

**Annual Technical Report on Trademark on Information Activities
on Trademarks and Models and Designs**

I. Evolution of registration activities:

In 1998 the Benelux Trademarks Office (BTO) received 24.020 applications. In 1997 23.929 applications were filed. During 1998 21.503 registrations were made, compared to 20.401 in 1997.

As a result of the introduction in 1996 of absolute grounds for refusal the number of withdrawals has grown to 4.291 in 1998. Among this number there are also applications which were filed in previous years.

The Benelux-office for Models and Designs counted 3.879 applications during 1998, which is equivalent to a growth of 16 percent.

II. Matters concerning the generation, reproduction and distribution of secondary sources of trademark information, i.e. trademark gazettes:

During 1998 there has been no significant changes in these areas.

III. Matters concerning classifying, reclassifying and indexing of trademark information:

During 1998 the office has started the preparatory work to convert the classification of the figurative elements of imagemarks to the fourth edition of the Vienna classification. The actual conversion will be made during 1999.

IV. Trademark manual search file establishment and upkeep:

There has been no significant changes in this area. The BTO conducts searches on the basis of a wordmark and an imagemark Database, which includes the applications and registrations made under the Community Trademark System and International Registrations.

V. Activities in the field of computerized trademark search systems:

There have been no significant changes in the automated search systems in 1998. However the office has started in 1998 a project to integrate the image Database and search-system with the wordmark and other bibliographic Databases on one and the same platform (AS 400). This project will be completed in 1999. With this new platform the office is able to offer in the future on-line facilities regarding trademarks or models and designs to third parties on an Intranet and Internet basis.

During this year the BTO continued its work on the project to rewrite all in-house developed software to support the registration process of trademarks. It is foreseen that this work will be completed during the first half year of 1999.

VI. Administration of trademark services available to the public:

In the framework of the activities mentioned under V. the office has started in 1998 a pilot-project on the electronic filing of applications, which is operational from May 1999 onwards. It is foreseen that also other kind of request (searches, copies of applications or registrations) can be asked and delivered through this Intranet.

The electronic filing module uses Informs as a standard for the electronic documents and Groupwise as a (non-mandatory) means for reliable communications. Informs supports a large number of databases, which gives the opportunity to e.g. trademark-agents to establish a link between the electronic document to be transmitted to the office and their own database(s).

Under Groupwise clients are given an electronic mail-box and are able to keep trace of the documents sent to the office. Each transmitted request or document leads to an electronic confirmation of receipt.

VII. Matters concerning mutual exchange of trademark documentation and information:

During the year 1998 the BTO and the WIPO reached an agreement on the exchange of bibliographic and image data relating to international registrations under the Madrid Agreement and Protocol valid for the Benelux. As a result the BTO will be able to introduce all images of the international registrations in the image-database, without further scanning.

In the framework of the activities mentioned under V. the BTO work has been done to enable the BTO to exchange any type of information in the near future relating to individual applications or registrations, international applications, or other kind of data to third parties more or less automatically or on request by an Intranet.

VIII. Matters concerning education and training including technical assistance to developing countries:

In 1998 the following promotional activities were undertaken:

- organisation of seminars and conferences in the Benelux countries on generic and specific matters aimed at small and medium enterprises and the advertising agencies;
- participation to fairs across the countries for the entrepreneurial sectors, technology and invention sectors, small and medium enterprises and business to business groups;
- welcoming visitors searching information, mainly students writing theses on the subject matter and presentations to groups of students specialising in Intellectual Property at university;
- contributing to the perception of the Offices as a public service for the general public, focussing on small and medium enterprises and supported by advertisements in specific publications.

Regarding assistance to developing countries the following activities can be mentioned:

- organisation of two training courses, one in English, one in French, on legal and administrative aspects of trademarks and designs for about 40 officials from Offices of developing countries;
- welcoming delegations into our Office from various parts of the world, such as China, Turkey, South Africa, etc.
