



Europäisches
Patentamt
European
Patent Office
Office européen
des brevets

EPO's QMS



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Quality Management



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Employing highly qualified specialists as examiners



Minimum requirements

- Master's degree in physics, chemistry, engineering or natural sciences
- Excellent knowledge of one official language (DE, EN, FR) and the ability to understand the other two



Only the best candidates are recruited

- 20 000 job applications were received in 2016
- 185 examiners were recruited

Building and retaining examiners' expertise

Building expertise

First two years



- 45.5 days instructor-led, interactive, classroom training
- On the job coaching by experienced examiners supervising all activities

Career-long training



- regular training on technical and legal matters
- In 2016, 89.5% of staff received at least one training exercise
- Examiners are fully trained in about four years

Retaining expertise

- **No outsourcing** of core activities such as search, examination, classification
- Low staff turnover (around 3.5%)

Fostering collaborative work between our experts



World's most comprehensive prior art collection



Largest prior art collection: millions of centralised records

- over **100 databases**
- **1 billion** technical records
- **> 100 million** full-text patent documents
- **> 30 million** non-patent literature documents
- **> 3 million** standards documents



Patent Translate: patent-specific machine translation

- developed in collaboration with Google
- covering **32 languages** worldwide

“Get it right first time”

Search Phase



Search Examiner



Examination Phase



1st Examiner

- EPO searches are delivered within 6 months. They are as complete and thorough as possible.
- In the examination phase, the same examiner who carried out the search will perform the substantive examination:
- The EPO approach offers early legal certainty.

“Get it right first time” and PCT

- If the EPO performed a search during the PCT Phase (International Search Report or Supplementary International Search Report):
 - The EPO recognises its own PCT searches in the European Phase
 - **no** European search will be performed, **no** European search fee
 - on entering the European phase, the application will proceed immediately to the EPO’s examination phase (saving time)
 - the same examiner who performed the PCT search will be responsible for the examination at the EPO

Providing Early Certainty throughout the process

Search reports

Delivering search reports within **6 months** of receipt

Actual¹ Search timeliness: **4.9 months**



Examination time

Reducing examination times to just **12 months** on average by 2020

Actual¹ Examination timeliness: **22.6 months**



Opposition time

Completing oppositions in just **15 months** on average, while ensuring the parties are heard

Actual¹ duration of oppositions: **23.8 months**

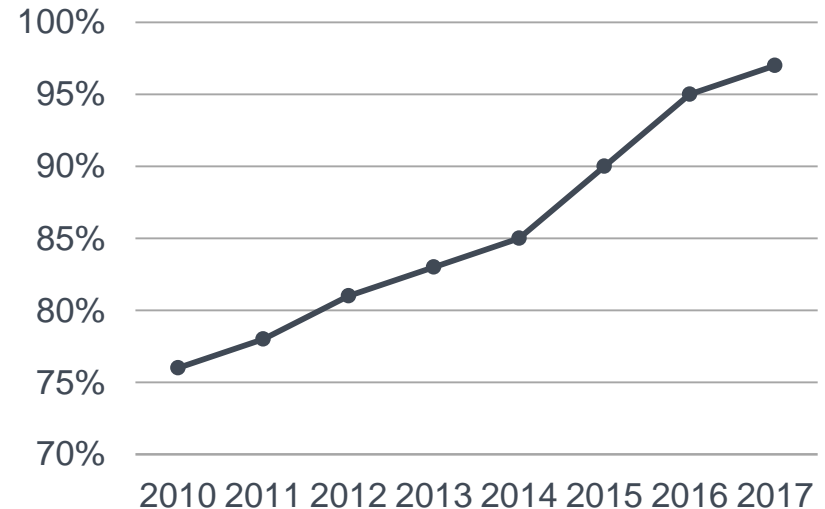


¹ Data from Q4 2017

PCT search timeliness

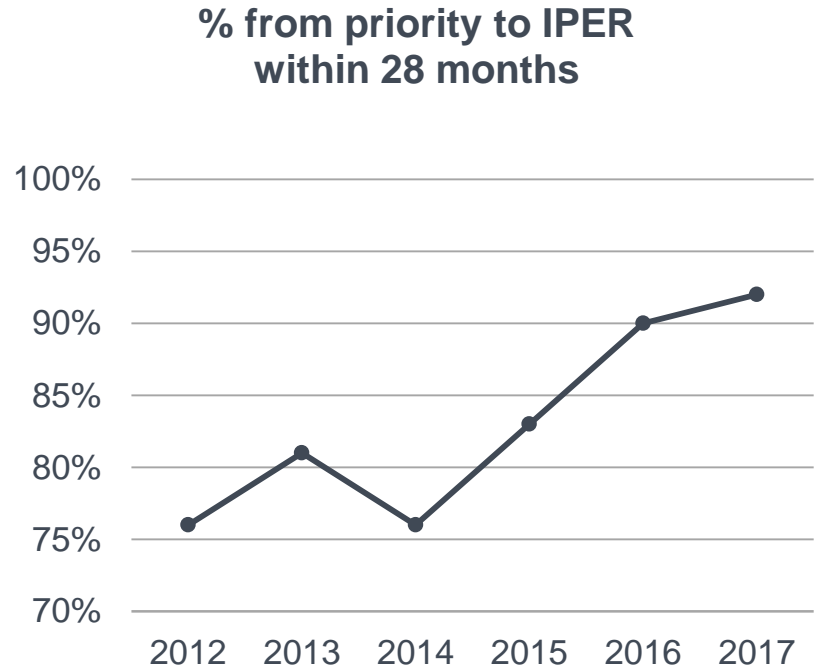
- The “in time” indicator increased from 76% in 2010 to **97%** in 2017 (Q1 and Q2)
- Resulting from two initiatives:
 - Early Certainty from Search, **6 months** from receipt
 - **Fast track** for PCT applications delivered late from other Receiving Offices

Percentage of EPO International Search Reports issued in time for A1 publication



PCT examination timeliness

- “Within 28 months” indicator increased from 76% in 2014 to **92%** in 2017 (Q1 and Q2)
- Resulting from:
 - **Prioritising** PCT Ch. II applications
 - International searches (PCT Ch. I) delivered on time



Retaining highest quality standards

Patent process

- Search
- Examination
- Limitation/ Revocation
- Opposition
- Classification
- EP Publication
- EP Register and Bulletin
- Post-grant fee handling
- Supporting processes

ISO 9001 re-certified in 2017

- 2017: **re-certification** audit under revised ISO 9001:2015 standard
- **First** of the world's largest offices to achieve ISO 9001 certification for its Quality Management System (QMS) covering the entire patent process
- Includes supporting processes (e.g. HR-related, Automation support, QMS maintenance and review)



Preparatory work for UPP to integrate into the Patent process
Ratification pending. Integration in the QMS after a period of operative implementation.

Annual reporting of quality deliverables

- Reporting transparency
- Quality indicators integrated in the Annual Report since 2014
- First Quality Report published in 2017



EPO Quality Report 2016

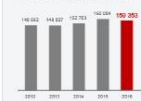


Welcome to the Annual Report 2016



Statistics and indicators

Application level remains high



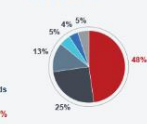
Outstanding performance



Top applicants



Origin of applications



Fastest growing technology fields



[View all statistics](#)

[Download all statistics](#)

President's foreword

Quality and rising productivity

President Battistelli talks about meeting high demand with improved digital processes to enhance productivity.



Focal topic



Keeping pace with change

In a competitive environment, the EPO has been reforming to support innovation.

[Read the feature story](#)

Highlights 2016



Highlights 2016

A review of some of the main developments and achievements of the year.

[Read the highlights](#)

Expanding EPO Services



Fee levels have remained **stable**



The level of **EPO services** has **expanded**

- More validation states: Morocco, Tunisia and Moldova
- Patent Prosecution Highway agreements with 15 other offices, giving easy access to accelerated examination abroad free of charge
- Innovative new services such as PCT-Direct
- Timeliness has dramatically improved
- Patent Translate in co-operation with Google
- Free access to world's largest patent databases (Espacenet: now over 100 million documents)

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