

Preface

The IP5 Statistics Report (IP5 SR) is jointly produced by the “IP5 Offices,” a group that consists of the European Patent Office (EPO), the Japan Patent Office (JPO), the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO), the State Intellectual Property Office of the People’s Republic of China (SIPO) and the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), along with the support of the International Bureau (IB) of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). It follows on from a provisional Key IP5 statistical indicators 2016 data report that was made earlier in 2017. The latest reports along with other data exchanges and information about the Group can be found at the IP5 Offices homepage www.fiveipoffices.org.

On June 2, 2016, the 9th Meeting of the IP5 Heads of Office was held in Tokyo, Japan. The heads agreed to establish three major initiatives as future directions for IP5 cooperation: i) enhancing relations with users, ii) continuing to provide high-quality and reliable examination results and iii) exploring the IP Offices’ readiness to respond to emerging technologies. The heads highlighted major achievements from their joint projects:

- a) Improved public access to information on how patent applications are progressing at different patent offices around the world by offering online access to all IP5 patent file histories;
- b) Extension of the IP5 Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) pilot program, establishment of guidelines concerning the common PPH request form, clarification of the IP5 Offices’ PPH implementation practice and publication of these achievements to users; and
- c) Launch of a 5-year pilot program in which the IP5 Offices, at the request of patent applicants, perform a limited number of search reports and opinions for international applications filed under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) in a collaborative manner.

Collaboration was also successful in the area of patent statistics. In addition to promoting a better understanding of patenting activity, both at the IP5 Offices and worldwide, this report explains each office’s operations and informs about patent grant procedures. It discusses background activities at each office, reviews worldwide patenting developments and then compares the patent related work at the IP5 Offices. The IP5 SR supplements annual reports for each of the IP5 Offices and also presents specific statistics that are collected and published by the WIPO.

There are diverse factors that influence patent filing trends. In the past, trend breaks have been mainly caused by changes to patent rules and fees as well as by sudden changes in the economic climate. Every year, there is a background of changes at one or more of the IP5 Offices. As the global patent system becomes more harmonized, common economic driving forces have been a major influence on patent filings at the offices.

According to the World Economic Outlook³ of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), global growth is expected to pick up in 2017 and 2018. Growth in 2017 is projected to be 3.5 percent, followed by 3.6 percent in 2018. Stronger economic activity and a corresponding increase in financial market optimism are expected to result in a cyclical recovery in investment, manufacturing and trade. It seems likely that the drivers for patent applications will remain positive. At the IP5 Offices in 2016, the applications increased 21.5 percent at the SIPO and 2.7 percent at the USPTO, stabilized at the EPO and at the JPO, while they decreased by 2.3 percent at the KIPO. The data showed a total annual growth of 10.6 percent for overall applications at the IP5 Offices (See Chapters 2 and 4 of this report).

Although patent filing is closely tied to economic growth, political and technological factors are also influential. Globalization of markets and production continues to be a key business trend. There is a worldwide tendency to harmonize patent laws with common international standards and to facilitate filing of applications across borders. Common vehicles for applying across different jurisdictions have also appeared, such as the PCT system, the validation agreements or the Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH). These factors have had a positive impact on worldwide patent growth over recent years. While applications are user driven, grants show the production capacity of the offices on those applications after some delay.

The IP5 Offices hope that this report provides useful information to the readers. The IP5 Offices will continue to improve and refine the report to better serve expectations and objectives of the public. Definitions related to the terminology used in the report are given in Annexes 1 and 2 that appear at the end.

When reading this report, please bear in mind that the procedures and practices among the IP5 Offices differ in a number of areas. Therefore, care should be taken when analyzing, interpreting and comparing the various statistics.

Materials from this report can be freely reproduced in other publications, but we request that this should be accompanied by a reference to the title and the web site location of this report, (www.fiveipoffices.org/statistics.html).

The web version of the report has an additional annex including a glossary of patent-related terms. It also has a statistical table file that includes extended time series and graphs of much of the data found in this report. Here some longer term phenomena can be seen, such as the big growth of domestic patenting in China over the period and the effects of the recession and subsequent recovery from 2007 to 2010.

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³ World Economic Outlook October 2017, www.imf.org