

SCIT.ATR.PI.2006.IE

Annual Technical Report 2006 on Patent Information Activities submitted by Ireland (SCIT /ATR/PI/2006/IE)

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 2006 the Irish Office received 951 patent applications, an increase of 10% compared to 2005. 838 of these applications, i.e. 88%, were received from applicants within the State and 261 claimed priority under the Paris Convention. The Patents Act, 1992 offers applicants the choice of a ten year (short-term) or twenty year (full-term) patent – in 2006 approximately 49% of applicants opted for the full-term patent.

The Office acts as a receiving office for European (EP) applications and also for applications filed under the Patent Co-operation Treaty (PCT). The number of EP applications filed in 2006 was 27, a reduction of 27% over the 2005 figure. The number of PCT applications filed went down marginally from 147 to 145.

The number of European patent applications filed with the EPO in 2006 and designating Ireland was 123,912, an increase of 6% on the 2005 figure.

The Office granted 357 national patents, a marginal increase of 0.2% over the figure for 2005.

In 2006, the number of granted European patents designating Ireland was 33,895, an increase of 26% over the 2005 figure.

A total of 38 requests for Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPC's) were received in 2006 and 56 such certificates were granted. 9 requests were rejected. At the end of the year there were 42 requests pending.

Statistics can be found in the 2006 Annual Report at http://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/publications_report.aspx

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

The Office publishes the Patents Office Journal once a fortnight and this contains bibliographic information (applicant name, title of invention, date of filing, priority date where applicable and the application number) on new applications, published patent applications (i.e. 18 months after the priority date) and granted patents. The list of granted patents includes those granted both by our Office and by the EPO having Ireland as a designated state.

Since the latter part of 2002 the Office Journal has been published electronically in both HTML and pdf versions on the Office's website at http://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/publications_download.aspx. A search/browse facility is also available.

Since 1995 the Office has published its patent applications on a series of CD-ROMs, the ESPACE-IE series, in co-operation with the EPO and using the MIMOSA software. This series contains searchable bibliographic data and abstracts with the complete document available in facsimile format. At present the collection covers the years 1995 to 2005 inclusive and it is expected that the 2006 disk will be available towards the end of 2007. All patent applications are also published in paper form. The Office also sends bibliographic data and abstracts of all published applications in electronic form on a fortnightly basis to the EPO for inclusion in its internal databases and incorporation onto the esp@cenet search facility.

Since June 2000 granted patent specifications are only published in pdf format on CD-ROM and are retrievable using the grant number. The Office has had its entire backfile of all granted specifications from 1927 to June 2000 scanned by the EPO and these documents are now also available via the esp@cenet search engine.

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

All abstracts are submitted in English by applicants are checked and modified if necessary by the patent examiners.

All patent applications are classified according to the latest edition of the IPC (Eighth Edition). The Office applies the Core Level of the IPC to all its published documents. No indexing schemes are used in the Office. When a new version of the Core Level is published in 2009 the Office will reclassify its documents accordingly.

IV. Search file establishment and upkeep

Because of the small number of patent examiners the Office has contracted out the searching of national applications and does not maintain a search file.

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

The Office maintains an internal Patents database that contains all bibliographic data and legal status for Irish patents. The database can be searched free of charge by the public at our Information Centres in Kilkenny and Dublin. The Office's website now offers 3 facilities for accessing Irish patent information online:- the Patent Register Search allows access to current register information using the application or grant number; the Patent Database Search provides access to the patent collection via the bibliographic data, title and abstract fields; the SPC Database Search provides information on all published SPC information via the bibliographic data, product type and product identity.

The Office has a CD-ROM/DVD jukebox network with a capacity of 4400 disks and this contains the major collections of patent documents e.g. EP-A, WORLD, GlobalPat, etc. These collections may be searched using the MIMOSA software and are available to public visitors to the information centres in Kilkenny and Dublin. The patent examiners and the information centre staff also have online access to the EPOQUE search and BNS document retrieval systems of the EPO.

The Office uses the PTOLEMY administrative management system with the application server running under Microsoft Windows NT linked to a SQL database and client workstations running under Windows XP. The network uses Novell and TCP/IP.

VI. Administration of the industrial property office library and information products 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)

The Office has two Information Centres, one at the headquarters in Kilkenny and the other in Dublin. The centre in Dublin also serves as a Receiving Office for national, EP and PCT patent applications. Both centres provide general information concerning intellectual property rights to the public as well as dealing with specific queries such as the provision of certified copies of documents, etc. Workstations are available giving access to the Register of Patents, the Patents Public Search facility and the jukebox CD-ROM/DVD network. Paper copies of patent documents going back to 1920 for most major countries can be supplied on request.

The Office website is linked into the EPO esp@cenet search facility offering the possibility of accessing over 30 million documents online including Irish patent information.

The Office's website also provides an online renewal fee system which facilitates the payment of patent, trade mark and design renewal fees by credit and debit cards.

VII. Matters concerning mutual exchange of patent documentation and information

The Office supplies national bibliographic data in electronic format to the EPO for loading onto their EPOQUE database, for esp@cenet and for processing related to the production of the ESPACE-IE CD-ROM series.

The Office also provides and receives electronic renewal fee and legal status information for EP granted patents designating Ireland from the EPO via the SPIRIT data exchange software.

Copies of all published Irish patent applications are sent to the United Kingdom Patents Office which maintains a comprehensive collection of Irish documents for search purposes.

At the present time priority documents may be exchanged only in paper form. Similarly, there is no current provision for the electronic filing of applications.

VIII. Other relevant matters concerning education and training in, and promotion of, the use of patent information, including technical assistance to developing countries (please indicate URLs of web pages of the Office's website wherever appropriate)

In 2006 the Office participated in the annual BT Young Scientist and Technology exhibition which attracted over 35,000 visitors in January. The Office again sponsored a special award in the competition, which was won by Fionan Murray a student of Blackwater Community School, Lismore, Co. Waterford, for his project - "The Unbreakable Hurley". The Office also participated in the National Ploughing Championships in September.

The Office sought to promote awareness of intellectual property, particularly for SMEs, in cooperation with a number of County Enterprise Boards. Staff gave talks on IP with an emphasis on trademarks to participants at "Start Your Own Business Courses" organised by the County Enterprise Boards in Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Wexford. Staff also gave seminars and workshops to participants at events organised by the Offaly and Wicklow County Enterprise Boards.

IX. Other general information related to the Office that is available on the Internet -- URLs of web pages of the Office's website that:

X. 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.
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