CWS/ATR/PI/2014/IE

Annual Technical Report on Patent Information Activities in 2014 submitted by Irish Patent Office

I. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN PATENT INFORMATION ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE OFFICE

Outline of main policies and plans aimed at development of patent information activities and expected time frames for their realization

Communication with the Office

Since 2010, the Office has pursued an e-communications programme which has the aim of improving service delivery and more efficient processing by combining electronic filing, electronic file processing and electronic communications in a way that will ultimately facilitate the introduction of paperless processing in the Office. The vast majority of Office correspondence is now issued by email and customers are encouraged to correspond by email with the Office, where possible.

The Office has introduced an electronic drop box which facilitates the submission of encrypted patent, trade mark and design applications and associated documents electronically and securely via the Internet for patent agents.

Available patent documents

A project to expand the amount of national patent documents which are electronically archived which commenced in 2013 and continued in 2014. The aim of the project is to scan all available patent application specification documents from the 1960s to the early 2000's, and to make them available on the website. It is estimated that there are approx. 58,000 documents to be scanned. This project will facilitate ease of access to the data for both the public and for staff, as well as reducing the requirement for storage space for paper files. The project continued in 2014 with over 18,800 documents scanned to date. It is estimated that the project will take the next three years to complete.

PTOLEMY Developments

During 2014, staff continued to refine the work processes and technology solutions that underpin its core products and services to provide more efficient service delivery. In this regard, nine substantive enhancements to the PTOLEMY administration system were developed during the year, all of which were aimed at improving operational efficiency and ensuring the Office's core business systems remain current.

E-Services

A project to develop e-filing for patents is scheduled to commence in 2016. This patent e-filing module shall contain separate sections for experienced users (agents, companies, etc.) and non-experienced users. The non-experienced user module shall contain step by step instruction with in-depth explanation for all application requirements.

Federated Register

The Federated European Patent Register service provides the public with information on the legal status of European Patents and the legal status of national patents. In the first phase of the project (already completed) the Federated Register provides a direct link to a specific application or publication number in a number of national patent registers including Ireland. The second phase, which will be completed in 2015, will give the opportunity for the user to consult legal status data of EP documents in the national phase in several offices displayed in a single unified list. This list will be built on the fly by retrieving data in real-time from each national office's register databases including the Irish patents register.

Upgrade of web servers and website

An upgrade of the website infrastructure and webservers is being carried out in order to replace out of date and unsupported operating systems. A new content management system will also be put in place to facilitate refinement of web pages, easier creation and management of content and expanded capabilities to manage graphics, photos, video and audio so as to provide improved services to users. This will be followed by a redesign of the Office's website.

New projects launched or resumed this year in the context of the policies and plans mentioned above, short description: aims, partners, tasks

The Office also successfully completed its participation in the EU programme called IPORTA which concluded in December 2014. The project involved the participation of 26 European IP Office. The EPO and OHIM were observers. The programme was coordinated by CRP Henri Tudor on behalf of the Luxembourg IP Office. The project seeks to strengthen the cooperation between national intellectual property offices from the member states and associate countries and to promote activities and tools related to the use and management of intellectual property rights. Its aim is to build synergies among national IP Offices with national business support organisations and with other IP stakeholders such as the European and China IPR Helpdesk and the Enterprise Europe Network in order to help SMEs to better integrate IP into their business strategies and to better exploit them.

Main areas of patent information activities and related information and communication technology (ICT) practices which were in the focus of attention last year

See entry above in relation to the development of patent information activities.

Statistics: changes in terms of application filings and grants with respect to previous year; trends or areas experiencing rapid changes

National full term Patent filings received during 2014 were down by 12.5% on 2013 (from 135 to 118) while the number of short term patent applications filed was down 20% on 2013 (from 255 to 203).

The shift from long term patents to short term patents is also quite marked with a ratio of filings of almost 2:1. The figures would seem to suggest that applicants are choosing to make their patent applications via the European route as opposed to through national offices.

As at 31 December 2014, there were a total of 1,111 pending applications on hand. Of these, 242 applications were awaiting the submission of evidence of novelty. The Office granted 148 national patents.

The number of applications received from applicants in the State was 263 compared with 333 in 2013.

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 2014 was 0. The number of PCT applications filed went down from 26 in 2013 to 19 in 2014.

The number of European patent applications filed with the EPO in 2014 and designating Ireland was 152,400 an increase of 3.22% on the 2013 figure of 147,487.

Other general patent statistics include:

Patents and patent applications the subject of assignments	827
Patents revoked	0
Patents surrendered	2
Patents lapsed	54,914
Patents restored/reinstated	10
Patents renewed	42,061
Patents expired	959
Patents in force	111,109

National applications were filed in the following technical fields in 2014, according to the classes of the International Patent Classification (IPC):

A – Human Necessities – 27.06%;

F – Mechanical Engineering, Lighting, Heating, Weapons, Blasting – 22.93%

B – Performing Operations – 15.04%

E – Fixed Constructions – 15.04%

G – Physics – 9.77%

H – Electricity – 6.02%

C – Chemistry – 3.76%

D – Textiles, Paper – 0.38%

A total of 75 requests for Supplementary Protection Certificates were received during the year under the European Communities (Supplementary Protection Certificates) Regulations, 1992 (medicinal) and 1996 (plant protection products). During the year, 34 certificates were granted (medicinal and plant protection), 4 requests were rejected and 8 requests were withdrawn. At the end of the year there were 175 requests pending.

Other matters and useful links (URLs): annual report of the Office, news page, statistics, etc.

Our website offers a current news page, and news archive, which can be found at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/News

Statistics related to patents at the Intellectual Property Office can be accessed through the annual reports, annual reviews and facts and figures at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Publications/Annual-Reports

Information on filing, including a patent application guide and other materials for users, is available from the following web page: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Patents/How-to-Apply

Information regarding the patent procedure, including post examination and post grant, can be found at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Publications/Information-Booklets

Information regarding dispute resolution, including hearings relating to patents and SPCs can be found at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Publications/Written-Grounds

A link to the IE patent journal can be found at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Publications/Download-a-Journal

A link to electronic searchable patent journals (from 2002 onwards) can be found at: https://webjournal.patentsoffice.ie

Information regarding the current patent legislation (Act and Rules) is available from: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Legislation

Information regarding fees, payments and our online fee payments module are available at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Payments/Fees

https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Payments

https://epayment.patentsoffice.ie

Other business practices and procedures are covered by web pages accessible from the main patents page: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Patents

Information regarding protection of patents outside the IE jurisdiction is available at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Patents/Protection-Abroad

The IE patent register may be searched by publication or application number at: https://eregister.patentsoffice.ie/PTRegNr.aspx

The IE patent register may also be searched over several fields such as: title/abstract; application, grant or priority number; application date range; grant date range; legal status; IPC; inventor name; applicant name; etc. at:

https://eregister.patentsoffice.ie/query/PTQuery.aspx

A link to the EPO search facility Espacenet, the EP Patent Register and WIPO Patentscope database is provided from: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Patents/Patent-Searching

II. SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PATENT INFORMATION CARRIED OUT BY THE OFFICE

Information and support provided by the Office to applicants regarding filing on paper and/or e-filing (instructions, seminars, etc.) - URLs

Information on filing, including a patent application guide and other materials for users, is available from the following web page: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Patents/How-to-Apply

Information regarding the patent procedure, including post examination and post grant, can be found at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Publications/Information-Booklets

Availability of the application dossier in electronic form

The IE patent register may be searched by publication or application number at: https://eregister.patentsoffice.ie/PTRegNr.aspx

The IE patent register may also be searched over several fields such as: title/abstract; application, grant or priority number; application date range; grant date range; legal status; IPC; inventor name; applicant name; etc.:https://eregister.patentsoffice.ie/query/PTQuery.aspx

Classification[1], preclassification[2] (if applicable), reclassification[3] activities; classification systems used (e.g., International Patent Classification (IPC)); matters concerning indexing of patent information

All patent applications are classified according to the latest edition of the IPC 2014.01. The Office applies the latest edition of the IPC to all its published documents. No indexing schemes are used in the Office.

Reclassification is done on an application-by-application basis by the examiners.

Abstracting, reviewing, and translation of the information contained in patent documents

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

Other activities

None to report.

III. SOURCES OF PATENT INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE

Main types of publications of the Office (patent applications, full text, first pages, abstracts, bibliographic data, granted patents, etc.), medium (on paper, on CDs, online - URLs)

(1) Published Patent Applications and Granted Patent Documents

These are prepared in-house in a 2 week publication cycle using our PTOLEMY software system for front page bibliographic data. The PDF image is then scanned and loaded onto the office's back server (for Ptolemy) and publication server (for website) using our "Document Import Tool".

The Irish Patent Office no longer publishes applications or granted documents in paper format; the official publication means being electronic.

The PDF documents are then transferred via Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) to the EPO. This is done on a weekly basis and includes a separate ST.36 XML file for the bibliographical and full text abstract data.

(2) Patents Office Journal.

Up until 2009 the official notices and selected bibliographic data relating to IE patent applications and granted patents were published every two weeks in hard copy. After this date the journal was placed on the website in PDF and HTML format.

From 2012 the Patents Office Journal became searchable online with full patent document retrieval, and links to Espacenet for EP designating Ireland documents. THE HTML version was also modified to allow full bibliographic data access and document retrieval.

(3) ESPACENET, EPOQUE etc.

The full text, drawings and bibliographic data of all newly published Irish patent applications and granted patents is published on the EPOQUE and Espacenet system soon after the given publication date.

(4) Annual Report

A report, providing information on statistics, IP application trends, office activities, office projects, training, patent information dissemination, etc. is published on a yearly basis. It is provided in hard copy and electronically on our website.

Official Gazettes: main types of announcements, frequency of publication, medium (on paper, on CDs, online - URL), etc.

Official notices and bibliographic data relating to IE patent applications, published patents, granted patents, withdrawn/refused patents, etc. are published every two weeks in Patents Office Journal. It also contains information regarding EP applications designating Ireland.

Mass production of paper copies of the journal ceased in 2009, but a small number of hard copies are produced, in house, for distribution to our National Library, university libraries and the British Library. The journal is now made available, at no cost, on the Patent office website. The journal is searchable and may be downloaded in PDF or HTML formats.

The journal section on the website also includes a back-file of previous journals from 27 November 2002, which are also searchable and downloadable. The Patents Office Journal and archived journals may be accessed from: https://webjournal.patentsoffice.ie/default.aspx

Important and current information relating to patents and other IP is made available on the news section of our website at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/News/Current-News

Information products and patent document collections (coverage, medium, etc.) available to examiners, including external collections and databases

The examiners have access to a complete catalogue of IE documents reaching as far back as 1927. Full document retrieval is made possible through our Patent Database search system. External databases such as Espacenet, Epoquenet and Patentscope are accessed to retrieve relevant patent information also.

Examiners also use national patent office organisations websites for information regarding priority, family members, etc.

Information products and patent document collections (coverage, medium, etc.) available to external users, conditions of access (e.g., free of charge, subscription, etc.)

A collection of patent application and grant documents is physically located at our office, in Kilkenny, Ireland. These documents are also available on the website.

Copies of information booklets, other national office annual reports, IP legislation, previous copies of the IPC; guides to IP Law, patent case law reports, scientific journals and magazines, etc. are stored in our main information centre.

Our office is open to the public five days a week, where users can file applications, perform searches on our patents database, Espacenet, and/or Patentscope, peruse available booklets/journals or avail of an IP clinic with an examiner for pre-filing advice. These services are provided free of charge.

Legal status information (kind of information, coverage, medium, etc.)

Legal status information is contained in the IE patent online bibliographic data page and may be searched in our patent database search at: https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/Patents/Patent-Searching

This data is complete for all Irish national applications and granted patents in force

Other sources

Nothing to report.

IV. ICT SUPPORT TO SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PATENT INFORMATION CARRIED OUT BY THE OFFICE

Specific software tools supporting business procedures within the Office: general description, characteristics, advantages, possible improvements

In the Irish Office, provides an integrated and extensive network of applications that are available to all staff, via Microsoft Windows 7. Word processing can be carried out using Word 2010; all other MS Office applications, including PowerPoint, Publisher and Excel are available. EpoqueNet, Espacenet and Patentscope are available to all examiners.

Our Office administration software system (PTOLEMY) is used in conjunction with a SQL database for recording file movement, incoming and outgoing correspondence, fee payments, examination reports, etc. Production of office statistics is done with our IMPROMPTU statistics software.

The Office 'workspace', hosted on Lotus Notes, contains a very large collection of essential information for staff, including: procedure manuals for particular administrative sections; PTOLEMY development and evolution requests; FAQs; etc.

All staff have access to the Internet and to the office intranet. They have their own e-mail (via Lotus Notes) and official e-mail address (firstname.secondname@patentsoffice.ie).

Remote access to the full range of required tools and software is possible for the staff using Citrix remote access software.

Hardware used to supporting business processes of the Office

Our office network uses Novell and TCP/IP. Staff can access this through their Windows 7 desktops. The workstations are Celtic G630 Desktop-PC Pentium running Windows 7, using Dell and Acer 20" monitors.

Ptolemy Application Server: POWEREDGE R710: 2 INTEL XEON E5506 PROCESSORS (QUAD core): 8GB of RAM

Ptolemy Database Server: POWEREDGE R710: 1 INTEL XEON E5506 PROCESSORS (QUAD core): 12GB of RAM

A daily back up is performed to a central server offsite.

Internal databases: coverage, updates, interlinks with external sources

All bibliographic data (Patent applications, SPC applications, granted patents, granted SPCs) is stored in the patent database (PTOLEMY).

All patent documents (published patent applications, granted patents) are stored both in a back server (for integration into the PTOLEMY software system) and a web publication server (for display on the patents office website). They are servers are accessed by different software tools (our Document Import Tool/PTOLEMY and our Patent Database Search system).

The SPC Database Search, available on our website, provides information on all published SPC information via the bibliographic data, product type and product identity.

Establishment and maintenance of electronic search file: file building, updating, storage, documents from other offices included in the search file

Because of the small number of patent examiners, the Office does not carry out its own searches and does not maintain a search file. The searching of Irish national applications is carried out by the UKIPO.

Administrative management electronic systems (register, legal status, statistics, and administrative support)

See entry in relation to internal databases

Other matters

Nothing to report.

V. PROMOTION ACTIVITIES AIMED TO SUPPORT USERS IN ACCESS AND EFFICIENT USE OF PATENT INFORMATION

Patent library: equipment, collection management, network of patent libraries in the country, cooperation with foreign patent libraries

Our information Centre deals with the maintenance of IP relevant material and collections. Co-operation with the EPO, WIPO and other national offices is ongoing to maintain up-to-date catalogues and legislation.

The staff deal with calls and emails from members of the public regarding general IP issues. Presentations and Information days are co-ordinated by these staff on demand and through collaboration with Enterprise Ireland, Irish universities, local enterprise boards, etc.

The Information Centre has telephone access to selected examiners in the office should help be needed on specific enquiries.

IP Clinics (one-to-one sessions with a patent examiner for pre-filing advice) are managed by the Information Centre staff.

Publications related to different business procedures and patent information sources available to users, for example, books, brochures, Internet publications, etc.

A collection of patent application and grant documents is physically located at our office, in Kilkenny, Ireland. These documents are also available on the website.

Our website contains a "Student Zone" which approaches the issue of IP in an easy to understand and entertaining way. This section contains a brief history of Patents, fun facts, Irish inventors, links to IP information in comic book format, etc.

Copies of information booklets, other national office annual reports, IP legislation, previous copies of the IPC; guides to IP Law, scientific journals and magazines, etc. are stored in our main information centre. Selections of these are available on our website.

Patent specific publications held include: European Patent Handbooks; Copies of the EPC, PCT, Paris Convention; Case Law decisions; Law Reports; CIPA guides, IP related publications ("Irish innovators in science", "Ingenious women", "British patents of invention") etc.

Our office is open to the public five days a week, where users can file applications, perform searches on our patents database, Espacenet, and/or Patentscope, peruse available booklets/journals or avail of an IP clinic with an examiner for pre-filing advice. These services are provided free of charge.

Office's initiatives on providing foreign patent information in the local language(s) (e.g., machine translation tools, translation of abstracts)

Nothing to report.

Cooperation with universities, research centers, technology and innovation support centers, etc.

During 2014, the Office participated in some 56 events speaking on IP at "Start your own business" courses run by the County Enterprise Boards (now Local Enterprise Offices) and either had a presence or provided a talk at various business advice and enterprise exhibitions and shows throughout the country. The Office participated in the first national Innovation Showcase at the Convention Centre Dublin which had over two thousand attendees many of whom were provided with information and advice on IP matters either at the event or thereafter at one-to-one sessions with a member of staff. "MeetWest" is a popular and successful business networking event at which Office staff held one-to-one sessions with various businesses who had specifically requested our presence.

Talks are provided, upon request, to universities and colleges, usually in conjunction with their Technology Transfer Offices.

Education and training: training courses, e-learning modules (URLs), seminars, exhibitions, etc.

The Patents Office held 110 awareness raising activities in 2014, covering a range of IP rights. Of these 54 were IP clinics. These clinics give an opportunity to members of the public, inventors, entrepreneurs and business people to discuss with Patents Office staff, on a one to one basis, their ideas and matters concerning IP applications they intend to make or have already made to the Office.

This particular approach has been found to be very helpful in providing basic guidance on procedures and forms required for the registration of IP rights, the processes of obtaining IP protection in Ireland or abroad and the timeframes involved. Assistance in constructing a do-it-yourself search strategy for patents and using online patent databases is also provided.

A significant part of the Office's IP awareness raising efforts is directed at second level students through involvement with the annual BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition and the annual Student Enterprise Awards.

The Student Enterprise Awards run by the Local Enterprise Boards is the biggest enterprise competition for second level students in Ireland with some 16,000 potential participants. The National Finals took place in April 2014. The competition provides an excellent vehicle for the Office to engage with second level student entrepreneurs to reflect an awareness of IP when developing a business idea and establishing and running a successful enterprise. The SEA workbook has now incorporated a new chapter specifically relating to Intellectual Property, thus reinforcing awareness of IP amongst second level students.

Other activities

Nothing to report

VI. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF PATENT INFORMATION

International exchange and sharing of patent information in machine-readable form, e.g., priority documents, bibliographic data, abstracts, search reports, full text information

The Office supplies national bibliographic data in electronic format to the EPO for loading onto their EPOQUE database and for Espacenet.

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

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.

Participation in international or regional activities and projects related to patent information

Patents Office staff represent Ireland on the Administrative Council of the EPO, its various Committees, and several of its technical and liaison committees which deal with various issues concerning intellectual property. In addition, staff participate in meetings of governing and technical bodies of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

The EPO offer alternative routes to obtaining IP protection in Europe and the Office's involvement with these organisations is aimed at ensuring that Irish interests are appropriately represented, at keeping abreast of best practice at an international level and to facilitate collaboration with other national and international industrial property offices.

The Office partakes in cooperation programmes with the EPO under which it receives assistance towards participation in various IP awareness raising events, specialist IP training and ICT projects to facilitate IP data exchanges. Our participation also facilitates dialogue on the content and structure of cooperation programmes between those organisations and other national IP Offices in Europe which in turn enables the Office to further enhance or develop its customer services in line with best inter-national practice.

Assistance to developing countries

The Irish Office continues to have an informal programme of cooperation with various countries, including a number of developing countries.

Other activities

Nothing further to report.

VII. OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Nothing further to report.

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.