

# WIPO



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**ANNUAL TECHNICAL REPORT**

**1999**

**ON PATENT INFORMATION ACTIVITIES\***

submitted by the

**NETHERLANDS**

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of members of the Standing Committee on Information Technologies

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– The term “patent” covers utility models and SPCs.  
– Information related to design patent activities reported by industrial property offices issuing design patents is included in the series of documents SCIT/ATR/ID.

# ANNUAL TECHNICAL REPORT ON PATENT ACTIVITIES IN 1999

## NETHERLANDS INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY OFFICE

### I. Evolution of patent activities

For the Netherlands Industrial Property Office 1999 was marked as a year of further implementation of its target group oriented activities, presented in its 'Strategy Statement for the Netherlands Industrial Property Office's non-legal tasks, 1997 - 2002.

*Facts:* In 1999 the Office received 3,051 patent applications of which 3,047 were submitted under the 1995 Patents Act, an increase of 2% compared to 1998. In total 2,541 (83%) of the filings were of Dutch origin. 37% of the applications came from small en medium sized enterprises, more then 21% from private individuals and 12% from large companies. The 1995 Patents Act offers the applicants the choice of a six year or twenty year patent. Approximately 72% of the applicants opted for a twenty year patent (with novelty search). In 1999 the NIPO carried out approximately 400 novelty searches. The European Patent Office (EPO) effected 1,794 novelty searches on behalf of our Office. A total of 2,965 patents was granted, of which 354 under the 1910 Patents Act.

#### *Changes in the 1995 Patents Act:*

The fees for novelty searches were further reduced according to the reduction of fees of the European patent organization. Also the fees for advises in case of annulment were reduced. The maintenance fees were increased on bases of indexing. Fines in case of not paying maintenance fees in time were increased till 50% of the payable fee.

*Supplementary Protection Certificates:* A total of 45 applications for a Supplementary Protection Certificate (SPC) were submitted to the Office in 1999. Of these 45 applications 43 related to a certificate for medicinal products (45 in 1998), while the remaining 2 applications related to a certificate for plant protection products.

### II. Matters concerning the generation, reproduction, distribution and use of primary and secondary sources of patent information.

In accordance with the 1910 Patents Act NIPO publishes:

- A-documents, patent applications laid open to public inspection;
- B-documents, patent applications after examination;
- C-documents, grant of patents.

Publications according to the 1995 Patents Act are:

- A-documents, registered patent applications;
- C6-documents, 6 year (unexamined) grant of patents;
- C20-documents, 20 year (examined) grant of patents.

The Office monthly publishes the patent gazette "De Industriële Eigendom" and the official journal "Bijblad bij De Industriële Eigendom". The latter contains jurisprudence on industrial property rights.

1999 was the sixth year "*Biebulletin*", the library's announcement periodical, has been published. Both selected referential articles and newly acquired books and periodicals review the intellectual property in this - also monthly - published periodical. From June 1999 the Office worked on a new patent register which came available to the public in January 2000. The register is accessible through the Internet.

### **III. Matters concerning abstracting, classifying, reclassifying and indexing of technical information contained in patent documents**

Nothing new to report since the 1998 report, see also under IV. Search file establishment and upkeep.

### **IV. Search file establishment and upkeep**

National patent documents, starting with the year 1912 up to 1973, classified according to IdT (Dutch classification system *Indeling der Techniek*) are still part of the search files. From 1973 onwards national documents are accessible in classified order according to IPC. Patent documents of over thirty countries with which the NIPO exchanges documents are kept in numerical order. These documents are accessible on paper, microfilm, microfiche and cd-rom.

With reference to former discussions that included user commissions of the library decisions were taken to reorganise the patent collections. In 1998 a start was made by deleting the duplications on micro-media. In 1999 duplications on hard copy were deleted in favour of publications on cd-rom. With the increase of five extra computer configurations in the public reading room in January 1999 access is given to in total fourteen workstations now.

### **V. Activities in the field of computerized and other mechanized search systems.**

#### *Patent Information On Line*

The capacity of the *Patent Information On Line* system (PION) was expanded end 1999/beginning 2000. De major enhancements were more powerful computers. The new nodes each have two CPU's instead of one, with 1 Gbyte of memory instead of 256 Mbyte for the old nodes. The new CPU's are each roughly four times as powerful as the old CPU's. Furthermore the disk array subsystem has been replaced with much faster disks and faster interfaces, resulting in an almost doubling of the throughput.

The software of the PION system was upgraded to the most recent reliable versions of AIX, DB2, Verity and IXOS. At the moment around 10 million patent documents on CD-ROMs are available in this system.

#### *Esp@cenet server*

The Netherlands Esp@cenet server was brought on-line in 1999. The system functions without problems. The hardware consists of an IBM Netfinity-server using Windows/NT as its operating system.

#### *DVD*

The foreseen (partially) migration to DVD-disks had to be postponed to 2000.

### *On-line patent register.*

The project resulting into this product was formerly known under the name *Register+*. In December 1999 the Internet version of the Netherlands patent register was completed and brought into production early January 2000. The system is based on the same hardware as the PION system (RS-6000 SP nodes), but has more memory (1.5 Gbyte). The database management system used is Oracle 8i. Up to now the system is very stable and response times are above expectation.

### *Automation of library systems*

The implementation of the desired functionality in the software package Cuadra/Star envisioned some further delays and is expected to be completed in the year 2000. At the moment of composing this report the project is on the latest schedule.

### *IPC-classification*

The Office is preparing a new information tool. This information system makes it possible for people to search and consult the Netherlands version of the IPC-classification. The timetable for this project has not yet been finalized.

## **VI. Administration of the industrial property office library and services available to the public**

The library is collecting, administering and making available collections of patent publications, non-patent literature and files in the field of industrial property. With permanent search for solutions to integrate internal and external information sources the library offers clients access to information systems in an ambiguous way.

The main part of the collection is available on paper but since the introduction of the cd-rom the collection of cd-rom disks has rapidly increased. The collection of patent publications is stored by publication number. An important part of the patent collection is accessible via PION, Esp@cenet and Patent Register. The main part of the collections on paper, microfiche, microfilm and cd-rom is directly accessible to the public, partly in the public reading room. Besides patent publications there is a large collection of patent journals. The collection of non-patent literature consists of about 40,000 books and journals focused on the entire field of science. The books are accessible by IPC classification. The legal collection contains international literature on intellectual property in general and on industrial property in particular. This collection is unique in the Netherlands.

*Facts.* In 1999 around 700 new books were acquired, 421 current periodicals subscriptions were available, document supply service of 647,000 photocopies were sent to third parties, while 700,500 photocopies and prints were made by visitors. 73,700 search actions in PION in the year 1999 and 100,400 search actions in Esp@cenet over the last three months of 1999 were executed.

In 1999 the library received 6,327 external visitors in total, a fall of 16,7% compare to 1998. As a result of the increase in the number of on line services it is expected that the number of visitors will fall again in the year 2000.

The Office received almost 10,000 requests for information from patent offices, companies and private individuals via the public information services. The interest in answering questions via e-mail is becoming increasingly important.

Visitors *	6,327
Photocopies supplied to third parties	647,000
Photocopies and prints made by visitors	700,500
Search actions in PION	73,686
Search actions in Espacenet **	100,396

\* external visitors only, excl. EPO and TNO

\*\* this number relates to October – December 1999

## **VII. Matters concerning mutual exchange of patent documentation and information**

### *Exchanging patent information*

The NIPO works continuously on improving its service provision. Developments in the area of ICT enable quality improvements. The ultimate aim is complete digitisation of internal information sources. Access to patent information is enabled by using Internet technology. For example, the Office launched the Patent Register on line, Esp@cenet (the European patent search system) and Patent Information On line (PION, a national search system). The Office will shortly offer the International Patent Classification translated into Dutch.

### *Patent Register on line*

The Patent Register has been made accessible on line and has replaced the Octet digital register since January 2000. The Patent Register is accessible via the website of NIPO ([www.bie.minez.nl](http://www.bie.minez.nl)).

The new on line search system offers free access to current data on more than 550,000 publications: Dutch patent applications, patents granted from 1968 onwards (including European patents granted for the Netherlands) and certificates. The register provides administrative data via 40 entry points, such as patent status, patentee, granting date, validity term and fee payments.

### *Esp@cenet and Patent Information ON line*

In 1999, the year in which PION was operational for its first full calendar year, a total of 73,686 search actions were executed. Syntens users (with its regional innovation outlets) were the most active remote users with 10,599 search actions.

Since October 1999 the NIPO has been offering a second facility through its website, Esp@cenet ([www.bie.minez.nl](http://www.bie.minez.nl)), in addition to the PION search system. Esp@cenet, which the EPO developed, is ideal for patent experts searching in the patent literature. PION is intended for laymen and offers more search entry points - in the Dutch language - in which support is offered via the NIPO, Syntens, Senter, higher vocational education institutes and universities. PION unfortunately is still password protected and is therefore accessible only via the organisations mentioned above. An additional 50 people from these organisations were trained for this in 1999.

Esp@cenet offers more current information and is accessible to everyone without a password. As a result Esp@cenet is used more often than PION. At a national level 100,396 search actions were executed via Esp@cenet in the period from October to December 1999 inclusive.

### *Dutch language IPC*

The NIPO will soon be offering a Dutch language version of the IPC (International Patent Classification). The Dutch translation will further simplify the use of the search systems as mentioned earlier.

#### *MIPEX*

NIPO is participating in the international MIPEX project (Message based Industrial Property information EXchange) to develop e-business in the area of industrial property. Partners in this project include amongst others the national patent offices of the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark. In addition there are two participants from private companies and an organisation of patent agents (FICPI). In this project the NIPO is responsible for developing on line access to Patent Register data and is participating in a pilot in the area of on line fee payments.

Work is also being done on developing a system for on line filing and handling of applications for industrial property rights. The comparable EPO-line - to be developed by the EPO - limits itself to patents, whilst MIPEX focuses on all industrial property rights.

#### *Websites*

The NIPO has developed a techno-starter box for start-up entrepreneurs who want to develop technological products, the so-called techno-starters. This information box introduces these techno-starters into the world of innovation and patents via the Office's website. These starters can use the virtual box ([www.bie.minez.nl/technostarters](http://www.bie.minez.nl/technostarters)) as a tool in developing a business plan and modelling their enterprise. An extension with boxes for other specific target groups is in preparation.

The Office can also be consulted via the InnovatieNet's website. The InnovatieNet, operated by Syntens, is a virtual community and functions as a central Internet searchsite for SME entrepreneurs. The NIPO participates in InnovatieNet and delivers information about the patent system to entrepreneurs ([www.innovatienet.nl](http://www.innovatienet.nl)).

### **VIII. Other relevant matters concerning education and training, and promotion of, the use of patent information, including technical assistance to developing countries**

#### *Implementing target group policy*

Partly at the request of the Dutch Lower House the ministry of Economic Affairs commissioned an interim evaluation into the execution of target group policy as stated in the Strategy statement 1997 - 2002. Researchers have established that the Office is on schedule in respect of the SME and higher vocational education target groups. On the other hand the universities, technological institutes and government target groups require more attention. It is expected that greater effectiveness will be reached by among other things improvement programmes within the Office, intensifying an office-wide approach to the knowledge dissemination task and unambiguous guidance from the ministry.

#### *Target group focused activities*

Via intensive collaboration - with use of client panels - and further target group segmentation to encourage further use of the patent system by the target groups mentioned before will be stimulated.

## ***I. Business and industry***

Within the business and industry sector the Office is focusing particularly on the innovative SME (and especially on techno-starters) and their onward referral bodies, such as the Chambers of Commerce and umbrella organisations. In this framework the Office is working in close cooperation with what are referred to as the innovation intermediaries, such as Syntens, Senter and industrial design firms. The Office conducts regular research to map out the desires of this target group.

### ***a. Techno-starters***

In November 1999 the NIPO organised the seminar 'The patent system, innovation and start-up entrepreneurs'. The aim of this seminar was to make techno-starters and their coaches aware of the possibilities that the patent system can offer in building up their enterprise and product package.

Mr G. Ybema, minister of Foreign Trade, opened the seminar.

### ***b. Umbrella organisations***

The NIPO has conducted various activities to point out the possibilities of the patent system to umbrella organisations. Sector secretaries and company lawyers from the trade organisation Metaalunie were informed about industrial property rights, patents and innovation, which means that from now on they can provide their own first line advice to their members. All 21 Dutch Chambers of Commerce have obtained access to the Office's information material. Almost 100 members of the Dutch Institute of Inventors have been informed about the electronic patent search systems in three sessions.

### ***c. Target group segmentation***

The NIPO commissioned the Economic Institute for Small and Medium sized Enterprises to conduct research into the most efficient possible market approach strategy for the innovative SME. The Office has large awareness among this group of companies and there is a need for more use of patent information. There is also appreciation for the Office's disclosing information task. The further conclusion from the research was that a direct approach (via trade fairs, specialist literature and the Internet) is advisable.

## ***II. Knowledge infrastructure***

The knowledge infrastructure target group consists of the Dutch universities, higher vocational education and technological institutes.

### ***a. Universities and technology institutes***

Most universities are beginning to gain more attention for a patent policy at a managerial level. The NIPO works with a bottom up-strategy: universities and technology institutes are offered visiting lectures and information sessions. What is envisaged with these is giving the patent system a clearer place in (the curricula of) these knowledge institutes. In total 550 people have participated in visiting lectures, workshops and colloquia. The universities also started to use the Patent Game in 1999. And, preparations have been made for a Knowledge protection course at Utrecht University.

From results of research conducted by the Economic Research Foundation into the university knowledge protection and exploitation policy in the Netherlands it appears that this policy requires improvement. A more active university patent policy is supported in both the so called

Industry letter from the ministry of Economic Affairs and the Science budget of the ministry of Education, Culture and the Sciences.

The National Platform for University Patent Policy proposed in 1999 will help to formulate general basic policy principles via influential experts and policy makers. The nucleus of the Platform met for the first time in March 2000 and consisted of experts from the Association of Collaborating Dutch Universities, the Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy, the Catholic University of Nijmegen and the University of Utrecht. The Platform's primary task is to act as a sounding board for the Office, providing it with unsolicited and solicited advices about the best approach towards this target group.

#### *b. Higher vocational education institutes*

The NIPO's activities have resulted in increased interest within the higher vocational education institutes and embedding the patent system in 21 courses. The Higher Vocational Education book 'Patents!' and the 'Patent knowledge enriches Higher vocational education institutes' brochure that the Office developed provide a good overview of the patent system's possibilities within higher vocational education.

Almost 600 people were informed about the patent system via three teachers' meetings, fifteen visiting lectures and four library visits. In addition a theme day for teachers was organised for teachers around 'Patents in Higher vocational education institutes' and an information evening was held for Higher Vocational Education teachers' department of the Royal Institute of Engineers.

### **III. Government**

There were various contacts with central government representatives, in particular from the ministry of Economic Affairs. For example, all Technical Scientific Attachés (TSA's ) and the TSA home-base staff were informed about the Office's tasks and objectives. This meeting has since resulted in more structural knowledge and experience exchange in the 'Technieus' periodical.

In consultation with the ministry, consideration is being given to what the possibilities for the NIPO are to carry out novelty searches on behalf of the government target group (consider here the government institutes). It has also been agreed that the ministry will introduce the Office to the technology promoting departments. The ministry will also give more attention to promoting conscious use of the patent system with this target group.

#### **Other activities**

##### *Trade fairs and specialist literature*

The Office was represented at ten Dutch trade fairs for a total of twenty-five days. This year the Office will continue this active information policy. In addition an active publication policy has been started. This will result in publications in various specialist periodicals.

##### *Innovation and I.P. rights P.R. Platform*

The Innovation & Industrial Property Rights Public Relations Platform was set up in 1998 and has since met six times. The platform consists of representatives from the ministry of Economic Affairs, Syntens, Senter, the Benelux Trademarks Office, the Institute of Dutch Patent Agents and Association of Trademarks and Designs Agents, the Dutch Institute of Inventors, ID-NL and NIPO, the initiator. These organisations cooperate on subjects of innovation and industrial property rights in the direction of SMEs, the knowledge infrastructure and/or the government. One of the Platform's objectives is developing communal activities. In 2000 the Platform is therefore organising joint fair participation and a congress, and it will be issuing a brochure and a list containing frequently asked questions.



*Innovation through patent information project*

The 'Innovation through Patent Information' project plan that aims to encourage SMEs to use patent information was brought up to date in 1999 in collaboration with Syntens. In April 2000 the European Commission announced a 'Call for proposals', aimed at the national Patent Offices. The NIPO has shown its interest in participating in this action program.

*Foreign contacts*

Again the Office organised the fifteen day course 'Practical Aspects of Patent Information' and the three day seminar 'Administrative Issues on Patents and Trademarks' in collaboration with the WIPO the EPO and the BTO (Benelux Trademarks Office). Representatives from more than 25 (semi-) developing countries who work in the field of industrial property rights participated in these courses.

In addition six foreign delegations from Japan, China, Taiwan, South Africa, Latvia and a representation from pan-Asiatic countries visited the Office.