

News Release

epoline®: bringing patents closer to the public

The European Patent Office, *epoline*® second Annual Conference

Munich/The Hague: Patent professionals from all over Europe came together in Barcelona on 9-11th December at the second *epoline*® Annual Conference to learn about the latest developments in on-line patent management and information dissemination.

The conference consisted of three parallel sessions: hands on training for both *epoline*® on-line patent management and *esp@cenet*® patent information conducted separately in English, French and German by experienced EPO tutors, seminars on the patent procedure and presentations on the theme “Cutting Edge Issues in Intellectual Property Today”.

The conference showed delegates how the *epoline*® on-line patent filing and management processes as well as the *esp@cenet* on-line patent information service are setting new technical standards worldwide in order to make the patent procedure more efficient, transparent and cost efficient.

Dr. Ingo Kober, President of the European Patent Office, said that “*epoline*® enhances transparency and accessibility of the European patent system for applicants and the public, provides an alternative to all paper-based transactions in that system, and establishes a single point access to the global patent system, following the principle of “Draft your application once, file it everywhere”.”

Amongst the many interesting presentations, **Mr. Thierry Sueur**, Vice President, Intellectual Property and Vice President, European & International Affairs of Air Liquide, focused on the role of patents within small and medium size enterprises.

On a related point, **Mr. Jörg Machek**, Director, the European Patent Office, explored the requirements for patenting computer software implemented inventions under the European Patent Convention, while recent developments in biotech patent law was the topic of the presentation given by **Mr. Rainer Moufang**, Member, Boards of Appeal of the European Patent Office.

Under the title "Intellectual property: access to medicines", **Mrs. Ruth Mayne**, Policy Adviser at Oxfam, examined the implications of global patent rules for access to medicines and R&D, as well as the policy implications.

The conference proceedings, including presentations, speeches and press releases can be found at: http://www.isc-europe.com/epoline/press_info.html

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Editor's note:

European Patent Office: The European Patent Office (EPO) grants European patents for the contracting states to the European Patent Convention (EPC), which was signed in Munich on 5 October 1973 and entered into force on 7 October 1977. It is the executive body of the European Patent Organisation, an intergovernmental body set up under the EPC, whose members are the EPC contracting states. The activities of the EPO are supervised by the Organisation's Administrative Council, composed of delegates from the contracting states. See <http://www.european-patent-office.org>.

EPO Member States: The following states are currently members of the European Patent Organisation: Austria; Hellenic Republic; Belgium; Ireland; Switzerland; Italy; Cyprus; Liechtenstein; Germany; Luxembourg; Denmark; Monaco; Spain; Netherlands; Finland; Portugal; France; Sweden; Turkey; United Kingdom; Republic of Bulgaria; Republic of Romania; Czech Republic; Slovenia; Republic of Estonia; Slovak Republic and Hungary.

The Spanish Patents and Trademarks Office: The Spanish Patents and Trademarks Office (OEPM) is an independent body attached to the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology that stimulates and enhances technological and economic development. The OEPM serves by granting patents and utility models, industrial model and designs, trademarks and company names and protection titles of topographies of semiconductor products. Likewise, the OEPM spreads information regarding the different forms of protecting industrial property rights. See <http://www.oepm.es>.

The OEPM will be launching its On-line Filing service in Spain in the coming months. The other national offices that have already launched the On-line Filing service are Finland, in May 2002, and France, in December 2002.

epoline®: *epoline®* is the brand name given to the range of electronic products and services produced by the EPO for the intellectual property community. These products and services have been designed to provide a secure, integrated environment for electronic communication between the EPO, applicants, their representatives and the national patent offices of the contracting states to the EPC. Most significantly, it provides for on-line filing, fee payment and management of deposit accounts, file inspection, and Register enquiries. It offers major advantages over traditional ways of working by providing instant feedback in the form of status information and immediate confirmation of communications and transactions, while reducing clerical work and paper handling costs, as well as increasing public visibility of the patenting process and transparency of procedure. See <http://www.epoline.org>.

esp@cenet®: *esp@cenet®* is the EPO's public worldwide patent information service on the Internet. It provides users with a readily accessible source of published patent information. It also aims to improve awareness at national and international level, in particular among small and medium-sized enterprises, of the kind of information that is accessible to the public. Moreover, as well as offering documents published by the EPO, this service provides access to patent documents published by patent offices around the world. Specifically, *esp@cenet®* offers access to: all patent documentation available to EPO examiners, recent patent applications (at least two years) from the EPO member states, EPO patent applications and PCT pamphlets from the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

See <http://www.european-patent-office.org/espacenet/info/index.htm>.