

PCT RECEIVING OFFICE MARKS ITS TENTH YEAR

WIPO's Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) Receiving Office (RO/IB) recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. The RO/IB mainly carries out similar procedural functions to other receiving offices, such as according a valid filing date to the international application, collecting the relevant fees from the applicant, transmitting a copy of the international application to other authorities, etc. However, the RO/IB has an extended mandate, which allows applicants from all PCT contracting States to file international patent applications with it.

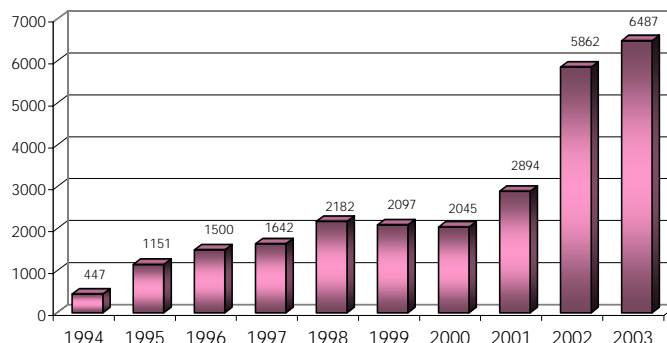
This peculiar and unique feature of the RO/IB seems to be the overriding factor for consideration by applicants that file international applications with the RO/IB. The fact that these applicants can file international patent applications directly with the RO/IB irrespective of their status as determined by place of residence or nationality is just one of the more salient features of the RO/IB.

Advantages of the RO/IB for PCT users

An applicant who files using the RO/IB can also benefit in the following areas:

- ▶ **language versatility** - international applications may be filed in *any* language, however the "request" part of the application must be in a PCT-approved language of publication;
- ▶ **access to more international authorities** - a broader choice of potential international searching and preliminary examination authorities is made available to applicants from different PCT contracting

No. of applications received by RO/IB



States who file an international application at the RO/IB;

- ▶ **agent representation** - the applicant may have a wider choice of professional agents to represent him if he uses the RO/IB: all persons with the right to practice before the national offices of the relevant PCT contracting States (as determined by applicant's nationality/residence), may also qualify to do so before the RO/IB.

Growth and evolution of the RO/IB

The RO/IB launched operations ten years ago with just two staff members and one supervisor. In its first year, it processed approximately 500 PCT applications. At present, approximately 6,500 applications are received annually by the RO/IB, handled by 13 staff member and one – the same – head of section. The graph above illustrates the increase in filings since the inception of the RO/IB.

The flexibility offered by the RO/IB has attracted a worldwide clientele as well as local Geneva-based enterprises such as Moltech Invent and Firmenich, a prominent multinational company and world leader in flavor-

ing and perfumery innovation. Some other companies that use the RO/IB include Pfizer, the first American client of the RO/IB, and the Dutch-based company Philips, currently the most frequent PCT user.

Quality assurance

The success of the RO/IB also lies in its commitment to customer service. It provides a crucial entry-point into WIPO as the essential first link in a dynamic operational sequence. Achieving exacting standards demands a high level of dedication and hard work from the RO/IB staff. The RO/IB examiners set the pace and determine efficiency for further work down the line. They provide the first point of contact that the customer has with the RO/IB and a ready source of direct, person-to-person advice and assistance.

The RO/IB has achieved a high degree of excellence in the ten years of its existence. This is attributed largely to the flexibility of its mandate and the consistently high standard of staff output, which make it an attractive option for use by innovators globally.