PATENT QUALITY CONFERENCE
International Panel

EPO and user community engagement
Sharing best practices
Quality Assurance and continual improvement
EPO and user community engagement

What does the EPO do to engage the user community and get them to invest in quality in the applications they submit?
Engaging with users

Regular meetings worldwide:
- user associations, e.g. “Partnership for Quality”
- company visits, more than 300 per year

Meetings used to inform users about:
- legal changes
- new procedural opportunities
- other developments at the EPO

User feedback: core element of the EPO’s ISO 9001 certified QMS
- online complaints form
- User Satisfaction Surveys
- meetings with users
- customer services
EPO procedures encourage quality and efficiency

EPO PCT processing is fully integrated with subsequent EP regional phase

- EPO PCT searches fully recognised during subsequent EP prosecution
- there is no EP phase search for applications searched by ISA=EPO

- **PCT Direct**: applicants filing an international application claiming priority from an application already searched by the EPO may react to objections raised against the priority application. This simplifies assessment of the international application and adds value to the international search report and written opinion established by the EPO.

- **Rule 161 EPC**: gives applicants the opportunity to comment on, or amend, an application based on objections raised during the PCT phase.
EPO procedures encourage quality and efficiency

**Acceleration**: PACE and PPH are free (no fee). Substantiated third party observations can accelerate processing of a competitor’s application.
Sharing best practices

What does the EPO do to make sure that best practices within a group are spread?
Disseminating best practices – core activities

Collaboration between examiners is enshrined into the European patent granting process (Art 18 & 19 EPC):

• discussions in examining / opposition divisions – typically 3 technically skilled examiners, if **required** a 4\textsuperscript{th} legally qualified examiner

• ad hoc consultations (EPeOple portal helps to find the competence required)

• **in process** quality review and analysis of audit reports

• Single Legal Source and Technical Training portal

• Senior experts
Examiner support network

1st Examiner

- Coaches
- Examing Division
- Classification experts
- Director
- Formalities Officers
- Asian Patent Expert Group
- Helpdesks
- EPC, Guidelines, Internal Instructions, QMS
Disseminating best practices – training and monitoring

Dedicated training:
- classroom training
- on demand eLearning
- dedicated coaches for newcomers

Risk based monitoring and response
- Procedural Data Visualization identifies deviations from norm and allows one to take act

Hire the best and invest in them for long-terms users benefits
Disseminating best practices – other activities

• Continuous Knowledge Transfer (CKT), flash seminars, intranet daily tips

• Asian Patent Expert Group (APEG) – enhances knowledge related to documentation in Asian and Russian languages on a practical level, providing translation aid when necessary

• Senior experts network

• External visits to companies, conferences

• Internships Extern

• Internships Intern
Quality Assurance and continual improvement

How does EPO use data from prosecution to drive consistency in patent examination?
Elements of Quality Assurance

User Satisfaction Surveys & Complaints
- Both are an integral part of the EPO’s QMS which help identify users needs and concerns

Meetings with users
- A means of informing applicants of developments and obtaining quality-related feedback

User Satisfaction surveys, user complaints

Visits to applicants, meetings with user organisations

Filing |
| Search |
| Examination |
| Grant |
| Opposition |
| Appeal |
| OQC |
| Search Audit |
| Visits to applicants, meetings with user organisations |
| Grant Audit |
| Appeal |
| OQC |
| CASE |
| PIPGA |
| SEMO |

OQC Operational Quality Control: quality control of Patent Administration processes & products

CASE Conformity Assurance in Search and Examination
- in-process control of nonconforming products, quality-relevant data for continual improvement

PIPGA Patent Information & Post-Grant activities:
- timeliness of each core process, accuracy and quality data of EP patents

SEMO: Search and Examination Metrics from Opposition

Quality Audits: detailed analysis of approx. 720 search and examinations per year
Integrated Quality Reporting: Preparation

- In Autumn, all quality-related data is collated:
  - a preliminary analysis is performed by PDQM
  - findings are discussed with DG1, Patent Administration and Patent Information
Set quality objectives
(President)

Management Review of QMS
(Chaired by President)

Implement Action Plans
(Operations)

Quality Reporting to Operations
(Quality Management Dept.)

QMS process audits & quality KPI monitoring
(Quality Management Dept.)