

## **Strategy of Swedish Patent and Registration Office, PRV, for assisting SMEs to use the IP System**

*Presentation by Christina Nordström, Knowledge Management Specialist, PRV*

Mrs President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Swedish statement of government Policy, which was delivered in September, the Prime Minister strongly stressed the need to strengthen Swedish companies, trade and growth. The Prime Minister also stated that growth is created by people's belief in the future, by innovative entrepreneurs, and continued by pointing out research and development and the improvement of conditions for entrepreneurs as two focus areas for the work ahead.

The SME sector is a vital part of the Swedish industry. More than 99 per cent of all enterprises in Sweden are classified as SMEs. Besides the objective of the government to create a competitive business environment there are other framework conditions that have a large influence. The European Union plays an important role. As an example we have intellectual property law and company law. This was also stressed by the Prime Minister in the Swedish statement of government Policy.

As a governmental authority we have drawn up a strategy in line with the statement of government Policy. Our overall mission is to support economical growth and to increase employment through an increasing number of enterprises and growing enterprises. In order to fulfil this mission we have a strategy which is based on co-operation. Co-operation with national and international organisations as well as co-operation with SMEs themselves.

As marketing technique we use the AIDA concept which deals with awareness, interest, desire and action. In this short presentation I would like to describe a couple of projects in the awareness field and how we deal with different desires from SMEs and actions taken.

Our current national awareness activity includes co-operation with Innovation Centres geographically spread out over the country. The activity comprises a seminar where the relationship between development, innovation and industrial property are dealt with. The objectives are:

- Increase the knowledge and the interest of IPR.
- Increase the understanding of the consequences of not protecting innovations.
- Increase the possibility for economic growth for innovative SMEs.
- Increase the interest from the press and other media.
- Give opportunities for consultancy and financing.
- Reach maximum number of local SMEs through regional attendance.

The messages are:

- There is a possibility to protect a design, an innovation or a trade mark even for SMEs.
- It is important to take the opportunity to make a living on your ideas.
- It is important to know that through ignorance you can infringe others innovations.
- You should find out what is already invented.
- Use patent-, trademark- and design information.

Primary target groups are:

- SMEs with no or little knowledge of IPR.
- Product developers, designers and innovators.
- Inventors associations.

Secondary target group is:

- Intermediaries.

We will offer the seminar to each region in the country. Every seminar will be evaluated in terms of perceived benefit from the audience.

Our international awareness programme involves a European Commission project, the IP Europe project, which aims at improving the basic awareness within the European business community of how the IPR systems may be used for commercial advantages. A special target group is SMEs. Partners in this project are the national patent offices in France, Czech republic, United Kingdom and Sweden. In addition to this we also have an Icelandic Research Centre as a partner who mainly take the SME role in our work. It is a two year project which started May 2002.

So far we have made business plans for seven different pilot actions. We are now in the phase which includes testing the actions together with a number of SMEs in the partner countries. I would like to mention a couple of the pilot actions:

- Protecting your ideas – an interactive tool. This pilot action will produce a web-based product which will enable SMEs and other innovators to find information on IPR systems that can help them in their innovative activities. It will enable users to guide them how to protect an idea. The website will guide users to the best adapted mode of protection but will also allow the user to test his knowledge in the various fields of the intellectual property rights such as patents, trademarks, design registration and copyrights. The product will consist of a website containing options which, depending on the answer, lead to textual information and further options. The purpose of this marked out course in the form of question/answers is to point out the essential stages in order to direct the user towards the best adapted mode of protection. In the end this exercise will lead to a summary which is printable.

- Database Roadmap. This pilot action is a web-based product which will enable SMEs and other innovators to identify and find information generated by IPR systems that can help them in their innovative activities. It will enable users to categorise their activities and their information needs and guide them to appropriate databases, tutorials, web-based help, patent offices, patent agents, libraries, and other sources of advice and expertise. The roadmap will guide users to the destination but will also point out other features (sources of information and advice) en route. The main thrust will be to cover patents as a source of technical and commercial information but it will also indicate uses for trade mark and designs information; copyright will not be covered. The product will link to the Interactive tool I just mentioned.

The product will enable users to discover

- new uses for information in innovative activities
- how IPR is used and exploited by others
- ideas within their subject field.

How do we deal with different desires from SMEs? In order to know what they are we need to communicate with SMEs directly or with intermediaries dealing directly with the SMEs. We have regular customer meetings to define customer needs. These meetings are held three to four times per year. Representatives from different sectors attend the meetings, such as patent attorneys from both industry and private sector representatives from the Confederation of Enterprise and representatives from the Federation of private Enterprises. In addition to

customer meetings we also conduct customer surveys to define the present status of our services. The outcome of meetings and surveys are put together and valued. Actions are taken and I would like to mention a few of them.

- Simplified language in our official letters. We try to be clear and not use words specific for the IPR world.
- Shorten time limits to respond to official letters. Two months for formal deficiencies and four months for substantive deficiencies in the patent field.
- Quick response to applicants with newly filed applications lacking formal requirements.
- Electronic access to the register via our website. Possibility to follow an application throughout the process for trademarks.
- Electronic filing for trademarks is schedule for 2004 together with electronic payment.
- Quick searches in the patent field – delivery of result within a couple of days.
- Establishing a structure to deal with view points and complaints concerning our service to the public.

Ladies and Gentlemen let me as a conclusion say that we perform a variety of activities to simplify and clarify the use of the IPR system in particular for SMEs. A lot of our work deals with our website to establish our office as a 24-7 authority. Our activities so far have been very successful but we will continue to develop and improve them. I am convinced that this work will be more efficiently if we can do it in co-operation with other offices both national and international.

Thank you for your attention!