relevance of the European patent system and its role in supporting international trade, investment and technology transfer.

Figure 1 – Potential geographical coverage of European patents as of 1 June 2026



Source: EPO

2. Strengthening the European Patent Network

A cornerstone of SP2028 Driver 4 is the continuous strengthening of the EPN. In 2025, the EPO deepened its collaboration with member states through strategic dialogue, modernised co-operation instruments and strengthened work-sharing arrangements. Efforts focused on supporting national offices, advancing alignment across the EPN and preparing for future accessions, ensuring a more coherent, efficient and user-centred European patent system.

2.1 Fostering co-operation with member states

In 2025, co-operation within the EPN entered a phase of consolidation and renewal. An updated co-operation catalogue was introduced, offering a strengthened portfolio of projects and shared digital initiatives under SP2028. In the course of the year, **39 bilateral co-operation agreements** (BCAs) were concluded with national patent offices (NPOs) from member and extension states, reaffirming the network's commitment to partnership and modernisation.

The **19th annual meeting on co-operation**, held in Reykjavik, brought together 75 delegates from 38 member states, along with observers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova. Focusing on IP financing, the meeting examined how startups and scaleups can use intellectual property to support growth and access finance. Insights from investors and innovation stakeholders highlighted the importance of closer links between IP and financial ecosystems. The discussions underscored the role of targeted education, enhanced co-operation and practical tools in positioning IP as a credible financial asset.

Collaboration with EPN members is multifaceted, focusing on enhancing knowledge, improving quality, enabling work-sharing and promoting convergence.

Figure 2 – EPO's 19th Annual meeting on co-operation with member states in Reykjavik



Source: EPO

Significant progress was also made in preparing for the accession of future EPC contracting states. The EPO actively supported **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and the **Republic of Moldova** in meeting the legal, procedural and financial requirements for accession in 2026, which will bring the Organisation to 41 EPC contracting states in total.

The EPO maintained close collaboration with its neighbouring countries. In the **Republic of Moldova**, the successful amendment of the national patent law, supported by the EPO, marked a key milestone on the path towards EPC accession. With regard to **Ukraine**, a new two-year Memorandum of Understanding with the Ukrainian National Office for Intellectual Property and Innovations (UANIPPO) renewed the reinforced partnership and confirmed the parties' commitment to sustained co-operation. Towards the end of the year, **Georgia** formally expressed its interest in joining the Convention, signalling continued momentum towards closer integration with the European patent system.

Work-sharing remained a central pillar of EPN collaboration. In 2025, new working agreements on search co-operation entered into force with **Portugal** (1 April), **Ireland** (1 July) and **Montenegro** (1 December), with another agreement being finalised with **Switzerland**. In total, the EPO carried out more than 26 000 national searches on behalf of national offices.

Figure 3 – EPO President António Campinos and Controller of the Intellectual Property Office of Ireland (IPOI) James Kelly signing the agreement on search co-operation



Source: EPO

A major innovation was the launch of the pilot project to **increase search and examination capacity at national patent offices**. The project draws upon senior expertise to address temporary capacity gaps. The 2025 pilot saw 13 assignments across 10 offices, with recently retired EPO examiners deployed for a total of 360 expert days. Their contributions – ranging from prior-art search and substantive examination to mentoring, quality review and training – were highly valued. Based on very positive feedback, a new call for interest followed in 2026, supported by a pool of around 62 experts covering all technology communities and 18 European languages.

Other co-operation instruments also continued to strengthen capacity across the EPN, including the **seconded national expert** (SNE) programme and the placement of EPO Young Professionals in national patent offices. Since 2023, a total of 23 SNEs have been deployed, with 13 currently active, making the programme an important driver of capacity building and knowledge transfer. The **Young Professionals programme** likewise expanded its reach, with 26 YPs on secondment between October 2025 and May 2026. In total, 10 national patent offices and 2 PATLIB centres across 12 host countries will host YPs during this period, further deepening expertise and fostering closer co-operation across the network.

Active participation in the SNE programme continued in 2025, fostering knowledge exchange and strengthening ties.

The EPO also took the opportunity to engage in several national events across the network, participating in milestone celebrations and national initiatives throughout 2025. Highlights included the 105th anniversaries of the Serbian and Latvian national offices, the President's address at the closing ceremony of the 31st Magister Lvcentinvs in Alicante, and the joint presentation of the Deep Tech Finder mobile app at the VivaTech fair in Paris, in collaboration with the EPO Observatory on Patents and Technology and the French national office.

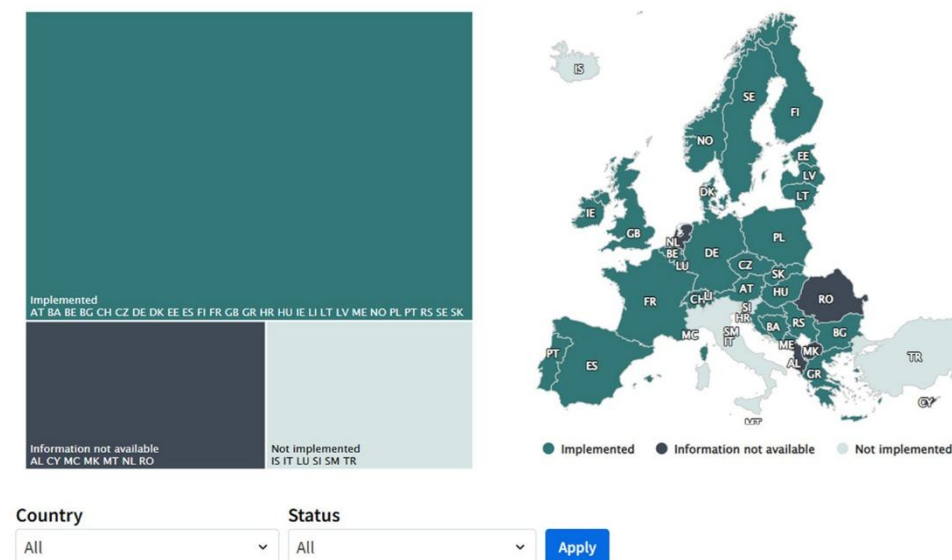
2.2 Pursuing convergence of practices

The convergence of practice programme continued to play a central role in 2025. The Administrative Council unanimously adopted the common practices on **"Observations by third parties"** and **"Practices concerning assignment"** (Working Groups 9 and 10 respectively), while the final pair of topics in the second convergence cycle – **"Broad claims"** (WG11) and **"Double patenting"** (WG12) – were successfully completed in December, with both groups reaching agreement on their draft common practices. Following a favourable opinion from the Committee on Patent Law, the Administrative Council approved these common practices in March 2026.

The **conclusion of this second cycle** represents an important step in aligning practices and strengthening legal certainty for users across Europe, supported by the convergence of practices dashboard, which enhances transparency on the implementation status of the agreed common practices across the network.

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 4 – Dashboard view of common practice 1 "Unity of invention"



Source: EPO

Throughout the process, user organisations (the epi and BusinessEurope) and WIPO participated as observers in the Working Groups, while the SACEPO Working Party on Rules was regularly consulted to ensure transparency and user feedback at every stage.

To broaden outreach beyond the Working Groups, the EPO hosted the **sixth virtual platform on convergence of practice** in October 2025. The event provided stakeholders with updates on the work carried out in Working Groups 11 and 12 and an opportunity for direct interaction and feedback. This open approach ensured that users remained informed and involved throughout the development of new common practices.

Building on this success, preparations began for a **third convergence cycle**, aimed at further reducing procedural burdens and addressing diverging national approaches. The Administrative Council unanimously approved the topics for this new cycle in December 2025 and work has commenced on the first pair: **"Divisional Applications"** (WG13) and **"Internet Disclosures"** (WG14). As in previous cycles, both Working Groups are chaired by the EPO.

Figure 5 – Third convergence cycle 2026-2029



Source: EPO

Alongside this work, the EPO continued to play an important role in the global effort towards **substantive patent law harmonisation** (SPLH). Throughout 2025, the EPO advanced this agenda by facilitating a common European position on complex SPLH issues: the grace period, conflicting applications and prior user rights. In October, the EPO published a draft proposal outlining best practices from a European perspective. This was followed by an extensive public consultation phase, with national offices engaging their domestic stakeholders while the EPO formally consulted the main representative bodies, BusinessEurope and the epi.

The insights gathered from this rigorous feedback loop are directly informing ongoing deliberations in 2026. This unified, collaborative approach strengthens Europe's voice in international fora, such as the B+ Working Group, ensuring the continent engages in global harmonisation dialogues with a clear, well-researched and collectively endorsed vision.

2.3 Enhancing support for small entities

The EPO further strengthened its support for **SMEs and micro-entities** by enhancing both financial measures and practical guidance, with the strategic objective of lowering barriers to patent protection and supporting smaller innovators in scaling up across Europe. Existing fee reduction measures continued to provide tangible support in 2025. A key development was the launch of the new **Fee Assistant**, which helps applicants – particularly those that are smaller or new to the system – to better understand early-stage fees and identify applicable reductions. Launched alongside it, a new **dashboard** offers insights into the EPO's support schemes for small and micro-entities. Insights from the fee support scheme underline its growing impact: since 2024, smaller applicants have saved EUR 28 million, including EUR 11 million through the targeted micro-entity reduction.

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

Support provided through **work-sharing agreements**, including the accompanying support schemes for eligible small entities, remained an important complement to these measures. In 2025, nearly 2 000 national searches benefitted from the 80% fee reduction for small entities. In parallel, the **Unitary Patent** continued to attract strong interest from SMEs, individual inventors, universities and public research organisations, offering cost-effective access to high-quality patent protection with a reduced administrative burden.

Targeted engagement with small innovators was further intensified. Under the 2025 user engagement programme, the EPO held **45 dedicated meetings** with SMEs and micro-entities, complemented by exchanges with **17 universities and public research organisations**. These discussions provided direct insight into the challenges faced by smaller applicants, particularly during examination and when navigating online support tools, and contributed to SME-focused refinements under SP2028.

Co-operation with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) reinforced these efforts, focusing on awareness-raising, capacity building in intellectual asset management and enhanced support measures for innovative SMEs and startups, including outreach at major startup events across Europe.

2.4 Advancing IT co-operation

IT co-operation remained a key enabler of the EPN's digital transformation in 2025, supporting closer collaboration with national patent offices and the progressive modernisation of shared services under SP2028. The year was marked by further consolidation of digital tools, the phased decommissioning of legacy systems and the introduction of new AI-enabled solutions designed to improve usability, efficiency and interoperability across the network.

Significant progress was achieved with the continued development of **Front Office**, including the delivery of an upgraded version and preparations for the roll-out of **Front Office 3.0** in member states. The enhancements focused on usability, accessibility and functional improvements, including features to support equitable access for users with disabilities, with first national deployments scheduled for early 2026. In parallel, the **Single Access Portal (SAP)** continued to evolve, integrating additional services such as support for the **Co-operative Patent Classification (CPC)** scheme and the **Technology Intelligence Platform**, while strengthened security was ensured through the introduction of **mandatory multi-factor authentication**.

A major milestone was the entry into production of the first two pilots of the **Legal Interactive Platform**, an AI-based conversational tool providing structured access to national patent law and procedures. Successfully launched in Italy and Ireland, this represented the first major new IT co-operation deliverable under SP2028, with further extensions planned in 2026. Progress was also made on the **Digital Toolkit**, with the deployment of the first components – the **Text Categoriser** and **Machine Translation** tools – to pilot national offices.

The transition to **ANSERA-based SEARCH (AbS)** was fully completed in 2025, with more than **2 500 examiners** actively using the system and access extended to over **40 national patent offices worldwide**. This milestone enabled the **decommissioning of EPOQUE Net**, which had been in service for more than 30 years, and supported more interoperable and data-driven search practices across the network. Similarly, the successful migration of national offices to Front Office or alternative local filing solutions allowed for the **decommissioning of eOLF**, contributing to reduced maintenance efforts and a more coherent digital filing landscape across the EPN.

Beyond operational delivery, 2025 also marked an important milestone in data protection governance. The adoption of an **EU Adequacy Decision for the EPO** recognised that the Office's data protection framework provides a level of protection equivalent to the **EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**. As the first international organisation to receive such recognition, the EPO further strengthened trust, facilitated secure data flows with EU member states and reinforced the foundations for future IT co-operation projects across the network.

3. Extending the system's global reach

The EPO actively engages with partners worldwide to extend the reach of the European patent system, promote convergence and harmonisation, facilitate work-sharing and support innovation ecosystems beyond Europe.

In 2025, a broad range of co-operation models were deployed to achieve those objectives. Activities encompass **validation partnerships**, **region-specific co-operation**, **work-sharing initiatives** such as the Patent Prosecution Highway, **classification co-operation**, and engagement in **multilateral fora**. Complemented by dialogue with user associations, standard development organisations and other European institutions, these partnerships reinforce the global role of the European patent system while supporting transparency, capacity building and sustainable innovation.

3.1 Validation partnerships

Validation has been an integral part of the EPO's international co-operation efforts, extending the geographical reach of European patent protection through a single, high-quality framework. In 2025, the validation system underwent its first comprehensive policy update since its inception in 1999, with a view to ensuring it remains fit for purpose in a changing global environment.

In October 2025, the Administrative Council unanimously adopted a **consolidated and updated validation policy**. The revised policy modernises the framework governing validation agreements by introducing clearer indicators for assessing potential partners, strengthening governance and transparency, and reaffirming core principles such as cost neutrality and the existing fee-sharing model. At the same time, it preserves essential flexibilities, including the possibility of tailoring the scope of an agreement to reflect a partner's specific needs.

Alongside this policy milestone, several noteworthy developments marked the year:

- The agreement with the **Lao People's Democratic Republic** entered into force on 1 April 2025, making it the second validation partner in Southeast Asia.
- In September, the EPO and the **Moroccan Office of Industrial and Commercial Property (OMPIC)** marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of their validation agreement.
- Technical negotiations with **Angola** were successfully concluded, paving the way for the agreement's adoption by the Administrative Council in March 2026.

The validation system allows applicants to extend the protection of their European patent to a non-member state, where it has the effect of a national patent. This formalises work-sharing, complements the international PCT framework, supports international trade, investment and technology transfer, reinforces the global role of the European patent system and uplevels the local innovation ecosystem.

- Engagement with prospective validation partners advanced further, with **São Tomé and Príncipe**, **Burundi**, and **El Salvador** formally requesting the opening of validation negotiations.

Figure 6 – EPO President Campinos with the Director General of OMPIC during visit to Munich to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the validation agreement with Morocco



Source: EPO

Strong co-operation continued with all existing validation offices – Morocco, Tunisia, the Republic of Moldova, Cambodia, Georgia, Laos and Costa Rica – focusing on data exchange, capacity building and support of local innovation ecosystems. A promising increase in the number of validation requests was observed at the beginning of 2026, with a growth of around 30% compared to early 2025.

3.2 Co-operation activities per region

Africa

Co-operation across Africa remained strong in 2025, combining sustained engagement with validation partners and reinforced regional collaboration.

- Besides marking the tenth anniversary of the validation agreement with the **Kingdom of Morocco**, the EPO and OMPIC signed a Work Plan for 2026-2027, covering activities in the patent grant procedure, classification, training and awareness-raising. OMPIC also signed an agreement granting access to AbS, enabling a smooth transition from EPOQUE Net.
- Co-operation with **Tunisia** (INNORPI) included a joint online seminar on freedom to operate, supporting companies and innovators active in the Tunisian and export markets.
- Engagement with the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat** continued, while co-operation with the **African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO)** advanced under the ARIPO-EPO joint Work Plan, focusing on capacity building, data exchange and European Patent Academy activities. Discussions also progressed with the **African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI)** on a new Memorandum of Understanding and an accompanying Work Plan.

Figure 7 – Vice-President Christoph Ernst with the AfCFTA delegation during their visit to the EPO premises in Munich



Source: EPO

Knowledge transfer and capacity building continued through the **Knowledge Transfer to Africa (KT2A)** initiative. By the end of 2025, KT2A involved 80 universities from 29 African countries, with 18 active twinning partnerships between PATLIB centres and participating universities, further strengthening technology transfer capacity across the region.

Asia and Oceania

- The validation agreement with **the Lao People's Democratic Republic** entered into force in April 2025, with first requests already being filed. A Work Plan for 2025-2026 was signed in November 2025, providing a structured framework for co-operation under the validation system.
- Bilateral co-operation with **Cambodia** (KH MISTI) continued under the existing validation agreement, including engagement with national stakeholders and the delivery of Espacenet training.
- The Reinforced Partnership agreements with **Malaysia** (MyIPO) and **Indonesia** (DGIP) were extended for a further five years.
- Engagement with the **Intellectual Property Office of Singapore** (IPOS) included a dedicated workshop focusing on artificial intelligence, data exchange and the reuse of EPO work products.
- At regional level, the **ASEAN Comparative Study Report on emerging technologies** was completed and endorsed by the **ASEAN Working Group on Intellectual Property Co-operation** (AWGIPC), providing a basis for further regional alignment.
- Co-operation with **China** (CNIPA) continued under the PCT International Search Authority pilot, which was extended for a further five years, until 30 November 2031. Implementation of the EPO–CNIPA Annual Work Plan 2025 reinforced operational co-operation, while the 19th Heads of Office Meeting, held in Porto and coinciding with the celebration of 40 years of co-operation, reaffirmed the strategic partnership. The CPC Memorandum of Understanding was also extended until 31 December 2028.
- Co-operation with **Japan** (JPO) was marked by the President's visit to Expo 2025 in Osaka. Bilateral exchanges focused on quality, digital

transformation, artificial intelligence and developments concerning the Unitary Patent. The co-operation agreement was extended until 2027.

- Co-operation with the **Republic of Korea** (MOIP) continued through high-level exchanges, including a visit by the MOIP Commissioner to Munich, focusing on examination practice, quality initiatives, artificial intelligence, filing trends and developments concerning the Unitary Patent, as well as continued alignment within IP5.
- As longstanding partners, the EPO engaged with **IP Australia** (IPA) on strategic issues, including the use of artificial intelligence in the patent granting process and preparations for a pilot allowing Australian users to designate the EPO as international search authority as of March 2026. In parallel, IPA and the **Intellectual Property Office of New Zealand** (IPONZ) committed to transitioning from EPOQUE Net to AbS, with agreements concluded in December 2025.

Latin America and the Caribbean

- Engagement with **Chile** (INAPI) and **Mexico** (IMPI) focused on advancing technical co-operation and operational alignment. Both offices tested AbS and expressed interest in concluding agreements in 2026.
- Momentum in the field of validation continued, with **El Salvador** formally requesting the opening of negotiations on a validation agreement.
- EPO experts participated in benchmarking studies conducted by **INPI Brazil** on organisational and administrative matters. Engagement with **Argentina** (INPI) focused on institutional dialogue and awareness-raising on the European patent system, innovation policy and the use of EPO tools.
- At regional level, the **LATIPAT** Memorandum of Understanding was renewed with WIPO and the Spanish Patent and Trademark Office (OEPM) until 2028.

Middle East

- The restructuring of Egypt's intellectual property system led to the establishment of the **Egyptian Intellectual Property Authority** (EGIPA), consolidating nine IP bodies under Egypt's National IP Strategy and creating a stronger, more globally engaged partner for the EPO. In this context, the EPO and EGIPA signed a joint Work Plan, establishing a structured framework for institutional development and capacity building. The EPO is supporting EGIPA's transition by sharing expertise on organisational restructuring, performance alignment and HR practices.
- Targeted coaching activities were delivered for regional partners, focusing on emerging energy technologies. In June, training on solar energy technologies was provided for the **Jordanian Industrial Property Protection Directorate** (IPPD), while a comparable programme on green hydrogen was delivered for the **Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property** (SAIP), strengthening technical capacity across the region.

North America

- Co-operation with the **Canadian Intellectual Property Office** (CIPO) was strengthened through the signature of a bilateral CPC Memorandum of

Understanding on the margins of the WIPO General Assembly in Geneva. In autumn, the two offices also concluded a biennial Work Plan, supporting CIPO's continued integration of the CPC and identifying additional areas for future co-operation.

- Bilateral engagement with the **United States Patent and Trademark Office** (USPTO) continued. High-level exchanges took place during the WIPO General Assemblies and the Trilateral meetings, focusing on workload management, the quality of EPO work products and the use of NET/AI technologies to support operational efficiency.

3.3 Patent Prosecution Highway

In 2025, the EPO further strengthened its global work-sharing framework through the Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH). By the end of the year, the EPO maintained **17 active PPH agreements** with national and regional offices worldwide, offering applicants faster processing when claims have already been found patentable by a partner office.

A key development was the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding with the **Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Bahrain** and the launch of a bilateral PPH pilot on 1 March 2025. Co-operation also advanced with the **China National Intellectual Property Administration** (CNIPA), with both sides agreeing to sign a bilateral PPH MoU. Once finalised and launched, this new pilot will complement the existing IP5 PPH while ensuring consistent conditions for users.

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, **39 IP offices and organisations** use the Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) system, including 24 EPC states and one validation state, following France's accession in 2025. 24 offices exchange CPC data with the EPO, and around **78 million patent documents** and **36 million non-patent literature documents** are classified in the CPC, benefiting users worldwide.

The CPC, jointly managed by the EPO and the USPTO, remains a vital tool for patent search and knowledge sharing. The **12th CPC Annual Meeting**, held in Geneva, provided updates on system developments and facilitated exchanges on implementation and classification practices. A joint EPO-USPTO survey further supported discussions on implementation status and future improvements.

CPC training activities continued throughout the year. Online collective field-specific training events were organised for all CPC offices in six technical areas, complemented by dedicated in-person training for China (CNIPA).

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

Figure 8 – Training visit of CNIPA examiners to the EPO premises in The Hague



Source: EPO

The EPO actively participated in **multilateral classification activities**, including the IP5 Working Group on Classification and the WIPO IPC Committee of Experts. EPO-led work concluded the multi-year revision of the semiconductor field, resulting in the creation of the new H10 class, and contributed to further IPC and CPC revisions in emerging technologies.

At bilateral level, CPC Memoranda of Understanding were renewed with **CNIPA** and **IP Australia**. Implementation exchanges were held with CPC offices, and an introduction to the CPC was provided to **IPONZ** (New Zealand), which was granted observer status at CPC Annual Meetings.

3.5 Co-operation in multilateral fora

Collaboration within multilateral frameworks remains essential for addressing global challenges, promoting alignment of practices and enhancing the efficiency and resilience of the international patent system.

The **IP5** Heads of Office and Heads of Office and Industry meetings, hosted by CNIPA in Tianjin in May 2025, focused on the strategic role of intellectual property in supporting innovation and economic development. Discussions addressed the utilisation and commercialisation of IP, strengthening innovation ecosystems, improving links between IP and financing, and enhancing engagement with industry. The meetings also covered progress in technical co-operation, including user-oriented digital services, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in patent administration, as well as governance matters and the future direction of IP5 co-operation.

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 9 and 10 – Meetings of IP5 Heads of Office and Trilateral



Source: EPO

Trilateral co-operation between the EPO, USPTO and JPO continued to deepen. The 43rd Trilateral high-level meeting, held at the USPTO in October 2025, focused on the use of artificial intelligence in patent procedures. Offices and industry exchanged views on opportunities to improve examination efficiency and quality through AI-supported tools, while emphasising the importance of responsible implementation. The Offices agreed to strengthen co-operation in this area through the establishment of a Trilateral AI Working Group, with progress to be reported at the 2026 Trilateral Conference, to be hosted by the EPO in Vienna.

Close co-operation with the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)** continued through the implementation of Annual Work Plans under the 2021 Memorandum of Understanding. Co-operation covered key areas such as PCT operations, classification, technical infrastructure, data exchange and digitalisation. In 2025, the EPO played a leading role in IPC governance and revision work, notably completing the restructuring of semiconductor technology under the new H10 class, while advancing operational collaboration under the PCT and consolidating co-operation on LATIPAT through a dedicated Memorandum of Understanding and implementation roadmap.

3.6 Engagement with user associations and industry

In 2025, the EPO further reinforced its dialogue with the user community through an extensive engagement programme covering the full spectrum of users. In total, 130 meetings were held with participants from Europe, Asia and North America, bringing together representatives from 42 user associations, 45 SMEs and micro-entities, 26 large corporations, and 17 public research organisations and universities.

Engagement with user associations continued at both European and international level, including exchanges with the **epi**, **BusinessEurope**, national associations from Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and long-standing international partners such as **AIPLA**, **AIPPI**, **FEMIP**, **FICPI**, **JETRO**, **JIPA**, **JPAA**, **KNIPA**, **KPAA** and the **US Bar**. Discussions focused on strategic topics including quality and consistency of practice, developments related to the Unitary Patent and the Unified Patent Court, digital transformation and the move towards a paperless granting process, as well as broader questions of European and international patent law and harmonisation.

In-depth engagement also took place with industry, SMEs, micro-entities and research organisations, allowing for tailored discussions on operational and strategic matters reflecting users' specific needs. Feedback collected through

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.

these exchanges fed directly into the preparation of the Quality Action Plan 2026, published in February 2026.

User outreach was complemented by broader communication and training activities. **The Voice of Our Users** interview series continued and was expanded for the first time to include representatives from universities and public research organisations. The **User Day** held in September 2025 attracted over 9 000 viewers from 68 countries, while 18 public seminars delivered in the EPO's official languages, together with tailored workshops, reached more than 4 000 participants, supporting users in the adoption of new digital services.

3.7 Co-operation with standards development organisations

The EPO further strengthened its structured engagement with major standards development organisations (SDOs), recognising the growing strategic interdependence between patents, standards and emerging technologies. Co-operation with key SDOs, including the **European Telecommunications Standards Institute** (ETSI) and the **Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers** (IEEE), continued under established bilateral frameworks, supporting exchanges on patent information, data formats, digital tools and best practices in the documentation and accessibility of standards-related material as prior art. Technical discussions focused on improving access to standards documentation as non-patent literature, facilitating data flows and ensuring high-quality search environments for examiners and greater transparency for users.

3.8 Co-operation with other European institutions

Partnerships extend beyond the IP sphere to organisations with shared interests in innovation, science and technology. Numerous joint activities and exchanges with European institutions take place through the Observatory on Patents and Technology and are therefore covered in greater detail in Section 5 of this report.

Other notable interactions in 2025 included:

- **European Space Agency (ESA):** co-operation was further strengthened through the signature of a Letter of Intent, establishing a framework for closer collaboration. The agreement provides a basis for structured knowledge exchange on space technologies, digitalisation and sustainability, and supports dialogue aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO):** fruitful co-operation activities included a bilateral seminar to exchange views on aspects of protection of plant-related innovations.

4. Partnering to enhance skills and knowledge

In 2025, the European Patent Academy delivered a comprehensive training and education programme on patents and related fields for a broad audience – from national patent office experts and legal professionals to universities, research centres, businesses, entrepreneurs and the general public. Through these activities, the Academy strengthened IP expertise across the EPN, supported key drivers of the EPO's Strategic Plan 2028 and contributed to the UN Sustainable

Development Goals, in particular SDG 4 (Quality education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships).

Figure 11 – UN SDGs targeted by Academy training (all activities contribute to SDG 4)

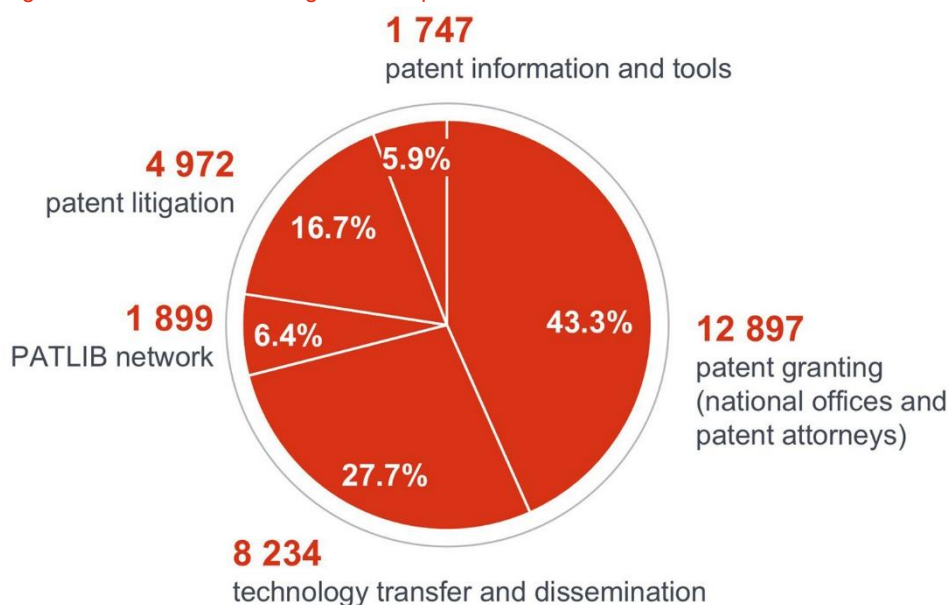


Source: EPO

4.1 Training reach, impact and delivery

The Academy expanded its training offer considerably in 2025, delivering **136 training activities** across all major IP learning areas and totalling **1 532 hours of learning**. The continued shift towards online delivery further improved accessibility and resulted in **29 749 registrations**, an increase from 26 602 in 2024.

Figure 12 – Breakdown of registrations per area



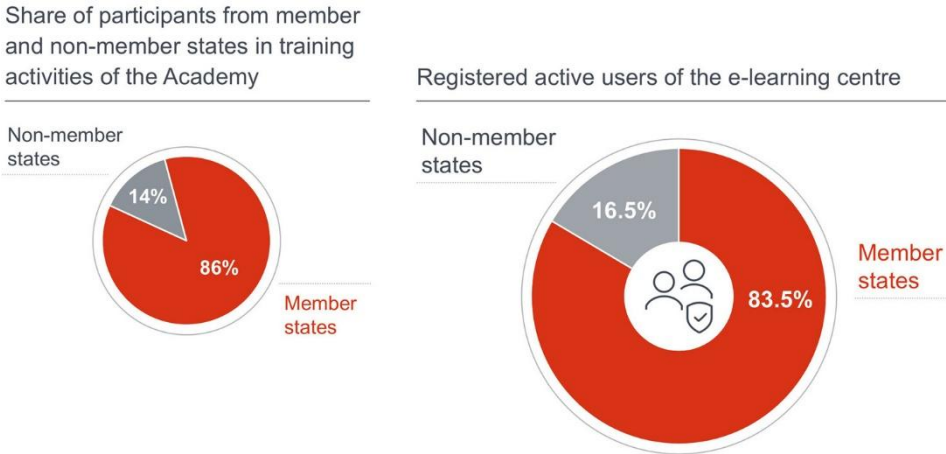
Source: EPO

Engagement through the Academy's **e-learning centre** was similarly strong, with **23 140 active users** and 295 509 visits, marking a **26.7% increase** compared to 2024. Popular courses included: Introduction to the European patent system; EQE Daily D questions and Practising for EQE Paper F; Assessing novelty and inventive step; and Patentability requirements at the EPO. To ensure reliable metrics, bot-generated and inactive accounts continued to be removed routinely.

The Academy also maintained **broad global reach**. Across all training areas, 86% of registrations came from member states and 14% from overseas. Similar trends were reflected in the elearning centre, where 16.5% of registrations are from international users. Co-operation with validation states, strengthened

partnerships and initiatives such as **Knowledge Transfer to Africa (KT2A)** further underline the Academy's contribution to global capacity building.

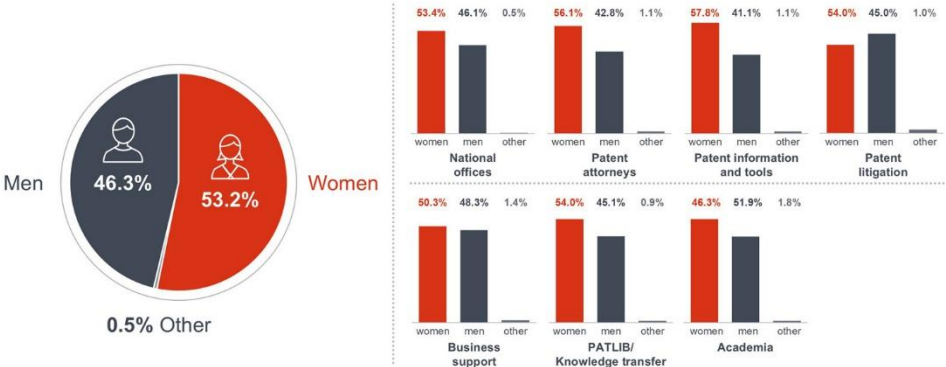
Figure 13 – Origin of participants in training activities and in e-learning



Source: EPO

The 2025 programme also reflected the EPO's commitment to **equitable access** to IP training and to broadening opportunities for women and underrepresented groups within the patent ecosystem. The growing use of online formats supported a positive gender balance, with **women accounting for 53.2% of all participants**.

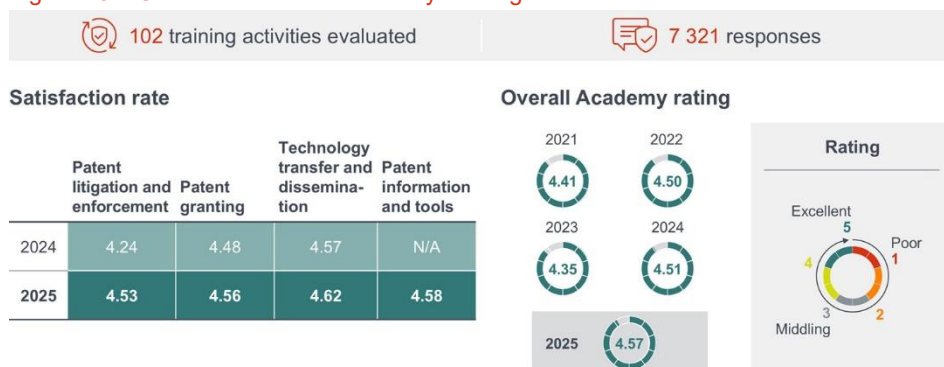
Figure 14 – Participants in Academy training programmes by gender



Source: EPO

User satisfaction with the Academy's offer remained very high and continued to improve. In total, 102 training activities were evaluated, generating 7 321 responses, and the **average satisfaction score rose to 4.57**, up from 4.51 in 2024, confirming strong appreciation of content, delivery and digital learning formats.

Figure 15 – User evaluation of Academy training activities



Source: EPO

4.2 Training for national patent offices

Figure 16 – Training for national patent offices



Source: EPO

Capacity-building for national patent offices (NPOs) remained a central priority. In 2025, **31 specialised activities** delivered 411 training hours and attracted over **2 700 registrations**, focusing on core examination topics such as CPC technical fields, AI and computer-implemented inventions, patentability requirements, and discipline-specific workshops (chemistry, pharmacy and biotech).

A major highlight was the **continued roll-out of the AbS** tool, supported by a robust training programme that drew more than 750 registrations. For the first time, an on-site *Train the Trainer* workshop enabled 29 experts from 19 member states to design and deliver their own AbS-related training. The AbS open course on the e-learning centre remained exclusively accessible to national office staff and was further enriched by the launch of the new "*5 minutes, one topic*" video series providing concise, on-demand guidance.

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

Figure 17 – Academy training on ANSERA-based SEARCH



Source: EPO

4.3 Training for patent professionals

Figure 18 – Training for patent attorneys and paralegals



Source: EPO

The training offer for patent attorneys and paralegals continued to expand in both scope and reach. **32 activities** (463 training hours) attracted **more than 10 000 registrations**, reflecting sustained demand for high-quality professional learning.

Flagship events remained central touchpoints:

- **Search and Examination Matters** conference (over 1 700 registrations), which explored patent quality, emerging trends and examination insights.
- **Opposition Matters** conference (over 1 300 registrations), which focused on recent procedural and substantive developments.
- **Guidelines2day** lecture series (over 1 800 registrations), which returned with six sessions, giving an overview of the 2025 Guidelines for Examination.

These were complemented by multilingual PCT update lectures (over 770 registrations) and specialised training in key technical areas including CILs and cross-field inventions through the three-part Tackling the Future series.

Support for **EQE** candidates intensified ahead of the new modular EQE, with a full suite of preparation tools – the Paper F course, EQE Guide, mock exams, podcasts and daily questions – attracting over 1 500 registrations. The **EPAC** preparation course also continued to grow, reaching 1 071 registrations. Many activities were delivered in close co-operation with the *epi*, ensuring practical relevance and close alignment with practitioners' needs.

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

4.4 Training for judges and litigators

Figure 19 – Training for judges and litigators



Source: EPO

Training for the judiciary and litigation professionals remained essential as the legal landscape continued to evolve with the arrival of the UPC. **Thirteen activities** (76.5 hours) attracted **4 972 registrations**.

Among the year's highlights were:

- **Litigation Matters** conference (co-organised with EPLAW/EPLIT, >1 300 registrations), featuring early experiences with the Unitary Patent and the Unified Patent Court (UPC).
- The **Boards of Appeal Case Law** conference (>1 200 registrations), where key decisions from the Enlarged Board and insights into inventive step were discussed.
- The **European Judges' Forum** in Venice (co-organised with IPJA/EPLAW), where judges from across the EPO member states reviewed the first years of UPC operations.

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

4.5 Training for academia and youth

Figure 20 – Training for academia



Source: EPO

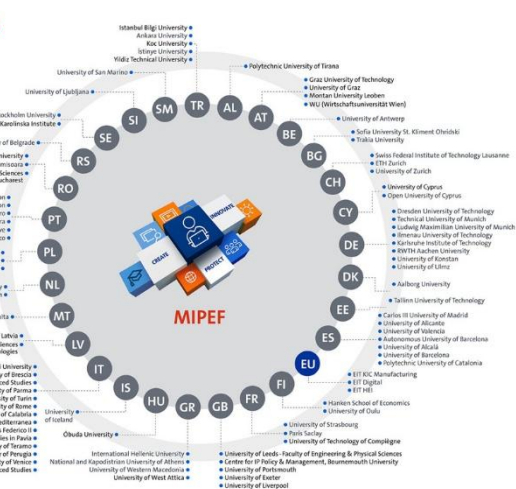
Twelve activities for universities and research centres delivered nearly 350 hours of training. A new online seminar on IP strategies for universities attracted registrations from 65 countries, covering technology transfer, IP management, university–industry collaboration and best practices from six invited universities.

The **Modular IP Education Framework** (MIPEF) continued integrating structured IP education into university curricula. The two MIPEF courses were again offered twice, in spring and autumn, reaching **3 188 enrolled students**

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

Further outreach included the long-standing lecture series for researchers, co-organised with the European IP Helpdesk, covering biotechnology, digital communication, green technology and AI in medical technology. The Inspiring Inventors Talk series also continued, featuring interviews with European Inventor Award winners.

**90 partner universities
in 28 countries**



MAREK D. SZCZEPANOWSKI

4.6 Training for businesses and technology transfer professionals



- Intellectual property rights for deep tech businesses - with the EIC
- Training on IP strategies, licensing, growth financing and build-to-sell approaches - with LESI
- EIT-EPO: training on intellectual property rights - with EIT and EUIPO
- Patenting Innovation course accredited by ATPP (11 CE) - 2 editions

			
3 612	14	68.5	53.5
registrations	activities	hours of lecturing	hours of self-study

epo.org | 24

Collaboration with EU partners remained key: four EPO–EIC training activities drew over 2 100 registrations, including the new Intellectual property rights for deep tech businesses seminar tailored to startups, SMEs and research-driven ventures. Additional partnerships with EIT and EUIPO delivered training for KICs, SMEs and spin-offs, while the IP Helpdesk & EEN IP Ambassadors Winter Summit gathered 28 experts from 13 countries.

The Patenting Innovation course, accredited by the Alliance of Technology Transfer Professionals (ATTP) with 11 CE points towards the Registered Technology Transfer Professional (RTTP) qualification, continued to attract strong interest with over 190 registrations. Looking ahead, a new course on post-grant procedures – to be launched in 2026 and awarded 10 CE points – will further expand the certified learning pathway, enabling participants to earn 21 of the 60 RTTP credits through EPO courses.

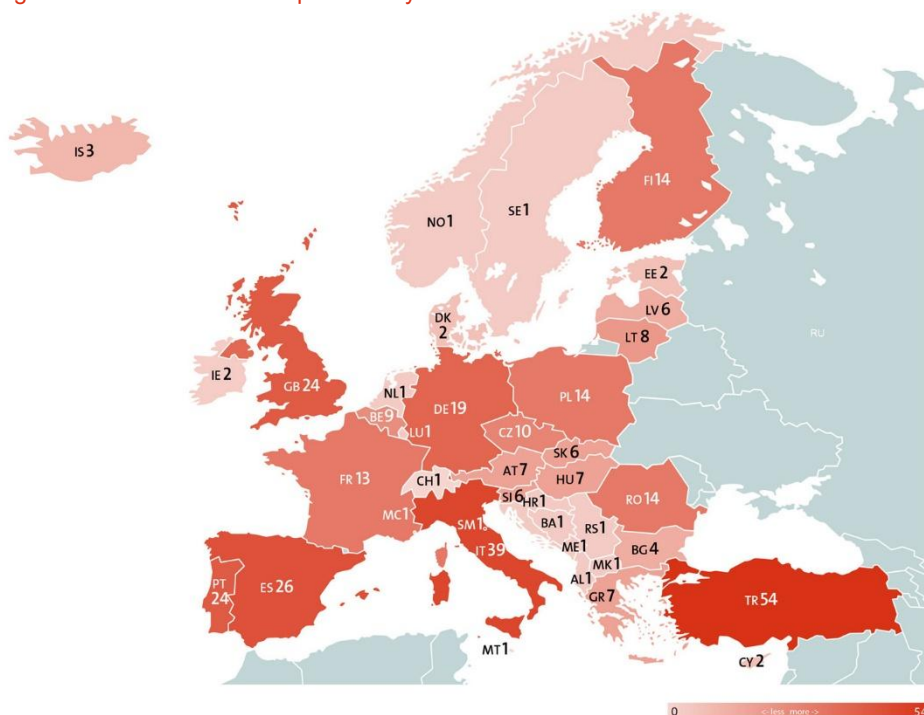
4.7 Supporting the PATLIB network

The PATLIB network continued to serve as essential local contact points for innovators, providing practical IP support close to where innovation happens. In 2025, engagement across the network remained strong. The annual **PATLIB Conference in Vienna** drew 82 participants on site, 752 online, and nearly 4 000 viewers overall, earning an excellent 4.83/5 rating. In addition, five Shaping the Future seminars and several meetings of the PATLIB Advisory Committee helped guide strategic development, including the launch of five new working groups covering impact, patent analytics, IP valuation, technology transfer and service-oriented training.

The PATLIB Learning Path on IP and patents – covering IP regimes, patent granting, and the use of EPO tools – continued to provide targeted support to PATLIB staff as they expand their advisory services.

The network of 336 patent information centres (PATLIBs) across 39 countries plays a crucial role for providing local IP support to innovators.

Figure 23 – PATLIB centres per country



Source: EPO

Building on this foundation, the **KT2A** initiative further deepened collaboration between PATLIB centres and African universities. By 2025, co-operation extended to 80 universities in 29 countries, with eighteen active twinning partnerships linking universities to PATLIB centres. The programme delivered sixteen mentoring sessions for 64 participants, complemented by 89 online exchanges with universities. Both PATLIB centres and universities reported positive outcomes – from strengthened institutional co-operation and increased IP awareness to greater engagement in training and valuable exposure to diverse innovation and IP ecosystems.

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

Figure 24 – KT2A Partner Countries 2025



Source: EPO

4.8 Professional certifications

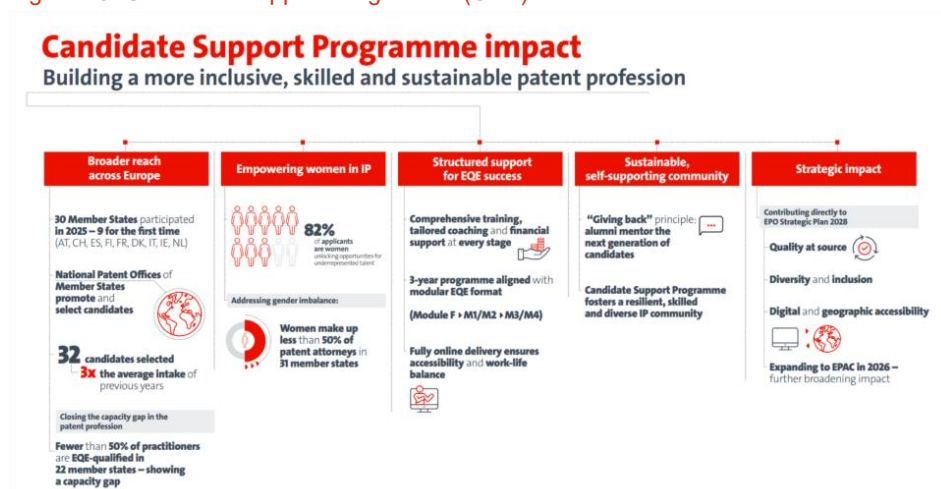
Maintaining high professional standards requires robust qualification frameworks, and 2025 marked an important year of progress. Modernisation of the **European Qualifying Examination (EQE)** advanced significantly with the introduction of the new foundation Paper F – the first step in the modular EQE structure. The 2025 session concluded with candidates sitting more than 4 000 papers, including over 600 sitting Paper F alone. To support preparation, the Academy offered a comprehensive set of resources – Paper F courses, mock exams, daily questions, podcasts and the updated EQE Guide – attracting more than 1 500 registrations. The transition continued in 2026 with the final sitting of Papers A-D and the first rounds of M1 and M2, ahead of the fully reformed EQE in 2027.

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

The **Candidate Support Programme (CSP)** also continued to advance its mission of fostering diversity and access within the profession. A total of 32 candidates were nominated – 82% of them women – highlighting the

programme's impact on gender balance and inclusiveness. The inaugural event of the revamped programme brought together 45 candidates from 21 member states, reflecting close co-operation with the epi, whose members serve as coaches, as well as with the programme's growing alumni community. Targeted training supported candidates preparing for the EQE, and from 2026 onwards, the CSP will also extend support to EPAC candidates, enabling each participating national office to nominate one candidate per year for high-quality exam preparation.

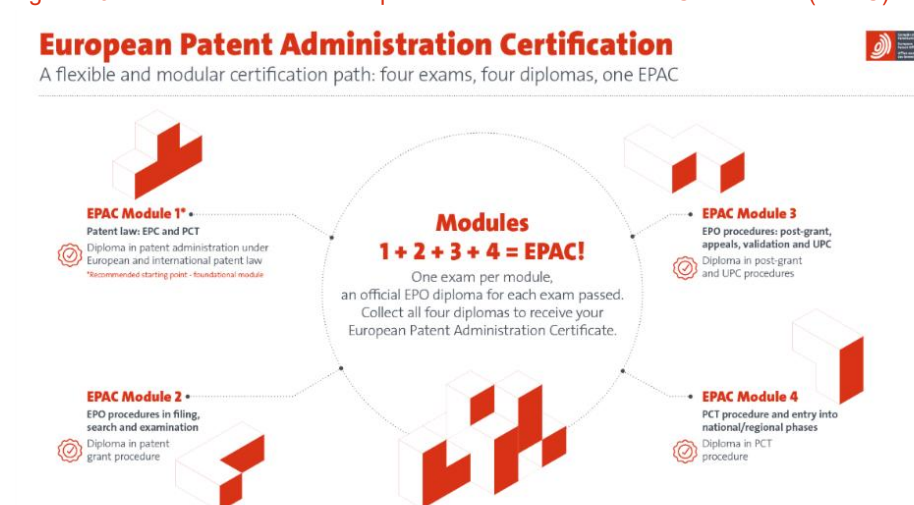
Figure 25: Candidate Support Programme (CSP)



Source: EPO

Certification for patent administrators and paralegals also gained momentum. Participation in the **European Patent Administration Certification (EPAC)** reached a three-year high – a 25% increase compared with 2024 – bringing the total number of candidates to more than 1 800 since 2022. Preparations for the new modular EPAC structure, launching in 2026, progressed well and will allow candidates to progress more flexibly through individual diplomas on the path to full certification.

Figure 26: Launch of modular European Patent Administration Certification (EPAC)

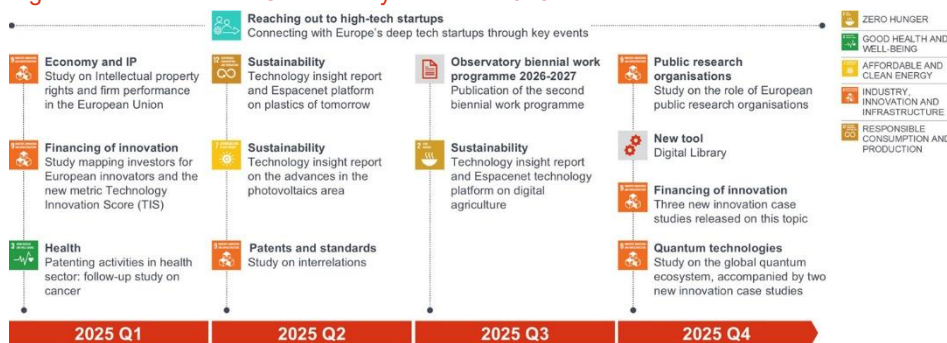


Source: EPO

5. Reinforcing the links between IP, innovation and sustainability

In the second phase of its first 2023-2025 biennial work programme, the EPO **Observatory on Patents and Technology** continued to deliver high-impact analysis, insights into the innovation ecosystem and strategic mapping of critical technologies. It also supported innovation actors with the launch of new digital tools and broadened access to patent intelligence across the entire innovation ecosystem.

Figure 27 – Timeline of Observatory activities 2025



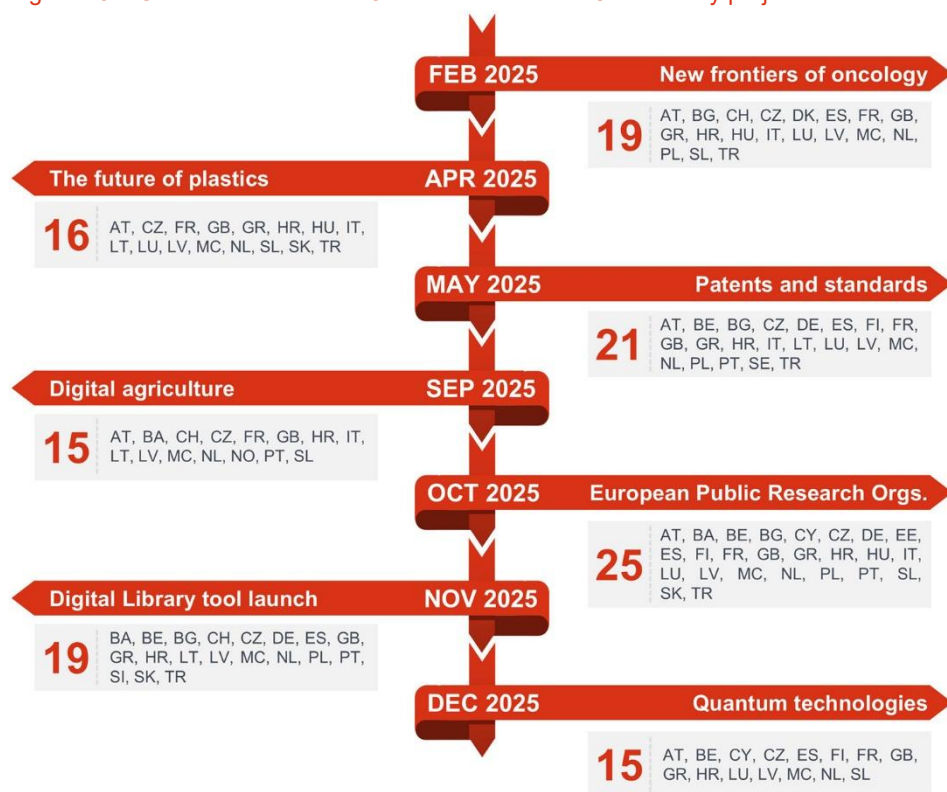
Source: EPO

5.1 Observatory strategic co-operation and partnerships

Collaboration with EPO member states

Collaboration with EPO member states was instrumental in enhancing the quality and relevance of the Observatory's work and in reaching out to national innovation ecosystems. In 2025, 36 NPOs engaged in various Observatory initiatives following the previous year's call for interest. While all projects received extensive support, the study on European public research organisations emerged as a key initiative, with 25 NPOs involved in the study and an associated public event.

Figure 28 – Collaboration with EPO member states on Observatory projects



Source: EPO

Throughout 2025, 20 technical meetings were held, playing an instrumental role in shaping the Observatory's strategic output.

During the 19th annual meeting on co-operation (June 2025, Reykjavik), the EPN discussed a common agenda on IP financing. The Observatory presented its work related to its [Financing of Innovation](#) programme, which aims to expand funding opportunities by effectively leveraging patents and other intellectual property assets. A few months earlier, in January 2025, the Observatory had published a new study identifying the investors that are vital to the successful commercialisation of cutting-edge innovations. The study "Mapping investors for European innovators" addressed the challenges that tech startups face in securing public and private funding. It also introduced a new metric, the Technology Investor Score (TIS), which is the proportion of companies in an investor's portfolio that have filed patent applications.

A new call for interest was open between October and December 2025 through the Single Access Portal to allow national patent offices to declare their early interest in contributing to the new biennial work programme for 2026-2027 based on their expertise, resources and national priorities. To date, 35 NPOs have formally confirmed their participation in the new biennial work programme. The top four most popular projects were "Technology transfer offices and spinouts", "Fostering innovation skills among European youth", "Women in STEM" and "Patents and market success for tech startups".

The "Reach out to high-tech startups" project also maintained its momentum, generating interest among NPOs, with 32 planning to participate in this initiative in 2026.

Figure 29 – Call for interest for 2026 and 2027 Observatory initiatives

Call for interest for 2026 and 2027 Observatory initiatives



Source: EPO

Collaboration with EU institutions

Working closely with EU institutions enabled the Observatory to stimulate interest in patent intelligence across broader innovation networks, especially under Horizon Europe. The Observatory studies provided solid evidence and data on areas covered by European innovation policies and priorities, particularly those mentioned in Mario Draghi's report on the future of European competitiveness. Moreover, the technology cartographies, designed to support collaboration with the European Innovation Council and the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), became increasingly significant. The cartographies are visual mapping tools designed to identify trends, innovation clusters and key players, supporting both strategic decision-making and research exploration within emerging technology sectors. Under the EPO-EISMEA co-operation umbrella, these cartographies contribute to programmes under Horizon Europe in emerging technologies such as "Pathfinder".

The EPO implemented several working arrangements, letters of intent and memoranda of understanding with EU entities such as the European Commission and its Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The EPO and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) Observatories continued to co-publish economic studies of common interest, such as "IPRs and firm performance in the European Union", addressing how IP ownership shapes business growth.

5.2 Observatory publications

During 2025, the Observatory delivered a total of 14 new publications (economic studies, technology insights reports and case studies). It also published the new Observatory biennial work programme for the next two years and started to lay the groundwork for the project *Scenarios for the future*.

The Observatory publications had a strong impact and were downloaded almost 100 000 times during 2025. In total, there have been over 150 000 downloads of studies and reports published by the Observatory since its launch.

Partnerships for joint publications

The Observatory partnered with key institutions to co-publish some of its publications, leveraging their expertise and networks while increasing the impact and quality of the studies. Examples include the studies conducted with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), the European Innovation Council (EIC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research. Moreover, some publications benefited from additional forms of collaboration with the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO) and the Association of European Science and Technology Transfer Professionals (ASTP).

The technology insight report "Digital agriculture" was developed in close co-operation with several Latin American patent offices, including Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, enriching the analysis with perspectives from emerging innovation ecosystems.

Economic studies

The Observatory published six [economic studies](#) in 2025:

Figure 30 – Economic studies

ECONOMIC STUDIES		
	Co-publisher	Launch
Intellectual property rights and firm performance in the European Union How IP ownership shapes business growth across the EU	EUIPO EUROPEAN UNION INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE	January 2025
Mapping investors for European innovators Mapping tech-focused investors and applying a new metric: Technology Investor Score (TIS)		January 2025
New frontiers in oncology: an evolving innovation ecosystem Tracking breakthrough cancer technologies and the players shaping them		February 2025
Standards and the European patent system Showing the deepening links between patents and standards		May 2025
The role of European public research in patenting and innovation Uncovering how public science powers Europe's deep-tech startups	Fraunhofer ISI	October 2025
Mapping the global quantum ecosystem Looking at patenting, firm activities, skills, trade, supply chains and government initiatives in the quantum ecosystem.	OECD	December 2025

Source: EPO

Technology insight reports

The Observatory also published three [technology insight reports](#):

Figure 31 – Technology insights reports

TECHNOLOGY INSIGHTS REPORTS		
		
Co-publisher		Launch
Plastics in transition <i>Exploring five decades of technology trends in plastic waste management</i>		April 2025
Advances in photovoltaics <i>Assessing patenting activities across over 30 technologies related to photovoltaic materials, photovoltaic devices and their management, and application areas.</i>		July 2025
Digital agriculture: towards sustainable food security <i>Highlighting the crucial role of smart farming in addressing food security, sustainability and climate challenges</i>		September 2025

Source: EPO

Innovation case studies

Innovation case studies feature curated examples illustrating how organisations strategically use intellectual property to support innovation, commercialise technology and achieve business growth, highlighting practical lessons and best practices from real-world innovation journeys.

The Observatory supported the extension of the series of EPO Innovation case studies. In November, to mark the EPO's participation in the SLUSH startup event, it published three innovation case studies related to financing innovation, showing the link between patenting and funding. In December, it published two more innovation case studies related to quantum technologies.

Figure 32 – Innovation case studies

INNOVATION CASE STUDIES	
	
Launch	
Arevo, a technology transfer case study	November 2025
Infinite Roots, an SME case study	November 2025
Lightyear, a technology transfer case study	November 2025
C12, an SME case study	December 2025
PASQAL, an SME case study	December 2025

Source: EPO

Biennial work programme 2026-2027

The preparation of the biennial work programme (BWP) for the years 2026 and 2027 included a public consultation in February and March 2025 and a presentation to the 97th meeting of the Technical and Operational Support Committee in April 2025, which received a unanimous positive opinion. The [second biennial work programme](#) was published on 6 October 2025, two years after the release of the first programme in October 2023.

The new work programme is structured into three major themes: breaking barriers to the innovation ecosystem, shaping a better future with technology and empowering innovation actors. Key projects and milestones of the new BWP are listed in the figure below.

Figure 33 – Key milestones in the biennial work programme 2026-2027



Source: EPO

Scenarios for the future

In 2025, the Observatory laid the groundwork for its foresight study, "Scenarios for the Future 2025-2045", which is due to be published in 2027. This project takes inspiration from the EPO's landmark foresight study published in 2007, which anticipated key transformations in the global IP landscape between 2005 and 2025. The new exercise expands on the scope of that study by covering

innovation and technology trends. It is intended as a flagship effort to support long-term planning and resilience across the European Patent Organisation, the European Patent Network (EPN) and key stakeholders.

The study is structured around three pillars: a) a retrospective analysis of the 2005-2025 scenarios; b) a forward-looking set of scenarios for the evolution of the innovation and technology ecosystems across EPO member states; and c) an exploration of possible future scenarios for the patent system itself, including the institutional role of patent offices, patent professionals and alternative protection models.

The objective is to provide EPO member states, policymakers and other stakeholders with robust strategic insights to inform their long-term planning and ensure that the patent system remains relevant, trusted and fit for purpose in a fast-evolving world.

The project got underway in mid-2025 and was formally presented during the December 2025 meeting of the Administrative Council. The study will be completed in 2027, in the framework of the 50th anniversary of the European Patent Office.

5.3 Observatory tools

Deep Tech Finder (DTF)

The [Deep Tech Finder \(DTF\)](#), the interactive platform that helps to identify European startups, universities with patent-backed innovations in deep technology fields, and investors that support European deep tech, continued to be improved and developed throughout 2025, with regular content updates. This was complemented by the extension of its coverage to public research organisations and the introduction of new filters for technical fields.

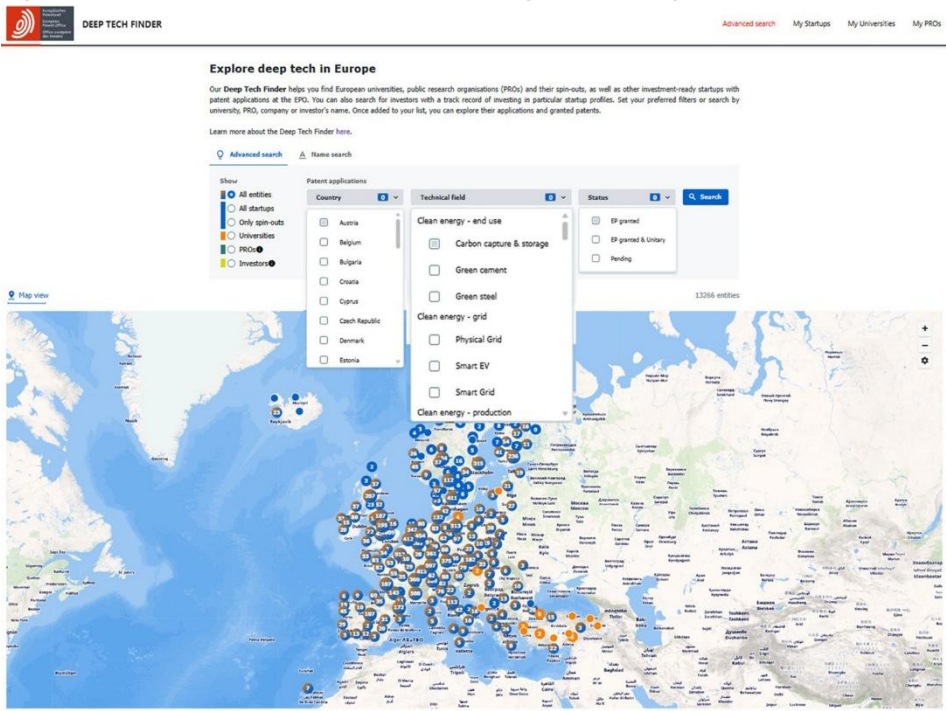
There were five major upgrades in 2025:

- **January:** a new version of the DTF was released with a feature enabling users to find investors that have European startups with European patent applications in their portfolio.
- **April:** the technical fields for plastic-related technologies were incorporated as filters.
- **September:** the technical fields for digital agriculture technologies were incorporated as filters.
- **October:** a new feature was launched enabling users to find public research organisations and their spin-outs with European patent applications.
- **December:** technical fields for quantum technologies were incorporated as filters.

In addition, a new DTF application for mobile devices was released in June 2025, both for Android and Apple users. The application provides the same contents as the desktop version, with an enhanced user-friendly interface adapted to mobile usage.

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

Figure 34 – Deep Tech Finder interface containing the 2025 upgrades



Source: EPO

As of December 2025, the DTF featured 10 251 startups, 897 universities, 123 public research organisations and 10 326 investors. The desktop version of the tool had more than 38 000 views in 2025.

Technology platforms

The Observatory continued to deliver new [technology platforms](#), making it easier for scientists and researchers to explore the EPO's free patent database, Espacenet.

Three new technology platforms were released during 2025, taking the total up to nine technology platforms covering a variety of different technical fields.

Figure 35 – Technology platforms

TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS

Plastics in transition

Mouldable, multi-purpose plastics are omnipresent in our daily lives yet their fossil fuel origins and global proliferation make them unsustainable. The challenge is to find viable, scalable alternatives. Innovation is key to creating sustainable solutions for the future of plastics.

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

Digital agriculture

As the world population grows, along with demand for arable land, there is an increasingly urgent need for more efficient farming. Advances in data-driven agriculture can help achieve sustainable food security.

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

Quantum technologies

Powerful new forms of computing, more secure communications and greater levels of precision in sensing and measurement will enable groundbreaking advances from medical imaging to navigation to environmental monitoring.

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

Launch	
Plastics in transition	April 2025
Digital agriculture	September 2025
Quantum technologies	December 2025

Source: EPO

All of the technology platforms developed under the Observatory since October 2023 attracted, altogether, over 20 000 visits during 2025.

Digital library

The new [digital library](#) tool was launched during the TOSC/98 in November 2025. It serves as a central hub for retrieving in-depth resources – from publications to other types of media – on technology and innovation. In preparation for the official launch, the Observatory organised breakout sessions during the TOSC meeting to introduce the tool and allow participants to give feedback with a view to making further improvements.

All Observatory publications mentioned above are already available in the tool, along with external content published by stakeholders. The Digital Library content will be continuously expanded and updated over time to reflect new developments and user needs.

As of December 2025, the tool had received almost 3 000 views during the month and a half since its launch.

Patent standards explorer

The [Patent Standards Explorer \(PSE\)](#) is a dataset connecting patent applications to Standards Development Organisation documents, linking the worlds of patent and standards beyond traditional, self-reported, standard-essentiality declarations. It was released as part of the "Standards and the European Patent System" project in May 2025.

After its release, the PSE dataset was downloaded 680 times over the course of 2025.

PATSTAT

PATSTAT is the EPO's comprehensive patent statistics database designed for conducting advanced analyses of global bibliographic and legal event patent data. It is now accessible free of charge within the EPO's Technology Intelligence Platform (TIP) together with dedicated training notebooks. The TIP offers users a powerful computing platform for exploiting PATSTAT data, combining it with other data sources and developing their own notebooks in various computing languages.

During 2025, PATSTAT reached several milestones in its development:

- The first two fully insourced PATSTAT Global and PATSTAT EP Register editions were released.
- The sixth call under the [Academic Research Programme \(ARP\)](#) was launched in December 2025. The programme offers funding for up to six practical, solution-driven research projects that harness the EPO's Technology Intelligence Platform and PATSTAT to generate impactful patent intelligence. Researchers were invited to submit proposals for two streams: advanced forecasting of patent applications and analysis of local academic inventor ecosystems.

5.4 Observatory outreach activities and impact

The Observatory began a comprehensive revamp and reorganisation of its section on epo.org, aiming to enhance visibility and facilitate easier access. This initiative was undertaken to ensure that information and resources are more readily available and user friendly for a wider audience. Throughout 2025, the Observatory's webpages registered over 40 000 views, demonstrating increased interest and engagement from visitors.

The Observatory also organised three online events (one hybrid) in 2025, generating over 16 000 cumulative views. The topics of these events included patents and standards, public research organisations and innovation in quantum technologies.

Additionally, the Observatory tripled its participation in external events, presentations and outreach initiatives, which increased from 60 interventions between October 2023 and December 2024 to 180 interventions in 2025. This expanded outreach enabled the Observatory to connect with different stakeholders, which, in turn, increased the visibility of patent-based intelligence and contributed to a rise in citations of Observatory publications in well-known external sources.

Figure 36 – Outreach activities



Source: EPO

Observatory events

The Observatory organised three online events during 2025, which generated over 16 000 total cumulative views. They were:

- [Patents, standards and innovation: securing Europe's competitive edge](#), May 2025
- [Public research organisations and innovation in Europe](#), October 2025
- [Scaling up quantum innovation](#), December 2025

In partnership with Euronews, the Observatory also contributed to the EPO hybrid event, [Unlocking Europe's potential: Competitiveness meets technology trends](#), hosted on 25 March 2025 in Brussels to mark the launch of the EPO Patent Index. The TV segment covering the event highlights achieved a reach of 1.5 million viewers in Europe.

Reaching out to high-tech startups

After the successful conclusion of the project's pilot phase, the Observatory continued to support more events suggested by participating member states within the categories enablement, funding and partnership, allowing national patent offices to select the category that best matched the respective startup events.

The initiative was implemented through joint participation in startup fairs and events, complemented by presentations tailored to the startup community. Member states could define the level of EPO involvement in these events, for example, by asking it to provide materials, contribute to funding or arrange for the participation of an EPO expert. In total, this project supported the following 12 events in 2025:

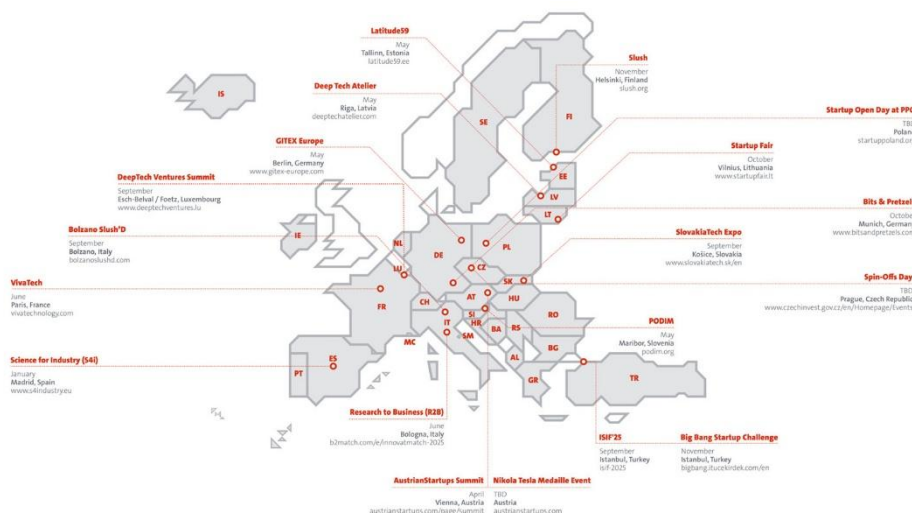
- Science4Industry, 30 January, Madrid, Spain, with the Spanish Patent and Trademark Office (OEPM)
- PODIM, 12-14 May, Maribor, Slovenia, with the Slovenian Intellectual Property Office (SIPO)
- Deep Tech Atelier, 15-16 May, Riga, Latvia, with the Patent Office of the Republic of Latvia (LRPV)
- GITEX Europe, 21-23 May, Berlin, Germany, with the German Patent and Trademark Office (DPMA)
- VivaTech, 11-14 June, Paris, France, with the French National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI)
- Research to Business, 25-26 June, Bologna, Italy, with the Italian Patent and Trademark Office (UIBM)
- ISIF'25, 17-21 September, Istanbul, Turkey, with the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office (TÜRKPATENT)
- Bits & Pretzels 2025, 29 September - 1 October, Munich, Germany, with the German Patent and Trademark Office (DPMA)
- Verleihung Nikola Tesla Medaille, 12 November, Graz, Austria, with the Austrian Patent Office (ÖPA)
- Slush 2025, 19-20 November, Helsinki, Finland, with the Finnish Patent and Registration Office (PRH)
- Innovations Hub Summit Gala, 28 November, Warsaw, Poland, with the Patent Office of the Republic of Poland (UPRP)
- National Spin-off Day 2025, 3 December, Ostrava, Czech Republic, with the Industrial Property Office of the Czech Republic (IPO CZ)

These contributions included workshops or presentations on topics such as IP and funding, Observatory studies and the Deep Tech Finder. The project also supported the NPOs' presence at these fairs by contributing to their booths and presentations by providing content, materials and funding.

Planning also started for 2026, with member states expressing their interest in contributing to a total of 14 events.

As part of the initiative *Reach out to high-tech startups*, the European Patent Office collaborates with the national patent offices in EPO member states to engage with startups and SMEs at leading innovation fairs and events across Europe.

Figure 37 – Map of the planned 2026 reach-out to high-tech startups events



Source: EPO

Reaching out through podcasts

The Observatory was also part of the EPO Talk Innovation podcast series to amplify outreach efforts, share insights into its initiatives and engage a broader audience on the emerging trends in innovation and intellectual property.

In total, six podcasts were released in connection with Observatory projects during 2025, each typically timed one to two months after publication to sustain interest in the topic:

- [Closing the funding gap to boost Europe's tech startups](#), February 2025
- [Plastics in transition: tackling the waste crisis](#), May 2025
- [From USB to 5G: the power of standards](#), June 2025
- [Shining a light on the photovoltaics boom](#), September 2025
- [Digital and data driven: the new age of agriculture](#), November 2025
- [Science meets startup: public research on the rise](#), December 2025

Figure 38 – 2025 podcasts released in relation to Observatory projects



Source: EPO

By the end of 2025, all Observatory podcasts released up to that point had accumulated a total of 22 000 listens.

Other interventions

The Observatory also participated in external events in 2025. These included attending conferences, events, summits and bilateral meetings at the invitation of stakeholders to promote the Observatory and its initiatives. The Observatory participated, for example, in the *Clean energy transition conference* in February 2025, the *EIC Summit 2025* held in April, the *Technology Forum Life Sciences*, the *European Research and Innovation Days* and the *European Conference on Corporate R&D and Innovation CONCORDi 2025*, where Observatory resources were presented.

Impacting other publications

In 2025, the Observatory's research and analysis for economic studies and technology insight reports continued to gain recognition, with citations appearing in a rising number of authoritative sources. In addition to facilitating knowledge transfer, these citations reflect the Observatory's growing role in shaping discussions on intellectual property and innovation across Europe and beyond.

Examples include references in the European Commission working document [The EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy](#), the International Energy Agency report [The State of Energy Innovation](#) on recent progress and emerging challenges in energy technology innovation, or WIPO's [Future of transportation](#) report.

Moreover, as a renowned source and global standard for patent intelligence and statistics, the EPO's PATSTAT database has paved the way for many research projects, resulting in a wealth of related publications. PATSTAT, which celebrated its [20th anniversary in June 2025](#), has already inspired its user community to over 6 000 publications and this figure is rising steadily.

Social media and press coverage

In terms of press coverage, five Observatory publications were accompanied by a dedicated press campaign, which generated a total of 2 300 clippings. These clippings reached an audience of more than 43 million, highlighting the extensive media coverage of the reports.

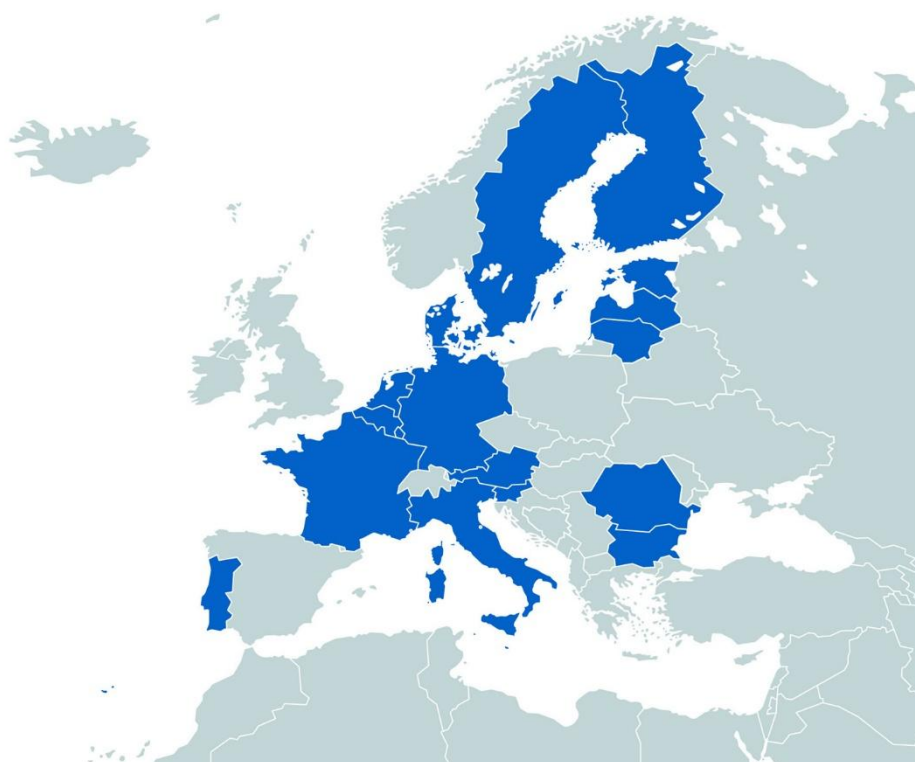
As for social media coverage, total organic reach (i.e. without paid promotion) across Observatory projects and events was over 350 000 users, with organic engagement totalling 31 000. Additionally, social platform content generated 122 000 views, reflecting strong audience interaction and content visibility.

6. Driving innovation with the Unitary Patent

In its first three years of operation, the **Unitary Patent** has already cemented its role as a key pillar of patent protection in Europe, significantly reducing fragmentation and boosting the Single Market. Through deep and sustained co-operation between the EPO, the Unified Patent Court (UPC), the 18 participating states, and the broader user community, the system is delivering real value to innovators across the continent and beyond.

Since its launch in June 2023, the Unitary Patent system has empowered European innovators by delivering cost-effective, unified market protection.

Figure 39 – States participating in the Unitary Patent system



Source: EPO

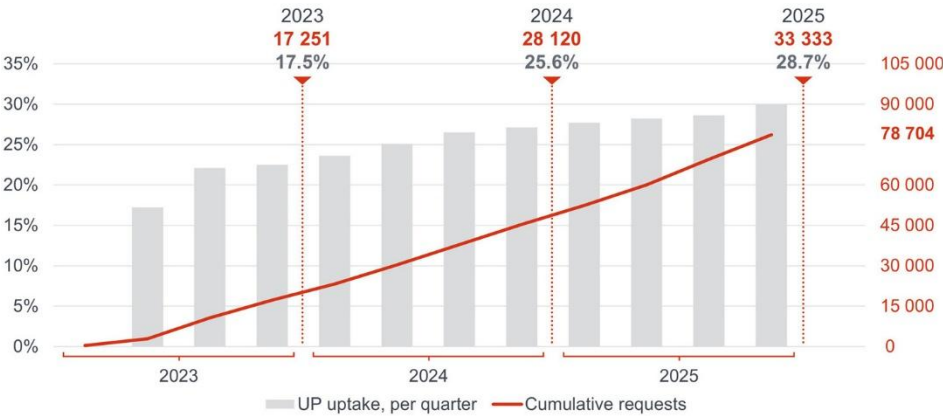
A thorough evaluation of the system's functioning since its launch began in 2025. Fulfilling its institutional commitments, the EPO produced a comprehensive contribution to the **European Commission's upcoming first report** on the operation of Regulation (EU) No. 1257/2012. Following informal exchanges and a dedicated workplan, this key contribution was shared with the Commission and EPC contracting states in November 2025, before its official publication in December.

The conclusions of this assessment are unequivocal: the launch of the Unitary Patent has been a resounding success. Any pre-launch concerns regarding the system's projected uptake or operational complexity have been dispelled. Instead, the European IP landscape now benefits from a robust, widely embraced additional framework that empowers innovation across all sectors. The implementation by the EPO has been smooth across legal, operational, and IT domains, validating the framework established through the Select Committee.

Accelerating uptake and sustained global growth

The trajectory of the Unitary Patent in 2025 was characterised by accelerating uptake and sustained global growth. By the end of 2025, almost **79 000 unitary patents** had been registered by the EPO. Demand strengthened consistently with each passing quarter, culminating in a total of **33 333 requests** received in 2025 alone. This represents a striking 18.5% year-on-year increase compared to 2024, confirming that the system's momentum is structurally embedded rather than merely an initial surge of interest.

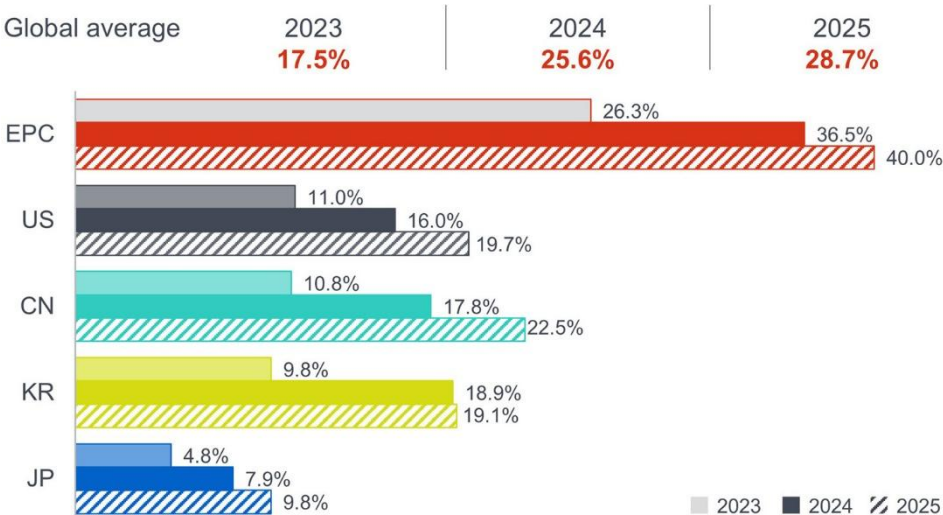
Figure 40 – Evolution of Unitary Patent requests 2023-2025



Source: EPO

This remarkable growth is reflected in the global uptake rate, which rose by three percentage points to reach 28.7% in 2025. More than one in four granted European patents now result in a request for unitary effect. Geographically, the system remains deeply anchored in its home market: 60% of proprietors of unitary patents are European, and the uptake rate among users from EPC contracting states reached an impressive 40% in 2025. In 23 of these states, uptake exceeded 50%, while in countries such as Portugal and Slovakia, rates surpassed 80%. These figures suggest that in many jurisdictions, unitary protection has practically become the default strategic choice for innovators.

Figure 41 – Unitary Patent uptake 2023-2025



Source: EPO

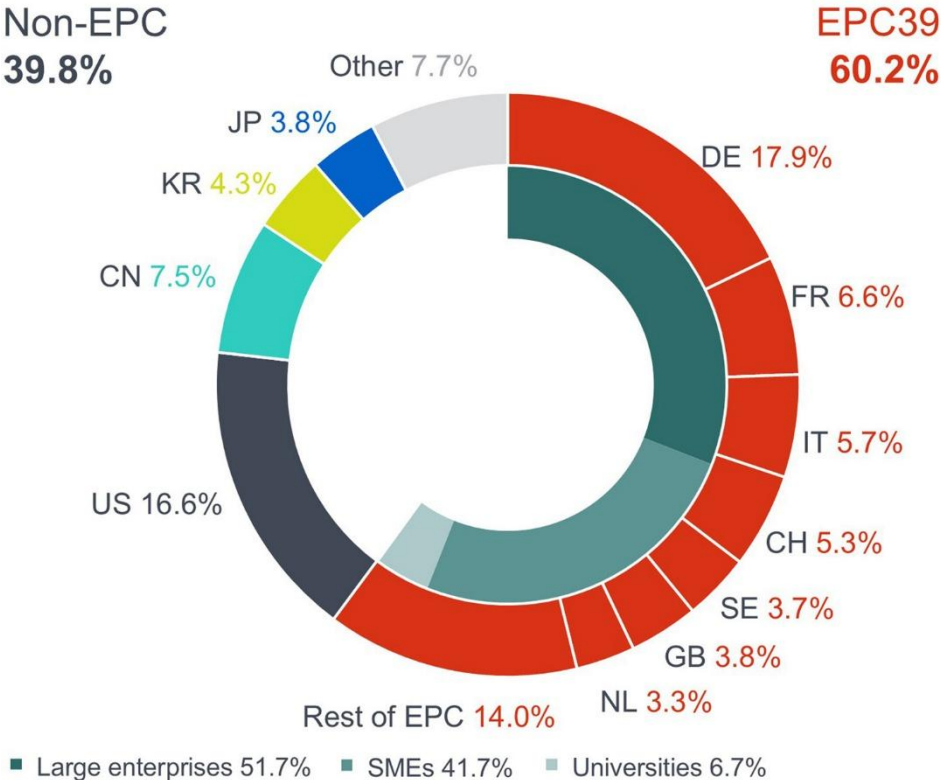
Simultaneously, the system is gaining steady international traction, indicating deepening global confidence. Uptake among users from the United States rose to 20%, with China exceeding 22.5%. Steady increases were also observed in Japan, reaching 12% in the fourth quarter following targeted awareness efforts, and in the Republic of Korea. This broad-based international expansion ensures that the Unitary Patent is increasingly integrated into the global filing strategies of major innovation hubs.

Empowering SMEs and the innovation ecosystem

At the heart of the Unitary Patent's success is its capacity to empower smaller enterprises, a strategic imperative recently underscored by the Draghi report's calls for enhanced European competitiveness. The system's economic logic, with a simple and cost-efficient centralised procedure before the EPO, on the basis of a single request and a unified register, uniquely benefits entities sensitive to administrative complexity and costs. In 2025, SMEs, individual inventors, universities, and public research organisations collectively represented over 48% of the total share of European proprietors.

From university spin-offs to scaling startups, the Unitary Patent system provides a cost-effective, unified legal safety net that allows smaller entities to focus their resources on innovation rather than administration.

Figure 42 – Unitary Patent proprietor makeup in 2025



Source: EPO

A closer examination of the operational data highlights the profound impact on small and medium-sized enterprises. Overall, SMEs accounted for approximately 40% of all European requests for unitary effect, compared to their 22% share of classic European patents. Even more impressively, the uptake rate within this group reached 54%, and soared to an exceptional 62% among micro-entities. This demonstrates that the EPO's targeted outreach and support measures are ensuring the system delivers real value exactly where it is needed most.

The distinct European character of the system is further evidenced by participation trends. While classical European patents see strong dominance from overseas applicants, especially the United States, the Unitary Patent landscape reveals robust participation from within Europe. Germany stands as the top contributor overall, illustrating the system's importance for the continent's industrial base.

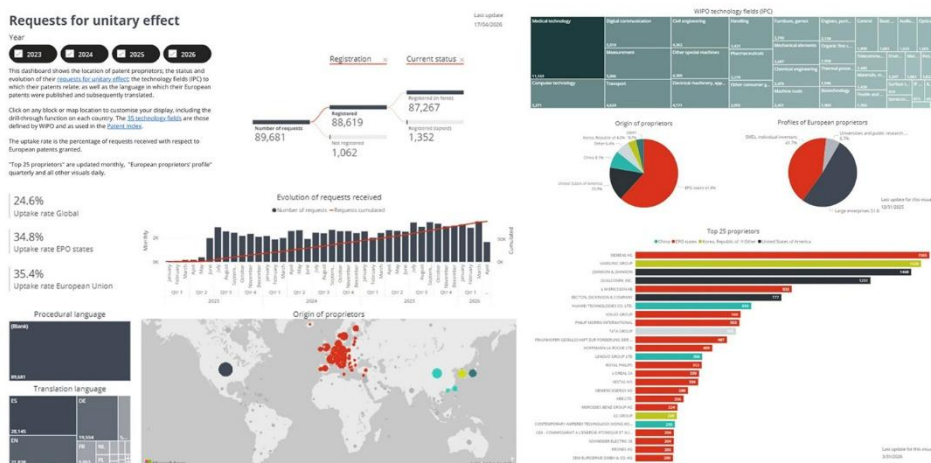
To further support this diverse ecosystem, the EPO administers a highly effective translation compensation scheme. This measure covers pre-grant translation costs for smaller entities based in the EU that file their applications in an official EU language other than English, French, or German. In 2025, the scheme continued to be actively utilised, with more than 1 000 compensation requests granted. The linguistic diversity supported by this scheme was evident, with the majority of granted requests concerning applications originally filed in Italian (62%), Spanish (14%), and Polish (8%).

Enhancing transparency and user tools

Transparency and continuous stakeholder engagement are critical components of the Unitary Patent's governance. Throughout 2025, the EPO introduced and refined a range of common tools and information services designed to democratise access to the system and support users in formulating their intellectual property strategies.

The **Unitary Patent Dashboard** received a major upgrade in June 2025. Extensively updated with a range of new interactive features, it now delivers a broader array of insights into usage and trends, directly addressing stakeholder feedback. Conceived as a flagship tool for outreach, communication, and transparency, its refreshed interface is highly informative and user-friendly. Crucially, the June 2025 update introduced detailed, country-level data, allowing users to examine uptake rates by specific technology areas for each individual country. Coupled with practical tools such as the **Unitary Patent fee calculator**, these instruments provide a consistent, transparent framework that aids users across all participating member states in understanding the strategic implications of their filing choices.

Figure 43 – Unitary Patent Dashboard



Source: EPO

Parallel to technological enhancements, the EPO maintained a highly collaborative approach to its legal framework. The revision cycle for the Unitary Patent Guidelines exemplified this partnership model: shortly after the first-ever set of **Unitary Patent Guidelines** were published in February 2025, external stakeholders were invited to contribute to the next revision. Participation was extensive, with 226 comments received through online consultations and discussions within the SACEPO Working Party Guidelines. This robust feedback loop resulted in concrete adjustments for the second edition of the Guidelines, pre-published in early 2026. The updated Guidelines incorporate reflections of recent legal developments, procedural updates for oral proceedings, and clarifications regarding notification rules. Furthermore, amendments introducing gender-neutral language into the **Unitary Patent Rules** successfully entered into force on 1 December 2025, modernising the legal text in line with institutional values.

Legal certainty and the UPC partnership

The sustained growth of the Unitary Patent is inextricably linked to the increasing jurisprudence and legal certainty provided by the **Unified Patent Court (UPC)**. As the judicial arm of the system, the UPC has solidified its role as a central, highly respected forum for patent litigation in Europe, delivering high-quality decisions that foster investment and trust.

In 2025, the UPC firmly integrated itself into the EU judicial framework in 2025, as evidenced by the Court of Appeal making its first-ever referral to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

The EPO continued to nurture its collaboration with the UPC on training and IT-related developments. This co-operation extends to the institutional set-up of the Patent Mediation and Arbitration Centre (PMAC), which commenced operations in May 2026, further expanding the dispute resolution options available to innovators. Furthermore, regular exchanges on practices between the EPO, UPC and Board of Appeals contribute to better consistency and predictability of outcomes for users.

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