

Questionnaire on the Term "Quality of Patents" and Cooperation between Patent Offices in Search and Examination

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The answers to this questionnaire have been provided on behalf of:

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Q1. Various aspects may be relevant to the concept of "quality of patents". It may relate to, for example, quality of patent procedures and management in the office, quality of search and examination, quality of granted patents or quality of a patent system. In addition, the expression "quality of patents" may be understood differently depending on the perspectives of various stakeholders, for example, the perspectives of a patent office, an applicant etc.

How does your office understand the term "quality of patents"?

According our understanding the concept of patent quality consists of following important elements:

- 1) high quality work product;*
- 2) quality management system (QMS) to measure and improve the patent examination quality;*
- 3) customer satisfaction.*

The most essential indicators of assessing of the work product quality are the results of customer satisfaction survey and the percentage of oppositions of the granted patents in the Board of Appeal and courts. Main objective of the Office's QMS is to improve the quality of patent search and examination at the Patent Department. Activities to achieve this objective are carrying out work product reviews, customer satisfaction survey, handling of complaints, analysing the decisions of the Board of Appeal and the courts, developing new rules, practices, procedures and tools for examination and training of examiners.

Q2. What types of cooperation with other patent offices does your office have with respect to search and examination?

Those types of cooperation may include, for example, access to documents/databases of other offices, use of search and examination work products, expertise and resources available in other offices, collaborative search and examination, outsourcing search and examination etc.

GPPH (since 06.07.2015)

Bilateral cooperation with Finnish Patent and Registration Office (since 1992)

Annual meetings between Nordic and Baltic countries:

- 1) meetings of Heads of Offices;*
- 2) NAP meetings – exchange of information and best practices;*
- 3) examiners meetings in biotechnology area.*

Q3. When performing prior art search, patent examiners prepare search strategies and queries (for example, indication of databases and publications, classification codes, search terms and key words used) to find relevant prior art.

Does your office share (for example, via an official website), or exchange, such search queries with other collaborating offices?

At the present stage of the cooperation, the Office does not yet share nor exchange search queries with other offices.

Q4. In order to facilitate the cooperation, what kinds of platforms and tools to share information on search and examination are available in your office? Such platforms and tools include, for example, WIPO CASE, databases allowing other offices to retrieve information and external databases used to retrieve information.

(i) Platforms and tools provided by your office:

No case

(ii) Platforms and tool used by your office:

*Search software EPOQUE Net of the European Patent Office;
European Patent Register;
Japan Patent Office – AIPN;
WIPO Digital Access Service (DAS) beginning from 01.01.2017.*

Q5. What are the impacts of such cooperation in the area of search and examination to your office? If your office has different types of cooperation and each type of cooperation has different impacts, please indicate them separately.

The result is improved patent quality, shorter average examination time, harmonized examination practice and less overlapping in search and examination.

Q6. What kinds of capacity building are required for different types of cooperation between patent offices in search and examination? Please indicate any specific capacity building needs to conduct such cooperation successfully?

In this context, the capacity building is understood to refer to various activities and trainings that support developments of knowledge and skills of office employees for effective cooperation between offices in search and examination.

Estonian Patent Office has concluded a cooperation agreement with EPO. Guiding principles for the cooperation are set in the EPOs Cooperation Roadmap. The core cooperation areas are training, patent-related IT services and tools, patent information services and awareness. The European Patent Academy provide high quality and up-to-date training in the areas documentation and classification, patent information, search and examination, IP management, legal and procedural issues and IP office tools and techniques. EPO also conducts dialogue with the NPOs by working visits, multilateral meetings and European Patent Network (EPN) workshops.

[End of Questionnaire]