SCIT.ATR.PI.2005.EP

Annual Technical Report 2005 on Patent Information Activities submitted by EPO (SCIT /ATR/PI/2005/EP)

Where URLs are requested below, it is preferred that either URLs which are likely to remain stable over time (three years or more) are provided, or home (main) page URLs are provided with a short explanation of how to access the corresponding information.

The term "patent" covers utility models and Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPCs). Offices which issue design patents should report their design patent information activities in their Annual Technical Reports on Industrial Design Information Activities.

I. Evolution of patent activities

In 2005, The EPO recorded 193 600 requests for European patent, 7% more than recorded in 2004 (180 700).

Of these, 132 860 (+9%) were made by designating the EPO in international applications, and 62 760 (+4%) applications were filed directly under the European Patent Convention. Out of the total number of applications filed, 68.6% were made under the PCT (67,6% in 2004).

As a consequence of the ongoing increase in the number of PCT international applications, the number of applications entering the European phase also increased by 4% to reach 67 900 in 2005. With the European direct applications, the total number of patent applications entering the European patent procedure rose by 4% to 128 700 (123 800 in 2004).

The growth in filings was nevertheless different among the technical units of the IPC. The number of European applications in the field of Electric Communication Technique (H03, H04) is the highest with 14 230 applications (+5%). The units Lighting and Heating (F21-F28; 2 611; +11.7%), Personal and Domestic Articles (A41-A47; 2 638; +10.4%), Building (E01-E06; 3 244; +9.6%) and Health (A61-A63 excl. A61K; 8 909; +8.5%), show the largest increases over the previous year among those unit with large numbers of applications. Micro-structural Technology, Nanotechnology (B81-B82; 187) experienced a 63% increase, Paper (D21, B31; 672; +17.7%) and Metallurgy (C21-C23, C25, C39; 1 736; +11. 6%) also recorded a substantial growth.

Seven units registered fewer applications in 2005 than in 2004. Among these were Instruments 1(G01-G03; 9 836; -1.5%) and Shaping 1(B21-B23; 2 021; -3.3%).

In 2005, almost 56% of the applications in the European patent procedure, were applied for in the leading 10 IPC classes (A61, H04, G06, H01, C07, G01, B60, C12, C08, F16). In these classes taken together, the number of applications increased by 4.4% over the previous year.

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

Publishing, printing, copying (main types of publications of the office in the field of patent information, etc.)

Patent applications

In 2004 the EPO has published 118 120 patent applications broken down according to the 31 Technical units of the International Patent Classification as shown hereafter:

Title of unit Classes Number
Agriculture A01, ex A01N 1 013
Foodstuffs and Tobacco A21-A24 1 304
Personal and domestic articles A41-A47 2 425
Health A61-A63, ex A61K 8 194
Prep. for med. dent.
or toilet purposes A61K 6 050
Preparing and mixing B01-B09 3 152
Shaping I B21-B23 2 005
Shaping II B24-B30, B32 3 379
Printing B41-B44 1 979
Transporting B60-B68 9 457
Microstructural technology,
nanotechnology B81, B82 133
Inorganic chemistry C01-C05 1 571
Organic chemistry C07, A01N 6 095
Macromolecular compounds C08 3 091
Dyes, petroleum, animal
and veg. oils C09-C11 2 280
Fermentation, sugar, skins C12-C14 3 700
Metallurgy C21-C23, C25, C30 1 574
Textiles and flexible materials D01-D07 1 389
Paper D21, B31 625
Building E01-E06 2 934
Mining E21 388
Engines and pumps F01-F04, F15 3 864
Engineering in general F16-F17 3 193
Lighting and heating F21-F28 2 249
Weapons; blasting F41, F42, C06 381

Instruments I G01-G03 9 173
Instruments II G04-G08 9 939
Instruments III G09-G12 3 788
Nucleonics G21 172
Electric techniques H01, H02, H05 9 694
El. and electric com. techn. H03, H04 12 929
Total 118 120

Since the opening, the EPO published the following number of patent applications

Number of patent applications published cumulative up to end of the year

1990 404 448
1991 462 607
1992 520 559
1993 575 919
1994 630 882
1995 688 730
1996 749 758
1997 813 897
1998 887 217
1999 966 979
2000 1 062 955
2001 1 163 822
2002 1 266 513
2003 1 371 204
2004 1 491 161
2005 1 609 281

Granted Patents

In 2005, the EPO granted 53 259 patents. Since the opening, the EPO has granted the following number of patents:

Number of granted patents
cumulative up to end of the year
1990 150 021
1991 176 663
1992 207 072
1993 243 736
1994 285 736
1995 327 343
1996 367 412
1997 407 058
1998 443 775
1999 479 132
2000 506 654
2001 541 356
2002 588 736
2003 648 725
2004 707 452
2005 760 711

Mass storage media used (paper, microforms, optical storage, etc.)

BNS Image data: 7 million documents loaded in 2005

The EPO maintains a digital library of facsimile documents. In 2005, this collection, one of the world's largest, increased from 55.6 million to 62.4 million complete patent and non-patent documents.

Quality control of the incoming facsimile data is systematically performed by specialised teams applying an ISO approach for the selection of the samples and making a decision on batch acceptance. Guidelines on backfile indexing and scanning of patent documentation from a vast number of national offices have been released and applied.

During 2005, load of PDF standard was in production environment, and allowed for the addition of new facsimile collections like CU, EA, RO, ES and old HU documents, and/or replaces scanning of paper delivered so far.

Loading programmes were improved and completed. In a continuous effort to expand and improve the BNS collection, a total load volume of almost 7 million documents was achieved in 2005.

The following are some of a number of achievements regarding new acquisitions of patent documents (BNS):

JP: Continue the load of Old U, B and Y collection, about 1.2 million documents loaded

BG: Image data loaded going back to No. 1, about 30.000 documents loaded.

ES: Addition of all kind codes from 2000 onwards and historic utility models; about 65.000 documents loaded.

AU: Addition of the AU A collection from 1998 onwards, about 0.5 million documents.

CN: Thanks to bi-lateral cooperation agreements with China, load of the frontfile was started in 2005. About 400.000 documents containing 2004 and 2005 data loaded, more than 2 million still expected to load.

KR: Loading of KR English abstract collection from 1978 onwards, about 300.000 documents.

MD: New country added to BNS from 2000 onwards, about 2.000 documents loaded.

SU: Finish of the SU backfile loading, around 300.000 documents added to the collection.

ZA : Addition of this country to the BNS collection.

Regular bulk extractions took place in 2005 at the request of other national patent offices or organisations.

Full text databases: more than 16 million patent documents now available in full text

Much work went into the development of keyword-searchable full-text databases. A total of 2 million full-text patent specifications have been added to the EPO's collection, extending it to over 16 million (patent) documents.

The most important additions to the full-text collection include Austrian and Belgian patent publications. For the BE full-text, more than 200 000 documents published between 1920 and 1984 were loaded. As to the AT full-text, the number is almost 100 000, ranging from 1920 onwards. For both, the coverage changed from one member per patent family to all published applications.

At the end of 2005 the loading of unpublished patent documents from WIPO, provided by the "early OCR" project, was begun. By the end of the year, over 10.000 documents were available through EPOQUE (TXTAWO*).

With these permanent additions, the EPO has today far exceeded its initial aim of guaranteeing at least the same search quality with electronic means as can be achieved with paper documents.

Non-Patent Literature and Library Services

Most important NPL academic databases like IEEE, IEE, AIP and Elsevier have been acquired in the last 5 years. In 2004 the coverage of the databases was increased by adding the backfiles of for example Inspec and Compendex, following the trend from publishers. Since 2005, the efforts are concentrated on the acquisition of more specific databases requested by a limited number of users but with a high relevance for their technical fields. In EPOQUE, the first full-text database of traditional knowledge for the medicine and cosmetics fields and the standards of JPEG for the image processing field were created. IP.COM, a database of defensive publications was added to the existing XPRD, the database of Research Disclosures. In Specdocs, various specific collections of technical standards like MPEG, 3GPP, IEEE 1394 and Conference Proceedings for example from the International Institute of Refrigeration Conference and Picture Coding Symposium were made available. The number of searchable NPL full-text records in EPOQUE increased by 90% to 2,2 million and in Specdocs the number of searchable records was multiplied by 4,5 to reach the number of 780.000.

Through 2005, EVL's journal collection grew from 3911 at the beginning of the year to 4817 titles which represents a 23% increase. This number includes a total of 439 open access titles, 144% more than in 2004. Apart from the continuous growth of scientific and technical literature, the main trend for 2005 was the focus on IP (intellectual property) and legal publications. Besides the journal collections, the EVL gained more importance on the level of e-books where acquisitions include the Referex collection from Elsevier, EngnetBase and PolymersnetBase collections from CRC Press. An important Internet database of NPL articles allowing powerful retrieval of cited and citing references was acquired: the ISI World of Knowledge from Thomson.

The number of orders for documents which could not be retrieved by the examiners themselves decreased by 13,3% in 2004 to 39.794, thanks to EVL and increased BNS coverage. 89,7 % of the orders made by examiners were fulfilled in less than 1 working day.

A large number of books were purchased, mainly because of the new IPC Edition (N.8), for which 2000 Guides to the IPC and 50 complete sets of the IPC were ordered for The Hague and Berlin alone.

The Network CD-ROM Library became fully operational. On request of users, databases which are not available on Internet but only on CD-ROM are made accessible to several users from a central server, using an application which creates a virtual CD-ROM drive. The requesters are then flagged for access to the virtual drive.
In 2005 the following CD-ROMs were purchased and made available:
- DIN Therm Datenbank.
- Handbook of Comparative World Steel Standards.
- Polyvoc (dictionary).

Network CD-ROMs with an HTML interface were made available in the Intranet via EVL:
In 2005 the loaded CDs were:
- Handbook of Nanotechnology.
- INSPEC Search Aids 2005.
- Singer/Stauder European Patent Convention 3rd. edition.
- Schulte-Kartei Gewerblicher Rechtsschutz.

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

Classification and reclassification activities; Classification system used, e.g., International Patent Classification (IPC), other classification (please indicate whether or not patent documents are classified by your Office and, if so, which classification is used)

Classification of new documents (patents and NPL)
Over the first 9 months of 2005, the EPO received around 544.000 newly published documents. Roughly 50% of the received documents were automatically classified by computer on the basis of a classified family member in DocDB, or because they corresponded to patent applications previously classified by the examiners.
About 273.000 of these new patent documents were sent via CLIPON to EPO classifiers, in all sites. Since electronic copies of one and the same document can be sent to several classifiers simultaneously, about 705.000 CLIPON circulations were treated.
15.800 NPL documents were classified by paper circulation over the whole of 2005. Articles from about 50 journals are directly sent via CLIPON, and NPL statistics are then combined with patent documents statistics.

Assisting examiners in their reclassification work
The EPO management decided in July 2001 to employ external staff on a temporary basis (mainly students from technical universities) to assist examiners with their reclassification work. Since that time this so-called Examiner Assistance Programme has grown significantly year by year. Up to 57 assistants have worked, on a part time basis, in 32 different directorates, reaching about 3,600 working days of reclassification time investment.
Following the success of the Examiner Assistance Programme in The Hague, and in order to cope with the increasing demand of projects to reorganise technical fields also via work carried out by examiners in Berlin and Munich, pilot projects were started in both places of employment.

Pre-classification for routing of files and documents
Dossiers need to be pre-classified in order to be routed to the relevant technical fields or examiners. This is done by a special team which analyzes the technical content of incoming dossiers and pre-classifies them on subclass or group level. Based on this pre-classification, a distribution routine sends the dossiers to the appropriate directorate in The Hague, Berlin or Munich. Pre-classification activities were also carried out in Munich.
A total of 104.400 dossiers were preclassified.

Deep indexing
Two staff members are in charge of deep-indexing documents for search in some selected fields. About 1.400 documents were deep-indexed in the fields C04B, C21C, C22C, and H01M. In the field of laminates (B32B), about 1.100 documents were indexed.

Classification Board
The Classification Board comprises 25 examiners, currently 20 members in The Hague and 5 in Munich, who work for part of their time for PD Tools.
The board continued performing its tasks of:
• Checking proposals for ECLA revisions (DOC14);
• Treating proposals for IPC revision;
• Harmonization and improvement of the EPO's classification and indexing systems;
• Cooperation with other offices (mainly member states and trilateral offices) in classification matters;
• Giving advice and support to the examiners in classification questions.
Last year one of the major actions of the Classification Board, the harmonization of ECLA with the IPC, continued in preparation of the introduction of the IPC reform in 2006. This activity resulted in the creation of more than 650 new ECLA groups corresponding to the future IPC edition 8.

Internal classification systems – ECLA, REPA, IDT
A total of 625 requests for revision of the internal classification (DOC14) were received.
Last year about 7.600 creations, deletions or modifications of classification entries were performed by the ECLA team. Due to continuous restructuring of clusters and directorates and the extension of BEST in Munich, the amount of REPA work has substantially increased: about 2.700 REPA requests were handled.

IPC revision
The Classification Board continued its participation in the revision process of the International Patent Classification (IPC). Members of the Board represented the EPO at the IPC Revision Working Group (WG) at WIPO, as well as its Task Force meeting on Training Examples in Kilkenny (Ireland).
Activities of the WG during 2005 included:
• Reviewing training examples of the WIPO Handbook in the light of the reform of the IPC (92 TE projects);
• Preparing Subclass Definitions (60 D-projects, including FR translation for 6 D-projects);
• Updating the "Guidelines for the revision of the IPC" -part of the WIPO Handbook, in the light of the IPC reform;
• Finalising the creation of residual main groups for IPC8;
• Taking part in the Editorial Board activities for checking approved training examples (21 TE-projects checked);
• Discussion on a new revision project (C432, A01N65);
• Adoption of first amendments for the advanced level of IPC8 (correction).
In all these activities, the EPO delegates of Directorate Classification and of the Classification Board played a leading role.

IPC reform
In a continuous information campaign, internal and external bodies were informed about the upcoming changes due to the reform of the IPC.
PD Tools staff gave presentations about the IPC reform at several conferences: PATLIB in Romania, EPIC in Hungary, and PATON in Germany. Lectures and training courses were also given at the PATLIB centres in Nuremberg and Hamburg.
PD Tools staff also provided expertise in technical conferences organized by WIPO and by the EPO's Vienna sub-office. An information lecture about the IPC reform was also given in cooperation with Dir. 4.5.3. in form of an electronic session in the "virtual classroom" series.
PD Tools staff was also heavily involved in preparing DocDB for its role as the Master Classification Database (MCD) for IPC-2006. By the end of the year, approximately 90% of the documents in DocDB had been given an IPC-2006 classification as a result of the backfile conversion processes based on ECLA and IPC1-7. Directorate staff will continue to work on further MCD enhancements during 2006.

Trilateral classification harmonization – the Harmony Project
A well-structured and easily accessible documentation is one of the pillars supporting the whole patent granting process. In the Harmony Project, the Trilateral Offices work towards a harmonized classification system by revising their respective systems in selected fields, resulting in similar classification schemes in ECLA, the US patent classification and the JPO's FI-classification. This project should lead to a reduction in the classification workload for the three Offices as well as an easier access to each Office's documentation.
The Harmony Project is run by the Trilateral Offices. Twice a year, the status of the Project is reviewed during the meeting of the Trilateral Working Group on Classification: highs and lows are discussed, solutions to identified problems are proposed and new projects are launched. 2005 saw a steady expansion of the activities around trilateral classification harmonisation. This year, nineteen new Harmony projects were started.
Interaction between the Harmony Project and the International Patent Classification is essential for the whole classification harmonisation process to succeed. Trilateral cooperation enables the EPO to deliver major input for the revision and further development of the IPC. With the arrival of the reformed IPC in mind, six Harmony projects were forwarded to WIPO in December 2005 for consideration by the Advanced Level Subcommittee (ALS) as revision requests of the advanced level of IPC-2006.
As part of an awareness campaign towards Harmony, a trilateral brochure entitled "Trilateral classification harmonisation - Guidelines for examiners involved in the Harmony Project" was drafted by the Trilateral Offices. The English/Japanese bilingual brochures were printed at the EPO and sent to the JPO and the USPTO. At the EPO, the trilateral brochures were distributed to all examiners as well as to EPO management.
In the context of accelerating classification harmonisation, the Trilateral Offices launched a new examiner exchange program totally devoted to Harmony: the Harmony Visit program. At the EPO, this Program is run by PD Tools-Documentation. The first Harmony Visit was hosted by the EPO: two batches of JPO examiners were welcomed in The Hague and Munich in June/July and October 2005. One USPTO staff member joined at one occasion. A third batch is planned for February 2006.
Some of these visits resulted in the start of a Harmony project in the corresponding area.

With the success of this first edition of the Harmony visit, the USPTO proposed to host the second edition in January and February 2006. The third edition will be hosted by the JPO later in 2006.

Training on classification
PD Tools was involved in the training of examiners on classification and documentation matters, in cooperation with L&D teams in Munich, The Hague and Berlin. Further training was offered to EPO member states as well as to non-EPO parties.

ECLA training for EPO member state offices
Some EPO member state offices manifested a strong interest to get more and more closely informed about ECLA, and even to get involved in the ECLA development and classification tasks. Examiners of EPO member state offices could share, at least for national first filings and in some cases for PCT applications, the same responsibilities and authorities for ECLA classification of new documents as their corresponding EPO examiners. In this framework, EPO has offered a course on ECLA that is very much in line with the course offered in-house to EPO classifiers ("Classification for Classifiers"), in the sake of harmonized and consistent information.
In 2005, six countries (GR, FI, GB, CH, DK, PT) have been added to the list of EPO member states offices that received an introductory course on classification in ECLA. Informal requests have already been received from HU, CZ and PL to host courses in their offices.
Other ECLA training
In addition to the training given to member states, PD Tools supported the Japan Patent Office in the creation of an e-learning module. A presentation about the ECLA classification given by a PD Tools staff member was recorded and is being used in the internal examiner training program of the JPO.
At this occasion, a similar presentation was given at the JAPIO Patent information conference and PD Patent Information staff was supported at the corresponding exhibition.

Bibliographic data and full-text processing for search purposes

Data management: increasing the “intelligence” of our documents

The EPO is constantly acquiring and loading new data to update and complete existing databases. Many activities take place in the area of rebuilding and modernising the master databases to offer better quality and services to the users. This summary provides the highlights for 2005.

About 3,4 million new bibliographic data and 0,4 million backlog data from 75 countries were processed in the bibliographic master database (DOCDB), bringing the overall number of documents to 62.812.000 million, a 6,8% increase compared to 2004. Corrections were required to 979.500 records.

The bibliographic data of 18.100 patent documents received on paper from various countries were manually recorded and loaded into DOCDB. About 51.400 scientific and technical articles (NPL) selected and classified by the examiners were recorded in-house and loaded into the NPL master database. Bulk data capture in the Philippines continued in 2005 with the capture of bibliographic data of 235.600 patent documents mainly published prior to 1970 (AU,BE,FR-E,GB,DE-U).

The DOCAREA rebuild reached 3 important milestones in 2005 :
The switch-over from DOCDB IDMS to DOCDB DB2 making DOCDB DB2 the master database for bibliographic and classification data.
The creation of the Master Classification Database(MCD) for the IPCR Reform Project.
The reloading and daily updating of new EPODOC with Family ID’s and IPCR data.

The patent bibliographic update procedure switched-over to DB2 brought vast improvements to the system :

Patent bibliographic data is now continuously being loaded all through the day and all through the night, where before the loading of data was limited to the batch window at night.
Correction of rejected data is now online and instant; corrected data is recycled back into the load process in real time where before there was a delay of at least one day.
Online correction utility is now a state of the art browser application and has been extended with new time and resource saving features like linking two or more families into one technical family on examiner's request in as little as three mouse-clicks.

All of these combined result in a considerable improvement in data quality and service to the public.

With the daily XML exchange DOCDB DB2 – EPODOC, a class allocated by an examiner in DOCTOOL/CLIPON is present in EPODOC the following day. Class allocation on a dossier with CAESAR is now included in the single class picture for the patent family.

Class allocation occurs in real time in both CAESAR and DOCTOOL CLIPON.

On 1st January IPC-2006 came into force. All systems were in production in time to enable the loading of the data received from patent offices (such as the EPO itself) who delivered new IPCR classifications into the new MCD. All DOCDB exchanges like ST-30, IFD and EPODOC have been updated with the new IPCR fields.

A new "pull" mechanism to update EPODOC on a daily basis (instead of weekly), enabling new patent documents originating from major patent offices to be available on EPODOC/ESP@CENET on the day of publication was implemented beginning of 2005.

In December 2005, the first sample of the DOCDB data exchange in ST.36 has been delivered. The DOCDB ST.36 Data Exchange is scheduled to be published in test phase inviting feedback from external providers in February 2006 and scheduled to supersede the two current data exchanges - the exchanges in ST.30 and in IFD format - in February 2007, after an intensive testing period and running the exchanges in parallel. This data exchange will be state of the art, implementing an XML schema design rather than a DTD definition and thus offering the opportunity to make web services the native data exchange vehicle for this product.

The EPO citation database (REFI) contains a wealth of information on cited patent- and non-patent literature related to international, regional and national applications and publications. These references are key information for the examiners and other users of patent information as they enable quick retrieval of prior-art documents or, failing this, help to prepare a more targeted search strategy. Currently more than 3,6 million citations related to over 1,6 million applications and 68 million citations related to more than 9,9 million publications are available in the EPO citation database REFI.

Cited references are supplied in different formats like paper publications, electronic files or as internal data from different applications, depending on the source (EPO or other patent offices). The aim is to have complete and correct data in our databases on time. The citation data flow unit is in charge of the handling, quality control and eventual corrections of these cited references.
In 2005 the citation data flow unit treated more than 422.000 publications which enclosed 4,6 million cited documents (patent and non-patent Literature) requiring 313.978 manual corrections.

Corrections are done at the earliest possible stage before loading. For European data this means correcting the search report before dispatching to the applicant.

In 2005, 6.247 search reports were verified by the Citation Data Flow unit after finding mismatching with BNS. In total 25.104 European citations were verified and 8.552 had to be modified.
A major effort was made to load citation data from ES publications from 1993 to 2003.

The project Search Data Management System (SDMS) started in 1991. The goal of the system is to bring consistency and completeness in search related information processed by the EPO information systems. SDMS consists of a database SPDB (Search Process Data Base) which collects, stores and distributes search related information created during the granting procedure.
SDMS ensures that the processed data is in conformity with the needs of an automated environment. It has also contributed to the further automation of the office by the development of central printing of the search reports and citations for applicants and organizations/offices such as: WIPO, INPI, USPTO, JPO. In addition SDMS ensures softcopy conversion of the search report forms for storage in PHOENIX.
The citations activity was 32% higher in 2005 than in 2000.

IV. Search file establishment and upkeep

Documentation from other offices maintained and/or considered part of the available search file

In 2005, the increasing quantity and complexity of the incoming data led to the creation of a new section, Data Flow Operations, in the Directorate Data Management. It is charged with bringing together the various different parts of the processes involved in the loading of data into one coherent "end-to-end" view of the process in order to better monitor what happens, and improve quality and timeliness.

The DFO service works closely with the users of the processes - the Citation Data Flow service and the DocDB Correction and Maintenance service - so that the processes can be optimised and accepted.

Meanwhile, the Front Office in Directorate Data Acquisition continues to monitor and improve the coordination with the various other Patent Granting Authorities around the world.

One of the largest projects was the change to IPC-2006 which went live on 1st January 2006. This involved changes to the vast majority of incoming data flows in order to supply correct information to the new Master Classification Database. In spite of very late change notices received from some National Offices, the major data flows were in production on time.

Another major project was the Proof of Concept of a new Extract, Transform & Load (ETL) environment. This will greatly improve the design and efficiency of the data flows.

There were numerous changes of data and format to deal with during 2005, but one major highlight was the resumption of good data delivery from China. An FTP server at SIPO now enables the team to download data on the day of publication as well as enabling the delivery of the missing backfile and test data for the future download of data in Chinese. Cooperation also improved with the Korean Office, with the delivery of a major backfile which is being analysed, processed and loaded.

The coverage of abstracts in English language was also increased by more than 76.000 abstracts integrated in DOCDB and belonging to (non)-minimum PCT front- and backfile.

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

In-house systems (online/offline)

The EPO possesses one of the world's most comprehensive collections of technical documentation. This huge amount of knowledge is indispensable for the Office's search work, and is a key to the quality of European patents.

The main patent data collection managed by the EPO is also accessible to the public via commercial providers and the esp@cenet® patent information service. Databases managed by PD Tools are a main contribution to the European knowledge base society.

To maintain its lead in the field, the Office concentrates its documentation activities on two main aspects: improving the range and quality of its databases, and continuously improving its online search tools.

Implementing a quality policy

In 2005, the EPO continued to rebuild its master database and procedures which support the acquisition, formatting, classification and distribution of data. By using modern technology and redesigning most of the processes, the EPO is improving further the quality (correctness, timeliness and completeness) of the data.

In line with the EPO's quality policy, a quality management system for the documentation acquisition processes and the development of specific tools and processes to allow better monitoring of patent and non-patent data status have been introduced in 2005. Specific quality indicators have been set up and systematically monitored, allowing the process owners to trigger corrective/preventive actions whenever required.

The documentation key processes and the data monitoring indicators are now also available for users and process owners through the new internal PD Tools Quality Site.

As part of the quality policy followed by EPO, a publication containing the Global Patent Data Coverage and the timeliness of the frontfile data received from national offices, is
now disclosed on the internet, twice a year.

Computer-based search at the EPO: looking toward the future

The cornerstone of computer-based search at the EPO is EPOQUE, which is increasingly developing into a global tool covering all the applications used by examiners during the patent grant procedure. Rebuild of the search engine, started in 2004, advances according to plan.

Concerning databases and their management, the development of reformatting and loading programmes for new databases and the maintenance of existing ones are the main ongoing tasks, with EPODOC, WPI and EUREG remaining as the main databases in view of the workload. More than 34 million records were added during 2005 which represents a 14,4% increase compared to 2004).

At the end of 2005, the 100 EPOQUE databases contained nearly 271 million records fully searchable in the INTERNAL retrieval session.

The electronic patent collection allows searchable access to 56 million patents or patent applications with more than 17,7 million abstracts in English (EPODOC), more than 14,6 million WPI abstracts and more than 16,2 million full text descriptions and claims.

A total of twelve new databases were added to the EPOQUE database portfolio. Three databases were completely reloaded.

Two major SEA versions have been rolled out to the user community. Two new versions of EPOQUENet have been distributed to all National Offices and some Non-Member States. All the National Offices have been migrated to the 24h "World" service.

The monthly number of users was 4.950.

An 1,3% increase in the connect hours was measured in 2005 compared to 2004. Whilst all EPO sites show a stabilized usage, the National Office use of EPOQUE has continued to increase steadily (+8,7%).

Use of the EPOQUE Viewer Main display by examiners and EPO Member State users increased by 5.6% in 2005. A total of 336 million pages were viewed.

Applied Research and Development

The Applied Research and Development directorate (A.R&D) has conducted a large panel of activities in 2005 ranging from pure R&D activities to quality control, knowledge management, not forgetting the processing of special requests from applicants (statistics, etc.) and the management of cases in biotechnology. It provided the development and maintenance of the library of public preparations supported in both Rexx and Java languages.

Patent Summarization

Examiners are spending time and energy navigating into long and irrelevant documents before finding novelty destroying documents. To overcome this issue, this project suggested to study computerized means to automatically summarize texts into important chapters. A summarization interface has been deployed for the EPO's users..

Automatic classification

It is part of the R&D strategy to both explore categorization models and adapt industrial products to the business. To allow a computer to categorize automatically a text in predefined categories, it is mandatory to "illustrate" the content of such categories (model training). Once the computer has "learned" how to categorize, the accuracy of the training versus the data has to be assessed by a model analysis process. In 2005, a cluster-based approach has been extensively studied. It showed theoretical results about the precision and recall to be expected by such a model. In parallel, a new study aiming at categorizing at a finer level (under IPC8/ECLA) has been initiated. In 2006, a common working program with WIPO is planned to share knowledge and experience.

Data Management in chemistry

The goal of this project is to enhance access to chemical data in general. This topic is currently very much discussed at international level and relations have been established with the Trilateral Office and WIPO (SGIPGL project).

In the framework of chartered user requests from the community of examiners in chemistry, a PubChem-database (edited by NLM) has been released in 2005. It includes also dedicated public preparations. An improved version with extended search facilities is planned for the next Epoque release early 2006.

Further projects include a study on the extractions of numerals, ranking of search results, an OCR quality study, the European Machine Translation Programme and import of EU's term database (IATE).

Life sciences/Biotechnology

The aim of the Life sciences program is to provide means for the processing of biological data from filing to publication; to supply knowledge and scientific information in biotechnology with the latest bio-informatics tools adapted to the needs of the patent offices. This programme develops original solutions as a consequence of peculiar filing rules and massive data to be analysed. The core of the duties are related to biological sequences, i.e. DNA and amino acid sequences, although developments in related area gain importance.

Patent applications disclosing biological sequences are put in order for the examiners by the sequence listing verification unit. In 2005 about 6.500 applications containing biological sequences were treated, an increase of 20% compared with 2004.
The EPO started to implement a late furnishing fee for sequence listings for PCT applications from April 2005 onwards.

Concrete progress was made towards an XML representation of Sequences with the EPO's trilateral partners.

PD Tools finalized the agreement to build a non redundant sequence database from patent publications. Sequences have been captured from WIPO's publication site.

Late in 2004, a licence for the usage of Genecards, an electronic encyclopedia of human genes, has been purchased. In 2005, this database was integrated in the Biotech search environment of the examiners.

In 2005, in total 38.500 sequence searches were performed, 98% of which by the EPO and most of them in the Joint Cluster Biotechnology. The number of applications searched was around 4.600, representing an average of 8 sequences per file. The robustness and reliability of the search environment has been consolidated. Implementation at EBI of Genomequest, a specialized suite of algorithms for sequence searches, is ongoing.

Improving our communication

PD Tools Documentation is continuously aiming to increase its user support and strengthen communications with its users.

The EPOQUE helpdesk is in permanent contact with the TECNO team (technical support to national offices) to ensure delivery of software releases and ad hoc second-level support, organise meetings and liaise with the EPOQUE and STC co-ordinators at the EPO sites. The EPOQUE helpdesk also gives training on request and provides internal and external users with valuable support for the use of EPOQUE, the VIEWER, EXTERNAL access and the EPOQUE databases, in close co-operation with DOCHELP for the data aspects.

DOCHELP (the documentation helpdesk) processed 5828 new requests, an increase of 12% compared to 2004. Most requests came from The Hague (56%), followed by Munich (22%), external users (16%), Berlin (4%) and Vienna (3%). The number of external requests continues to increase.

The hotpage column in DOCHELP's intranet site as well as the frequently asked Questions have been continuously updated allowing the users to be timely informed about the current and temporary issues which affect their work.

Three issues of DocToday, the paper bulletin of PD Tools Documentation, were released. DocAlert, the monthly electronic newsletter introduced in 2001, sent 11 issues to 3.200 examiners and other subscribers in 2005. The Gazette also published 11 articles on PD Tools activities and news.

Members of the communication unit gave numerous lectures on PD Tools during academies and other events. They also regularly contributed to the IPR helpdesk, an initiative promoting patent awareness and patent information among EU-funded research projects. Collaboration between the EPO, WIPO and the IPR helpdesk resulted in a common information tool: an IPR Newsfeed.

Figures:

Databases
• 100 (90 in 2004) different databases are available internally with a total of 271 million records, 15% more than in 2004.
• 56 million patent records are available in the EPO master patent database Doc-DB.
• 18.4 million full-text searchable records: 16.2 million patent and 2.2 million non-patent literature articles can be searched and accessed by EPO examiners, a 15% increase compared to 2003.
• 62 million facsimile documents are available in the EPO digital library.

Usage
• EPOQUE and BNS Main display increased by 5.6% in 2005
• 336 million pages were viewed in 2005
• 1.3% increase of connect hours overall; for National Offices, the increase is 8.7%
• 4950 monthly users

VI. Administration of the industrial property office library and services available to the public (relating to facilities, e.g., for lodging applications, for assisting clients on searching procedures, for obtaining official publications and registry extracts)

Information services available to the public (including computerized services and search files contained in libraries remote from your Office and patent information posted by your Office on the World Wide Web)

1. The EPO Web-Site

The EPO Website (www.european-patent-office.org) has been hosted since May 1995 and is managed by the Webteam in Vienna. The website content continues to grow in volume (currently more than 90 000 pages and some 4 GB of data), audience (some 12 000 distinct users per day) and popularity (some 110 million hits and almost 1 TB of data downloaded in 2005).

A number of “microsites“ with specific content and a new homepage were introduced in 2003 to demonstrate the “look-and-feel“ planned for the new website. This action was so well received, that there were a total of 25 EPO microsites by the end of 2005, including one for the Administrative Council of the European Patent Organisation (our governing body).

The Internet is a great medium for promoting patent information products and services, enhancing public patent awareness and introducing visitors to the concept of patentability. This should lead to an increase in the number of users of patent information and subsequently the patent system. The range of EPO services accessible via the website also includes esp@cenet® and epoline®, part of the website's evolution from a conventional website to a portal for patent information products and services.

The new website project was slowed while the EPO looked into a consolidated approach to Internet and Intranet activities, as these will be based on a new common platform (hardware and software). This will lead to convergence in the Office‘s various web-based services. A Content Management System (CMS) has been procured in order to facilitate management and maintenance of this increasingly complex site. The new CMS (to be implemented during 2006) will be used for both the external website and the new, office-wide Intranet project which will supersede the current constellation of DGxlines.

In the framework of the training activities on patent information products in Vienna, we will continue to develop distance learning activities taking into account new technologies. By creating a so-called virtual classroom, registered participants can participate interactively via the internet in instructor-lead "live events". Such new services will continue to be accessed via the EPO website and will fully conform with the EPO website design guidelines.

At the same time, we will progressively introduce the use of data in XML format and collaborate with other intellectual property players such as WIPO and the IPR HelpDesk.

2. Publication Services

2.1 European Publication Server

The European Publication Server became operational on 1 January 2005 and - in line with the decision of the President of the Office dated 22 December 2004 - has been the official medium for publication of all kinds of European patent documents since 1 April 2005.

A very simple interface allows users to view and download the documents from the date of publication across a secure connection on the Internet. All the different types of documents (A1/A2/A3/B1/B2 and corresponding correction documents A8/A9/B8/B9) can be accessed via their application numbers, publication numbers, IPC classification symbols and the dates of publication.

Users can download documents published since 1 April 2005 in both PDF and SGML (2005) / XML (2006) formats. Documents published before 1 April 2005 are made available in the best available format(s).

Access to the European Publication Server across the Internet is free of charge at:

https://publications.european-patent-office.org

The European Publication Server is an up to date way of publishing the increasing number of European patent documents and - by offering the publications free of charge - is an important contribution to the "knowledge-based society" in Europe. By the end of 2005, an average of 700 different users were accessing the European Publication Server every working day.

Developments were continued in the second part of 2005 to take into account the transition to XML (WIPO St. 36) and the introduction of the IPC on 1 January 2006.

Other improvement of the system are planned for 2006, including the uploading of the complete back-file of European patent documents, the introduction of links to the Patentscope system of WIPO for non-republished Euro-PCT documents and the implementation of a web service access.

With effect from 1 April 2005 the publication of European patent documents on paper was terminated.

2.2 ESPACE® Series

Thousands of patent information users around the world continue to enjoy the professional features offered by the ESPACE® series. In combination with the MIMOSA User Software, the ESPACE® products provide a wealth of complex search, display, archiving and document delivery functions that make the contents of the vast databases readily accessible and rapidly retrievable.

For providers of patent information ESPACE® and MIMOSA are a simple, cost-effective way of making large numbers of documents available on a variety of possible platforms, including optical disks and across the Internet, in a manner valued by professional users.

Production of the wide range of existing ESPACE® series, not only by the EPO, continued during 2005. It was joined by a new product at beginning of the year, ESPACE® ACCESS EPC. This new series is an important tool for all users of the European patent system, containing the bibliographic data and English language abstracts of patent publications of almost all EPC member states since 1990.

The following products are currently in production:

EPO Series

ESPACE® EP (previously ESPACE® EPA and EPB)
ESPACE® FIRST
ESPACE® ACCESS EP-A, ESPACE® ACCESS EP-B
ESPACE® BULLETIN, ESPACE® LEGAL

ESPACE® ACCESS EPC
ESPACE® WORLD

National series member states

ESPACE® AT, ESPACE® BNL, ESPACE® CH, ESPACE® DK, ESPACE® ES, ESPACE® Fl, ESPACE® GR, ESPACE® IE, ESPACE® IT, ESPACE® MC, ESPACE® PT, ESPACE® SI, ESPACE® UK, ESPACE® PRECES Access, ESPACE® PRECES

National series non member states

ESPACE® ASEANPAT, ESPACE® ID, ESPACE® MY, ESPACE® PH, ESPACE® TH, ESPACE® OAPI, ESPACE® DOPALES

and other series from Australia, Canada, Commonwealth of Independent States, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, Russia.

Commercial providers
PCT Gazette, US Patent Images and other series.

ESPACE® series are stand-alone products used primarily by external users around the world.

The EPO's Mission Statement calls for it to remain a global leader in the provision of patent information. ESPACE® products and the accompanying MIMOSA Software play a crucial role in this. They enable the Office to disseminate patent information products easily and cheaply to other patent offices, their libraries and to the general public.

Ongoing development of the MIMOSA Software ensures that ESPACE® products around the world remain compatible, thereby supporting their use as documentation exchange media.

2.3 ESPACE® collections online

With the release of MIMOSA User Software version 5 in the middle of 2005, and the transition to GTI v. 5 database structure in MIMOSA Authoring, it is now possible to publish ESPACE® collections online without any additional effort.

The EPO decided to make most of its own ESPACE® products available on-line for a test period during 2006 to gauge user reaction. Existing subscribers can access these ESPACE® collections with the same MIMOSA User Software by means of a secure encrypted https: connection across the Internet. A user registration and administration module and the necessary modifications to the MIMOSA User Software were made available at the end of 2005.

During the test period, the EPO plans to make the ESPACE® ACCESS, ACCESS EP-B, BULLETIN and EP available online.

The EPO will be approaching national offices whose data is on ESPACE® ACCESS EPC, to ask them to confirm their interest in also having this product available online. This would ideally complement the other ACCESS series online.

2.4 MIMOSA

The two components of MIMOSA provide a software package for content providers to author ESPACE® series and the user software for accessing the ESPACE® series. This ensures compatibility between products worldwide and supports their use in documentation exchange.

In addition to patent information products of the EPO, the MIMOSA software has been successfully used to create compatible intellectual property information products in the framework of EPO co-operation activities in member states (AT, CH, LI, BE, NL, LU, DK, ES, FI, GR, IE, IT, MC, PT, SI, UK, PL, RO, BG, HU) as well as by other patent offices, including Australia, the CIS, Canada, Cuba, Japan, Korea, Russia, Taiwan and the United States. The authoring software is also used by commercial data providers to prepare patent information products, e.g. Bundesdruckerei, Micropatent.

MIMOSA Authoring Software

MIMOSA Authoring Software has become the de facto worldwide standard for the publication of patent information on optical media. In the course

of 2005, it was brought up to date by modifying it to handle XML data (according to WIPO St. 36) and the new IPC 8 classification symbols introduced in January 2006.

At present there are two versions of MIMOSA Authoring Software in use:

• version 3.2
(based on GTI v. 3 database structure, running under HP and SUN UNIX)
• version 5
(based on GTI v. 5 database structure, running under MS Windows. UNIX and LINUX versions will added during 2006)

For the production of most national ESPACE® series, the performance and capacity of MIMOSA Authoring Software version 3.2 is still sufficient. It was adapted to handle IPC 8 classification symbols introduced in January 2006. However, it will not be modified to handle XML input; changing the publication format to XML therefore necessitates a move to MIMOSA Authoring Software version 5.

In the future, the EPO will strive to base further developments of MIMOSA software on standard programming concepts like JAVA as far as possible and to increase modularisation which would facilitate the re-use of modules. One of the first benefits has been in the use of GTI v. 5 in the EPTOS (EPOLOC), which allows use of MIMOSA or JViewer as interfaces to access big databases on a mainframe or ESPACE® databases on optical discs, hard discs or across the Internet/Intranet. This means that a single data preparation process can serve as the data resource for different distribution channels, such as ESPACE® online products and a publication server.

MIMOSA User Software

The MIMOSA User Software is distributed free of charge with ESPACE® products, on the ESPACE® Demo Disc and via the MIMOSA website.

The latest version – labelled version 5 – was made available in mid-2005.

It contains a number of enhancements over the previous versions, including the ability to display, print and export XML data according to WIPO St. 36 and to access to GTI V5 databases across the Internet / Intranet. It has also been modified to handle IPC 8. Other improvements enable the MIMOSA User Software to offer completely transparent data-base consultation on a range of media, as well as even bigger databases.

Together with the ESPACE® products, MIMOSA offers essential searching, archiving and document delivery tools. It permits full-text searching in a local environment through a single multi-lingual interface with a very complete range of features, as well as access to databases in an Intranet / LAN or Internet environment.

2.5 MIMOSA Website

The MIMOSA Website was developed to support the users of MIMOSA Authoring Software around the world (the Office is aware of users in Europe, Australia, the USA, Canada, Russia and Korea, among others).

Registered developers can download the latest version of the MIMOSA Authoring Software from the home-page. It also gives them a very practical way to upload configuration files for new ESPACE® series they have created. They then obtain verification from the EPO's contractor, which in turn makes them available for distribution to all MIMOSA users with future official releases of the MIMOSA User Software.

The MIMOSA User Software can also be downloaded from the website, together with the latest updates, including configuration files for new ESPACE® products and software patches. A forum gives an opportunity for direct exchange of information between users. It is regularly checked by EPO experts and the EPO's contractor to ensure that difficult questions raised by users get answered.

Update procedures, content management and the layout have been aligned to procedures being implemented for the EPO website in order to facilitate the transfer of the MIMOSA website to an EPO server. Advantages of the home-page are also to be found in the product registration offered, which enables the EPO to ensure proper version control and maintain a full product inventory.

3. Patent Information Services

3.1 esp@cenet®

esp@cenet® is an entry-level, internet-based patent document search service offered free of charge. It provides basic search and document retrieval functions on a range of patent and patent-related documents.

Use of esp@cenet® version 3 continued to grow, with more than 75,000 individual IP addresses performing an average 1.7 million searches per week. This reflects an increase of 10,000 more users compared to one year earlier.

The database behind the service (EPODOC) was rebuilt at the beginning of the year. The possibility to search in the Patent Abstracts of Japan database was eliminated because abstracts that were previously only available in this database have now been incorporated into the worldwide database, removing the need to offer this additional option. Improved workflow has allowed the uploading of some data on the day of publication, notably EP, DE and GB publications.

Following an extended test phase the possibility to download complete documents from the worldwide database was implemented. Documents available from the BNS, and up to 50 pages in length are available for download in one single PDF file, in addition to the previously available page by page modes (embedded and maximised).

The possibility to search in the worldwide database for documents that have been attributed an ECLA Y classification was introduced. This part of the classification is used in addition to the normal classifications assigned to indicate that the contents of the documents fall in the realm of nanotechnology.

esp@cenet® version 3 was updated to incorporate the new IPC 8. For Level I servers, this involved changing the way that the data is stored and indexed, and a change to the query parsing. These changes enable the application to allow experienced users to selectively search using core and advanced classes related to invention and non-invention information (where available), while still supporting the possibility to perform a single search in any available classification.

In the second half of 2005 esp@cenet® version 2, or "the old version", was finally closed down.

Work continues on the EPTOS integration planned to be released in the first half of 2006. This includes modification of the translation application, handling of local images (including full document delivery if desired), based on either used of the file system or where available, a local jBNS system as well as the launch of a Japanese language esp@cenet® interface.

3.2 Open Patent Services (OPS)

Open Patent Services (OPS) represents a new way of accessing patent information via the Internet. It offers an alternative way to access data offered by the HTML based esp@cenet® service, by providing a web services application offering the same data in XML format.

The following services are currently available from OPS: retrieval of INPADOC extended patent family, legal and bibliographic data, with aggregates of these data types also possible. A number of publicly available clients have been built based on these services, including the EPO's own Register Plus.

The EPO's intention, in extending the OPS services, is:

- to make all the information currently available through the web application esp@cenet® also available via OPS
- to introduce a search functionality to complement the present retrieve-only nature of the service
- to modify the present service to make use of the new WIPO St. 36 XML structures.

Further to these planned features, the introduction of IPC 8 on 1 January 2006 required adaptation work to be carried out in order to allow for delivery of the new IPC symbols on time. A new release of the current OPS system in December 2005 allows the delivery of the complete set of IPC-8 codes, in addition to the earlier versions of the IPC (numbers 1 to 7) and the ECLA.

Developments for the first extension, which will see facsimile images in PDF or TIFF format being offered via the OPS, started at the end of the year 2005. Further developments to offer additional bibliographic fields - including cited references, nanotechnology classification, non-standardised values - and full-text claims and descriptions have taken place already. A broad testing phase for these additional developments is under way and the new environment is expected to go into production by Summer 2006.

3.3 International Patent Document (INPADOC)

The content of the INPADOC databases has been further extended. With the integration of patents from Algeria and the Ukraine, the bibliographic data from 76 patent authorities are now available via esp@cenet®, OPS (Open Patent Services) and numerous commercial providers. In 2005 legal status data from Hong Kong, Slovenia and Slovakia was included so that the Legal Status Database now covers 47 countries.

By switching from manual capturing of legal status data from journals in paper form to electronic data collection from the gazettes on the internet the legal status data from the United Kingdom, Ireland and WIPO is now included on the day of publication. France and Brazil will be treated next.

The IPG newsletter, launched for the first time in 2004, continues to be a success. At the moment, there are more than 300 regular subscribers to this publication from all over the world.

In the second half of 2005 the migration of most of the EPO's raw data products from SGML to XML took place. This was reflected by parallel distribution of both formats via the subscribers' Internet download area. The bibliographic database of the EPO (DOCDB), now under the label "EPO patent information resource" has been made fit for dissemination in XML according to WIPO St. 36 in 2006.

3.4 Document Consultation / Production Service

Over the last few years, the technical concept of the Document Consultation / Production Service has proven its flexibility, reliability, robustness and economic competitiveness for the production of copies of patent documents. Documents can be sent to clients within one hour by e-mail, fax or within 24 hours by normal mail. The concept has become established as standard document production systems in many national offices of member and non member states.

It is also used internally for the production of copies of documents, training material and the like. The infrastructure available also allows for the production of pages and covers in colour.

In summary the resources of the Document Consultation / Production Service can support a variety of different tasks / functions, including:

- regular document production ("Document Delivery on Demand")
- high capacity provision of documents in high quality
- demonstration and training
- DVD network
- support for the new search tool
- production of large copies of documents after use of the MIMOSA User Software
- Global Index Database (library function)
- reference system for support and maintenance purposes
- backlog production on high capacity media.

With the technical evolution of operating systems and other applications within this system, it is becoming necessary to update some parts of the application to new standards. These modifications will be implemented step by step.

4. East Asian Patent Information Services

4.1 "Far East meets West in Vienna"

Over the past years, the EPO has seen a further increase in enquiries about patent information services for East Asia, mainly for Japan, China and Korea. In particular, Japanese patent information has gained in importance through a broad range of English-language services on the Internet. At the same time, other countries in the Far East are also offering more and more services in English language and are gaining in

importance for patent searchers. Nevertheless, data from these countries often remains difficult to get. The EPO's role in this field is to provide a European service to help users access patent information from the Far East and interpret this complex data.

Around 100 participants from around the world gathered in Vienna in November 2005 to attend the EPO's fourth annual forum on Far Eastern Patent Information, ("Far East meets West in Vienna"). This was organised by EPO with assistance from the Japan Patent Office and the State Intellectual Property Office of the People's Republic of China and with the support from the Korean Intellectual Property Office. The meeting gave European users of East Asian patent information the opportunity to find out about the latest developments in patent information products and services.

This annual "Far East meets West in Vienna" meeting has developed into a true forum for discussions on Asian patent information, with special support from guest speakers from East Asian countries and experts from the Chinese, the Japanese and the Korean patent office.

For organisational reasons, the next event will be held in April 2007. In September 2006 a special event - more dedicated to user training on East Asian issues - will be held in Vienna, as a smaller alternative to the main conference.

4.2 Cooperation with the Chinese Patent Office

In the framework of the cooperation with the Chinese Patent Office in the field of Patent Information, two experts from the Chinese Patent Office (SIPO) visited the EPO's sub-office in Vienna in January and February 2006. The purpose of this information exchange visit was to support the EPO's installation of a helpdesk for Chinese Patent Information in Vienna and to transfer information and specialised knowledge to the EPO's specialists. This programme will be continued in summer 2006.

In addition to its well known services for Japanese patent information, the EPO's sub-office in Vienna is now already in a position to deliver basic information and helpdesk services on all matters of Chinese patent information. It is planned to enhance these services step by step.

4.3 Korean patent information

The EPO is also planning to enhance its East Asian patent information services in the medium term by establishing a competence centre and helpdesk for Korean patent information issues.

5. Co-operation Activities

The EPO member states continue to be highly interested in activities within the framework of co-operation programmes. Of particular interest during 2005 was the implementation of EPTOS administration services; this led to a prioritisation of co-operation activities in the second half of the year in order to stay within the budget envelope provided for co-operation programmes.

Bilateral co-operation programmes continued, with a number being completed in the course of 2005. New programmes were also approved, with some others being in preparation.

6. PATLIB

The PATLIB2005 conference was held in Sinaia (Romania) from 17 to 19 May 2005 and was co-organised with the State Office for Inventions and Trademarks (OSIM) of Romania.

452 participants from 39 countries (including 27 member states) exchanged experiences in the light of the conference slogan "Focus on your Customers", referring to creating and developing customer orientated patent information services and marketing them after having carefully identified the users' needs marketing. In parallel there was an exhibition with 17 exhibitors and a training programme for students and attorneys and industry. The PATLIB2005 proceedings are available on the Internet or on CD_ROM.

The PATLIB2006 conference will be held in Prague (Czech Republic) from 22 to 24 May 2006. The preparatory work has already commenced.

The PATLIB network currently has 320 members.

VII. Matters concerning mutual exchange of patent documentation and information

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

IX. Other relevant matters

1.	Classification is allotting one or more classification symbols (e.g., IPC symbols) to a patent application, either before or during search and examination, which symbols are then published with the patent application.
2.	Preclassification is allotting an initial broad classification symbol (e.g., IPC class or subclass, or administrative unit) to a patent application, using human or automated means for internal administrative purposes (e.g., routing an application to the appropriate examiner). Usually preclassification is applied by the administration of an office.
3.	Reclassification is the reconsideration and usually the replacement of one or more previously allotted classification symbols to a patent document, following a revision and the entry into force of a new version of the Classification system (e.g., the IPC). The new symbols are available on patent databases.