

BEST PRACTICES OF IP OFFICES FOR ASSISTING SME's TO USE THE IP SYSTEM

Innovation Promotion Activities undertaken by the Austrian Patent Office

Since its foundation 104 years ago the Austrian Patent Office has the task to support the Austrian trade and industry. Comprehensive information and consulting activities for Austrian enterprises complete the classic field of granting and administration of industrial property protection.

Under the aspect of promoting the competitive capacity of the Austrian economy in a global market the Austrian Patent Office has to adapt to the new global structures defined by internationally operating co-operations acting in a harmonized international legal and commercial environment.

Patent offices accept new challenges. With regards to legal issues software protection, gene technology, Internet, e-commerce provide new possibilities and tasks but also new demands on legislation and administration bodies. With regards to new technical developments e-filing, consulting files online and online publishing are new challenges.

In the field of assisting SMEs we aim to ensure actual information about existing industrial property rights, their effects and possibilities. We try to increase public awareness and understanding of industrial property protection.

Within this context the Austrian Patent Office offers "best or at least good" practices.

Title	Description	Reason	Problems to be addressed	Success of the scheme
Reorganization Project	Definition of goals and activities for a period of some years give the chance to realize the new tasks patent offices have to manage	Furthering technological progress	To convince the target groups, clients and partners	Modern Patent Office

General information services in the Austrian Patent Office include:

- general inquiries
- registry services
- library services

and a legal and technical information service, a so-called Help-Desk.

Title	Description	Reason	Problems to be addressed	Success of the scheme
APO Help Desk	The program is aimed to improve efficiency and competitiveness of SMEs. The consulting services include all general, legal and technical questions	Knowledge about IP is the basis for the functioning of markets	Implementation of IP within SMEs	Increasing numbers of interested companies

Title	Description	Reason	Problems to be addressed	Success of the scheme
Online IP-Information	Online Access to all bibliographic data of national industrial property rights	Online access to in-house data of national applications and registered IP-rights and EP- and PCT-publications with respect to Austria	Difficulty in accessing IPR information	Easy access to data concerning applications and rights protected in Austria

World-wide communication concerning information about industrial property rights was built up via Internet. The office gives answer to general questions via e-mail.

The demands are increasing for both, the homepage:

www.patentamt.at and the e-mail, info@patentamt.at

The targets groups of the APO to be addressed are:

- enterprises
- marketing and technology consultants
- governmental, semi-governmental and private institutions acting in the innovation field
- universities/schools (teachers, students....)
- lawyers, attorneys
- librarians
- sole inventors
- advertising agencies
- designers

Title	Description	Reason	Problems to be addressed	Success of the scheme
Training the Trainees	The project is aimed to train lawyers, librarians, business advisers, teachers ...as multipliers for dissemination of information concerning IP	Dissemination of information	Create awareness	Increasing number of companies using IP information

A German study came to the conclusion that 30% of the R&D costs could be saved by using existing technical information. According to an estimation of the British Patent Office 20 billion pounds are wasted in the EU area per year because of double inventions. The state of the art search report is a report by the competent technical expert of the Austrian Patent Office. These searches are carried out in the complete German, English and French patent literature, in technical databases and non-patent-literature.

Title	Description	Reason	Problems to be addressed	Success of the scheme
State-of-the-art searches	Clients receive a complete state-of-the-art search without having to file an application	Filing should not always be the first step in IP	Stop filing before knowing the state-of-the-art	Number of state-of-the-art searches

To make things easier for the Austrian industry and to inform the decision makers about the instruments of industrial property rights, training courses and seminars are realized in the office itself or in the federal states of Austria.

External seminars are organized with partners as they are the Institute for the Promotion of Industry, the Law Society.... to keep the personal resources of the office as small as possible and to make use of the communication structure to address the target group.

Title	Description	Reason	Problems to be addressed	Success of the scheme
SME Information Campaign	The project is aimed to improve efficiency and competitiveness of all users of IP. According to the different target groups training courses are offered. Cooperation partners (Chambers of Commerce, Technology Institutes, Innovation Relay Centres...other patent offices) are involved. Information via mass media, Internet ..give an incentive.	Create a public awareness	Lack of knowledge of market information	Increasing number of participants

There are some special campaigns to promote the state-of-the art search in Austria. One of these is the "University Service". This service is installed for university and widened for advanced technical colleges. It is a free-of-charge service.

Another free-of-charge state-of-the-art search is the "Environment and Energy search". Inventors have the possibility to receive a search report for a technical problem concerning an environmental relevant or an energy saving technology.

Title	Description	Reason	Problems to be addressed	Success of the Scheme
University Service	Students in the last exams benefit from the state-of-the-art searches carried out free of charge by the APO	When students go into companies they know about these searches and save R&D costs	Lack in IPR knowledge	Increasing numbers of participants

The lack of knowledge about patent information amongst companies and even amongst companies which are active in patenting was brought to light by a study published recently by the EPO. Here an increased activity of the Austrian Patent Office is to be expected most probable in co-operation with the EPO.

In the frame of national and international fairs the APO presents its products via information stands on fairs. The APO offers online access to general and actual information and technical databases. Supporting programs (discussions, press interviews..) and the co-operation with other patent offices help to multiply this efficiency.

Press releases at least twice a year, additional ones for special events (new law amendments, actual activities in the international field.... and a lot of information material (annual report....) complete the offer.

To go with the time the APO participates in three EU- projects:

IPR-Guide (Co-operation Project between national patent offices and institutions for innovation from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Malta and the Netherlands to develop a guideline for SMEs)

e-Mage (Co-operation Project to give access to bibliographic data on databases in the trademark and designs field)

e-Patent (Co-operation Project to give access to patent publications via translation of a natural language into a formal one using the language of the IPC and patent abstracts).

It is planned to analyze the possibilities which are offered by the SOPRANO software of the EPO for the adoption of the EDP managing of files within the office.